

The Standard Bearer

A REFORMED SEMI-MONTHLY MAGAZINE

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All Around Us:

The Christian and Theatrical Entertainment

**The Pilgrim and Marriage
(see: In His Fear)**

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THE STANDARD BEARER

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Editorials

Developments in the Gereformeerde Kerken A LAODICEAN DECISION

Prof. H. C. Hoeksema

Synodical Decision in the Wiersinga Case

Shortly after the April 15 issue, in which we reported the stand of the Consistory of Amsterdam in the case of Dr. H. Wiersinga, went to press, the decision of the General Synod of the *Gereformeerde Kerken* came to our attention. In *Calvinist Contact*, April 3, 1972, the following report appeared (we translate):

The Synod of the *Gereformeerde Kerken* in the Netherlands (Synodical) has spoken extensively concerning the objections against the doctrine of atonement which the student pastor of Amsterdam, Dr. H. Wiersinga, developed in his dissertation on the atonement, for which he received the degree of Doctor of Theology at the Free University. After a session which lasted from 9 o'clock in the morning to 11 o'clock in the evening, the Synod came to the

conclusion that Dr. Wiersinga's views indeed depart from the Confession and that there must be further discussion with him because he agrees as well with the pronouncement about the atonement which the synod published in October, 1971.

Here follows the literal text of the synodical decision which was adopted unanimously:

The Synod has taken note of:

a. The protests which were filed against the doctrine of atonement as presented by Dr. H. Wiersinga in his dissertation, "The Atonement in Theological Discussion," which were brought to general attention through a published edition.

b. The letter of the Consistory of Amsterdam (January 7, 1972) with the attached report.

The Synod considers:

a. Dr. Wiersinga in the work referred to rejects certain expressions in the confessions concerning the atonement; namely, in Articles 20 and 21 of the Belgic Confession the expression "to make satisfaction in the same, and to bear the punishment of sin by His most bitter passion and death; the laying by God of our iniquities upon Christ; the appeasing of God's wrath by full satisfaction; the suffering for the remission of our sins," in Questions and Answers 11, 12, 13, 14, 16, 17, 56, and 60 of the Heidelberg Catechism words such as the following: "that the wrath of God against sin is a requirement of God's justice; that there must be satisfaction of God's justice; that the justice of God requires satisfaction for our sins; that Christ must bear the burden of the wrath of God (see also Lord's Day 15); that because of the satisfaction of Christ forgiveness of sins is given us, and the perfect satisfaction granted and imputed to us," and in the Canons of Dordrecht, II, 1-4, the entire exposition of the doctrine that there must be satisfaction of the justice of God.

b. Dr. Wiersinga testifies nevertheless to his complete agreement with the pronouncement of the synod concerning the atonement, October 6, 1971.

c. He declares that he agrees with the faith in the only work of Christ unto reconciliation, and in the gracious character of salvation as the gift of God. According to our conviction, faith is the work of the Holy Ghost and finds its certainty only in Christ.

d. He retracts the expression "alternative doctrine of atonement" because he "does not want to exchange the entire traditional doctrine of atonement for another."

e. Dr. Wiersinga objects against the doctrine of atonement in the confession as being in his opinion one-sidedly juridical, and wishes to make corrections and additions to this.

The Synod declares:

a. The freedom to test the confession of the church, as this is contained in her confessional documents, by Holy Scripture must continue to be maintained unabridged.

b. 1. It has not appeared that Dr. Wiersinga has demonstrated from Scripture in convincing fashion

that he correctly has rejected certain expressions in the confessions concerning the doctrine of atonement as mentioned in consideration "a".

2. Our churches have correctly called the attention of Synod to this departure from the confession.

c. Consequently the churches must continue to hold in preaching and instruction to their confession with respect to the atonement.

d. Seeing that with respect to this important point of doctrine, obedience to Scripture and the unity of faith and confession are in a far-reaching manner at issue, the Synod considers it necessary that there be further discussion with Dr. Wiersinga because he, on the one hand, thinks it necessary to reject certain expressions concerning the atonement in the confessions, and, on the other hand, has declared agreement with the synodical declaration of October 6, 1971.

The Synod decides:

a. To appoint a committee which shall speak with Dr. Wiersinga for the purpose of coming to more clarity concerning his views and to seek a solution for the problems which are raised in the church by his publications and by the protests filed on account of them.

b. She requests Dr. H. Wiersinga to declare himself ready to conduct the discussion about his published objections against the confessions with this committee, in the expectation that during this discussion Dr. H. Wiersinga and all concerned will preserve the pastorally required reserve and self-control.

c. She requests the churches and church members to accompany the further discussions with trust and intercession.

d. She furnishes notice of her decisions to those who have addressed her, to Dr. H. Wiersinga, to the Consistory of Amsterdam, and to the churches in common.

