

CORRESPONDENCE

The BRF

**From Mr Paul Hayden
Portdinorwic, North Wales**

'I have been a member of the BRF now for 6 months and I would just like to say what a privilege it is to belong to a fellowship of like-minded people as the BRF is. I am probably stuck out on a limb here in this part of the country, and I can only watch helplessly as the churches around me turn further and further away from the Reformed Faith. One highlight I have had this year was to go to a meeting held by the Wrexham Reformed Fellowship, where Ronald Hanko was preaching and I enjoyed meeting him very much. I enjoyed meeting the other people I met there as well, but 80 miles each way is rather a long way to travel on a regular basis. Anyway, I'd like to thank you for forming the BRF and you can trust on my support in future years.'

Family Holiday Conference

**From Mrs Mildred MacDonald,
Inverness**

'This is just a very brief note to thank you for a most enjoyable Conference. The Professors were excellent and one learnt a lot from their expounding of the Word. I'm longing to get the tapes so that I can listen to the talks again, and pass them on to my friends.'

I will certainly be remembering you all prayerfully and hope we can all meet again (DV). Above all I pray that we have all been blessed by the spiritual food we received, and especially the young ones while their hearts are still tender and responsive. The heart is

inclined to harden as we get older - what Satan loves.

Again, many thanks and may the Lord's richest blessings be with you in all that you do for His cause.'

**From Dr Timothy Cross,
Cardiff**

'The Conference in Galashiels was just outstanding in every respect: the ministry was edifying, the conversation was stimulating, the fellowship was heart-warming, the mix of nationalities was interesting and the scenery quite breath taking. Having to say goodbye to so many lovely folks of like-mind was the only bit I didn't enjoy. Your very kind gift of all the Westminster Standards under one cover will be a treasured memento of a week which was quite exceptional.'

Thank you very much once again. There is now nowhere to go but down!'

The Free Offer of the Gospel

**From Rev A M Macleod,
Kinloch, Isle of Lewis**

'It is depressing to see those who insist on loyalty to the Reformed Faith sniping at each other over certain important aspects of the truth for which they are sent forth as spokespersons. So strong is the bond uniting brethren in Christ that one feels there is an explanation for this other than a disagreement on some basic Christian truths.'

The subject of the "Free Offer" of the Gospel, strange to say, is a cause of controversy. A small number in the Reformed Church known as hyper-Calvinists are long

known to deny the "Free Offer." There are others however, opposed to hyper-Calvinism who cross swords also with supporters of a view called, by them, the "Free Offer of the Gospel." This is an example of disagreement caused, in part at least, by a different application of commonly used expressions. In the Reformed Church I serve, as far as I know, there is no serious controversy over the Free Offer, yet we adhere strictly to the Westminster Confession.

Professor D Engelsma, a supporter of the British Reformed Fellowship, in a book, *Hyper-Calvinism and the Call of the Gospel*, puts this matter in clearer focus for us. We there find that some view the offer as a call of God with the purpose of saving the reprobate. This is attributed to teachers of a Dutch secession of 1834. It seems that by "offer" is meant, not only that it is pleasing to God that all the called should come to Him, but also that He promises salvation to all to whom the Gospel is preached. This offer is called "well-meant." Quoting another critic of this view of the Gospel offer, the writer says (he) "had no objection to the offer as the preaching of Christ to all, as a call to all to repent and believe, as a declaration that it is pleasing to God that all who are called should come and as an announcement of the promise of eternal life to all who believe."

Professor Engelsma declares that the denial of the offer "has an honourable pedigree... it may claim to represent the Reformed tradition." Many would say "Amen!" if the term is thus strictly understood. In Scotland, as far as we know, all who are revered as Reformed preachers made the Free offer of the Gospel, as we use the term, to sinners indiscriminately.

There seems to be a crying need for a dictionary of several common theological terms. The one party cannot preach without opposing the "Free Offer," as understood by

themselves; the other cannot preach without making the "Free Offer" to all, as they understand it.

Nigel Lee and Tom Reid
From Dr Stephen Westcott
Bristol

I am not too in love with the Francis Nigel Lee contribution. I suspect that this "history" was not told us at school mainly because it is Dr Lee's *personal* view of what credence can be given to early myth and legend! Interestingly the concept of "Christian" British kings, the "Lucius" legend and the Joseph of Arimathea story, with "Jewish-Christian" Druids etc was examined at length by John Owen three centuries ago, and demolished with his usual thoroughness. Also the idea that the Vikings who made the "Vinland" voyages were really whiter-than-white Christian missionaries seems a little strange in the light of the Icelandic Sagas, Erik the Red only arriving in Greenland because exiled from Iceland for violence, the Erik Saga, the Icelandic "Landnambok" etc!

As for the "Sum of Saving Knowledge" it should be pointed out that this was NOT a product of the Westminster Assembly. The work of a single hand (quite who is disputed), it was added to Scottish printed versions of the Standards. It had no place in the Westminster discussions, nor was it seen or approved by the Assembly. Strangely enough the Assembly DID issue six major written documents, but the sixth was not the "Sum of Saving Knowledge," but the 1647 "Directory for Church-Government, for Church-Censures, and the Ordination of Ministers" - Westminster's fullest explanation of Presbyterian polity and often called the "Forgotten Document" of the Assembly. The earlier "Directory for the Public Worship of God" was, of course, only intended to be a temporary document. (See reprint in "Pressing Towards the Mark," OPC, 1986.)