Comment

Already some of the so-called conservatives in the Netherlands have hailed this decision of Synod as a kind of victory — at least enough of a victory that members of the *Gereformeerde Kerken* may be encouraged to remain with the denomination for the time being. The latter does not imply that up to now there has been any considerable tendency toward a "split" or a reformation in the Netherlands. On the contrary, while there has been some attrition on the part of individual ministers and members, there has up to now been no sign of a genuine reformatory movement even though there has been much complaining, and even protesting, about the liberalism in the GKN. Now, however, some of the so-called conservatives seem to find ground for renewed hope in this decision of the Synod.

We disagree.

We find this synodical decision to be at best another Laodicean-type of decision, that is, neither hot nor

cold. It is evidently calculated to throw some kind of sop to the conservatives by leaving the impression that Synod is maintaining the confessional position on the atonement, and at the same time to avoid the forthright condemnation of the heretical position of Dr. Wiersinga and the exercise of doctrinal discipline by what has now become a favorite device in the GKN, *discussion*. At worst, however, it is a decision in which the synod gives evidence of not having the courage of its convictions concerning the truth of the atonement, but of leaving the door open to flagrant denial of this truth and of protecting heretics.

An analysis of this decision will bring out how little good substance there is in the entire decision and how devious is the method by which the Synod avoids the exercise of discipline.

First of all, let us take a look at the case itself. There is one item on which apparently everyone agrees, including Wiersinga himself, the Consistory of Amsterdam, the protestants, and the Synod: Dr. Wiersinga has publicly set forth in his doctoral dissertation views that are contrary to the confessions and in which he specifically departs from certain key expressions of the confessions concerning the atonement. Now in plain language this means that Dr. Wiersinga is guilty of HERESY. Of course, nowhere in the ecclesiastical pronouncements on this case is that naughty word used. It has virtually become contraband in the Netherlands to use such language. And undoubtedly here we have one of the keys to this entire sad history. If those concerned would call things by their right name, they would almost be compelled to take correct and decisive action, too. At least, it is very difficult plainly to face up to the reality of heresy and then to do nothing about it.

But how did the case develop? There are several factors here. Let us note some of the more important ones.

1) Dr. Wiersinga's sponsor was the reputed and influential Dr. Berkouwer. His degree was granted by the Theological Faculty of the Free University. This means, of course, that Wiersinga sallied forth with his heretical views with considerable backing. It also means — because in the true sense of the word, academic approval of a doctoral thesis in theology and Scriptural and confessional soundness cannot be separated — that for good or for ill the Theological Faculty of the Free University (which is supposed to be under ecclesiastical supervision) was immediately involved in this case. But strangely enough, the synodical decision does not breathe a word about this. Even from their own point of view and in their own miserable discussion-spirit, Synod might also have decided that there should be discussion with the theological professors of the Free University who granted Wiersinga his degree.

2) The Consistory of Amsterdam refused to

condemn Wiersinga, maintaining his alleged right to test the confessions, meanwhile passing the buck to Synod. This, remember, is a serious mistake: for it is primarily the duty of a consistory to exercise discipline over the officebearers within its jurisdiction. Meanwhile, also the Consistory of Amsterdam not only became suspect, but became guilty by association with Wiersinga. Also about this, however, the synodical decision breathes not a word. It only states that the decision will be sent to the Consistory.

3) Dr. Wiersinga apparently made some concessions. One was his declaration of agreement with the October, 1971 declaration of the Synod in which the latter apparently took its stand with the confessions, tried to calm the fears of the churches, and meanwhile stated that there had to be long and careful study of the case. No details are furnished; nevertheless Wiersinga's concession on this is rather mystifying, and, on the surface of it, rather self-contradictory. How can he agree with that declaration of the Synod, and at the same time reject confessional statements on the atonement? But let it be noted that this is not reason for discussion. No, he should have been put on trial before Synod and given the opportunity to demonstrate and defend this alleged agreement. But what the Synod does in considerations "a" and "b" and "c" is to leave matters unresolved. Another concession was Wiersinga's retraction of the expression "alternative doctrine of atonement." This may seem to be a ray of hope in the case, but it certainly is not. It merely means that Wiersinga takes the untenable and contradictory position of trying to maintain both his own heretical views and the confessions. This is a favorite device of heretics: take ten heretical steps forward, and take one little step backward, and thus deceive the unwary. The same is true of Wiersinga's characterization of the confessions as being "one-sidedly juridical." This business of being "one-sided" is a real red herring, you know. The question, however, is whether something is true or false, right or wrong; not whether it is one-sided or two-sided.

In the second place, let us look at the Synodical declaration in this case. Synod declares that the freedom to test the confession of the church by Holy Scripture must be maintained unabridged. Let us note, however: 1) That this was not the original issue in the case. The issue was one of *heresy*. This matter of "testing the confessions" was introduced by the Consistory of Amsterdam. And now what happens? Synod's very first declaration is about *this* issue, not about the *case*. 2) That in the context of the case, this declaration means that there is complete doctrinal freedom in the GKN. For remember, this declaration does not say that one may test the confessions by Scripture in the carefully prescribed way of the old Formula of Subscription. This is neither stated nor

implied; and, in fact, the old Formula of Subscription has now been discarded in the GKN. This declaration apparently means by "unabridged" exactly that: without any limitation as to method or mode.

Further, the Synod makes only a *negative* declaration concerning Dr. Wiersinga: "*It has not appeared* that Dr. Wiersinga has demonstrated from Scripture in convincing fashion. . . ." Take careful note of this. For: 1) It avoids the issue of heresy completely. The issue was not whether Wiersinga had in the correct and prescribed and orderly way demonstrated anything from Scripture. The sole issue was whether his public and published doctrine was heretical, i.e., contrary to the confessions. 2) Even at that, the statement is negative: "*It has not appeared. . . .*" This even leaves the matter open, suggests that it can still appear — perhaps from the further discussion. Meanwhile, the Synod adds a declaration as big as a barn which no one had questioned: the churches correctly called attention to this departure from the confession. A pat on the back for the churches!

Declaration "c" is also deceptive. For one thing, it does not belong to the case proper. For another, it states a fact which goes without saying: must not the churches always hold to their confession in preaching and instruction unless and until that confession is set aside or changed? This appears to be nothing more than a kind of diplomatic move on the part of Synod to calm the fears of some and to leave the impression of loyalty to the confessions.

And, finally, declaration "d" does not even properly follow from the preceding weak stand of the Synod. The least one might have expected is that Synod would have placed Wiersinga before an ultimatum: either *make it appear* that you have in convincing fashion demonstrated from Scripture that certain expressions of the confessions are to be rejected, or recant the position published in your dissertation. Even this would not have been a good decision, you understand: for Wiersinga should have been *de facto* suspended from office long ago, on the ground of violating the Formula of Subscription. But the above would at least have been a logical decision in the context of the whole of Synod's stand. Now, however, Synod merely concludes that further discussion is necessary; and it does not even promise that there will be a resolution of the case after this discussion.

In the third place, notice the decision proper. The first item speaks of appointing a committee to conduct a discussion with Wiersinga. But what is the purpose? To convince him of the heresy of his views? No! To persuade him to make complete retraction? No! "To come to more clarity concerning his views!" As though they were not clearly in conflict with the confessions! As though they were not simple heresy, and that, too, with respect to the very heart of the gospel of salvation!

I ask: what comfort can any conservative take from such a decision?

Besides, the purpose is: to seek a solution for the problems which are raised in the church by his publications and by the protests filed on account of them. So now this has become a matter of problematics! And those who have protested heresy are in part responsible for the existence of the problem. I ask: since when has the existence of plain heresy in the church been a "problem" in the church? An evil? Yes! The work of the Evil One? Indeed! Something to be rooted out? By all means — whether by retraction or by expurgation! But a problem???! And I ask, too: must a solution be *sought for*? Is not the solution simple? And is not the solution prescribed — in Scripture, the confessions, and the Church Order?

And again I ask: what solace can conservatives find in such a decision? And if a "solution" for the "problem" is found, what guarantee is there whatsoever that it will be a proper solution?

No, it appears more and more that the Synod is forcing the *Gereformeerde Kerken* in the direction of a modalities-church, i.e., a denomination in which there are permanently two wings: a conservative, believing wing, which wants to hold to the confessions; and a liberal, unbelieving wing, which wants complete liberty (license) of teaching. And that is a Laodicean situation of the worst sort!

How it is possible that Synod dares to ask the churches to accompany the projected discussions with "trust and intercession" is beyond my comprehension. As far as trust is concerned, Synod, by this and past actions, has forfeited any right to expect trust. And as far as intercession is concerned, hypocrisy is not the proper attitude and atmosphere for it: how can one expect and pray for the Lord's blessing upon such hypocrisy?

THE DOOR OPEN WIDE

In *RES News Exchange* (March 29, '72) there is a report of another decision of the Synod of the GKN. This concerns the matter of the Formula of Subscription and the binding force of the confessions. This entire matter has been under discussion for some

time in the Netherlands. Synod had already decided, as was reported earlier in our columns, to make a change. Now the committee has reported; and Synod has made a decision.

And it is a bad decision!

Here is the report carried in RES News Exchange:

(Grand Rapids) The Reformed Churches in the Netherlands, at their recent session of General Synod, adopted a new form of subscription for officers in the church. The new form, which all pastors, professors and candidates for the ministry must sign, no longer requires complete agreement with the confessional standards of the church. This is a change from the position taken in 1969 when the Synod saw no reason not to express full agreement, although it recognized that there were difficulties in the form of the argument and manner of expression of the 17th century documents. At that time a commission was charged with the task of studying whether there were any additional reasons why full and complete agreement should no longer be required. The recent Synod declared that changes should not be made in the present standards.

In the new form the subscriber affirms that the Holy Scriptures are the Word of God, the authoritative revelation of the Gospel of God in Jesus Christ and therefore are the only rule for faith and life. It also requires the subscriber to say, "We promise, in the unity of the true faith, to remain faithful to the confession of the church which the fathers have expressed in the three general creeds and in the three Forms of Unity." Some persons had difficulty with the fact that the form does not mention the confessional *standards* but the *confession* of the church.

The reporter to the Synod, the Rev. A. C. van Nood, explained the new form by saying that it was definitely not the intention to "loosen all the screws" and to allow for unlimited freedom regarding the confessions. But, he stated, John Calvin himself held that the main points of the true doctrine are not all of one form. Some of them must be subscribed to by all, but others allow a difference of opinion without affecting the unity of the faith. Mr. van Nood also explained that the standards are there to direct the confessional activity of the church. Prof. J. Plomp of the Kampen Theological College expressed as his opinion that in adopting the new form nothing essential has been changed. (RES NE 3/29/72)

We are sorry that the entire new Formula is not quoted. If possible, we will produce this at a later date.

But certainly the substance of the Formula is found

in the statement that is literally quoted: "We promise, in the unity of the true faith, to remain faithful to the confession of the church which the fathers have expressed in the three general creeds and in the three Forms of Unity." Whether the new Formula says anything about disagreement and about penalties (suspension and deposition) in case of unfaithfulness remains to be seen. But it is easily seen that the above promise is the official opening of the door to all kinds of false doctrine — contrary to the opinions of those mentioned in the *RES News Exchange* report. And the chief problem lies exactly in that distinction between the "confession" of the church and the confessional *standards*, or documents. This, you understand, is altogether different than the precise statement of the original Formula of Subscription: "We . . . do hereby sincerely and in good conscience before the Lord, declare by this, our subscription, that we heartily believe and are persuaded that *all the articles and points of doctrine* (italics added), contained in the Confession and Catechism of the Reformed Churches, together with the explanation of some points of the aforesaid doctrine, made by the National Synod of Dordrecht, 1618-'19, do fully agree with the Word of God."

I do not have to add any explanation; a mere comparison of the language of the two statements will make the difference clear.

Besides, if, as Prof. Plomp is quoted as saying, nothing essential is changed by the new form, then the question cannot be answered: why a new form at all?

No, the door is now wide open!

But, of course, the Synod has by this only made official what has for a long time been an actual fact of life in the *Gereformeerde Kerken*. This will only make it more difficult, if not impossible, to protest against anyone's doctrine on the basis of the creeds, and, also to convict anyone of heresy.

The decline in the GKN is indeed swift!

And there is a question which all the churches of the Reformed Ecumenical Churches will have to face, too: how can the GKN any longer be tolerated as members in good standing of the RES? Is this not becoming too much for the sister churches of the GKN to swallow?

Meditation

Dwelling in the House of Knowledge

Rev. M. Schipper

"Likewise, ye husbands, dwell with them according to knowledge, giving honour unto the wife, as unto the weaker vessel, and as being heirs together of the grace of life; that your prayers be not hindered."

I Peter 3:7

Likewise, ye husbands!

Dwell with them according to knowledge!

Most fitting instruction is it which the apostle gives to complete his exhortation relative to the marital state!

Having spoken of the true beauty of the Christian wife, as consisting in her subjection to her husband in the fear of the Lord, the apostle now directs a word to the Christian husband.

They are to dwell with their wives according to knowledge!

But what does this mean?

It should be clearly understood that to dwell with their wives includes more than merely to have spiritual fellowship with them. O, indeed, it means this, too. For when Christian men and women marry in the Lord, it is a union of two who are bound together in the love of the Lord. There will therefore be a spiritual union of spiritual fellowship which they shall experience together with the Lord. Without this spiritual fellowship there can not be any real union. It is basic for the Christian home, and for the realization of a proper Christian marriage. Marriage should therefore be much more than a mere natural, fleshly tie.

However, this dwelling of husbands with their wives must include also all that pertains to the natural relationship. Included is the building of a home, the rearing of a family, the provision of the material needs, etc.

To do this, husbands should not live outside of the home. They should not be strangers to their wives and children. They should not send them support from a distance. Rather, they must have fellowship with them naturally, physically, and spiritually. This fellowship implies a mutually intimate relation. It involves the wife as well as the husband. And this means that the wife is not to act as an iceberg towards her husband, never inviting his embraces, treating him like a foreigner intruding upon her privacy, letting him feel that he is no better than a government agency providing her with the necessities of life. On the other hand, it means that the husband especially must seek to cultivate a warm, congenial, intimate fellowship in every sense of the word, naturally, physically, and spiritually. It stands to reason that the husband who is to do this must not be a stranger to his wife and to the children which may come out of such fellowship. In this materialistic age there are husbands, and sometimes even Christian husbands, who imagine that if they provide a place of shelter, the necessary food and clothing for their wives and children, they have done all that is expected of them. But this is a serious error. Such a husband is no better than a divorced man who by the court is ordered to send alimony and sufficient up-keep for his family. Today there are husbands who will take jobs far from home, even in

other cities where they can make more money, but who see their wives and children maybe once a week or once a month. The apostle in the text is not suggesting that a husband provide a house and the physical necessities of life, but that he build a home. There is a vast difference between a house and a home. It is the latter which will be the fruit of the intimate fellowship the apostle is suggesting.

Dwell with them according to knowledge!

How sad it is when the husband is a fool! What a spectacle he makes of himself when he conducts himself in the home as one who is empty-headed, a know-nothing. How sad, too, when the wife alone appears to have the knowledge necessary to regulate the affairs of the home; when she possesses better judgment than he, especially in things concerning the marriage relation; when the wife simply takes over, makes all the decisions, and the husband has nothing to say.

On the other hand, how sad it is, too, when the husband is a "know it all"; when he considers his wife to be no more than a piece of furniture to decorate his home; when he treats her as a slave that must bow to his every beck and call; and in the sacred intimate marriage relation looks upon her as a machine which, when it is worn out, may easily be replaced by another.

The apostle insists that the Christian husband must dwell with his wife according to knowledge. He must know how to treat her with respect. He must stand in the proper attitude towards her. He must know her in love, not with mere carnal infatuation, but with the love which proceeds from the love of God, which is spread abroad in his heart.

As with the weaker vessel!

This belongs with the foregoing, not with that which follows in the text. The first part of the text therefore may be translated thus: "Ye men, likewise, are dwelling according to knowledge as with the weaker vessel, the wifely one."

The wife is the weaker vessel, generally speaking, in every respect. Not only is she a different vessel than the man, but normally also the weaker of the two. The man is supposed to be the stronger in body, in mind, and in will. As we suggested above, there may be exceptions to this. A man may be effeminate, while his wife is masculine, strong as or stronger physically and mentally than the man. But this is abnormal. From the purely human and physical point of view, the woman is the weaker vessel. And the man must also act as the stronger towards his wife, who is the weaker vessel. This does not mean that he is to tyrannize over her, treat her with brute strength as a master over a slave. Not at all! But the very opposite will be true, — he will know that she is the weaker, and therefore treat her accordingly, as a man of understanding.

Moreover, he will bestow honor upon her as being

co-heir of the grace of life!

Here, undoubtedly, the apostle points up that from a spiritual point of view there is equality. By the grace of God they together are heirs of the grace of life.

An heir is one who is destined to receive a legacy, a possession which is gratuitously granted by a testator. Here God is the Testator Who has willed to give the grace of eternal life to all His people, male and female, bond or free, Jew or Gentile. This the man with his strength cannot give to his wife, but both the Christian husband and Christian wife are given this grace by God in His mercy and love. This grace of life is merited for them by the perfect obedience of Christ their Lord; and bequeathed to them by God out of pure and sovereign grace. It is the grace of eternal life, which they possess now in principle, and in the day of Christ in heavenly perfection. When a husband and a wife are married in the Lord, they are deeply conscious of this grace, which they observe also in one another. And the apostle stresses the point that when a man dwells in the house of knowledge, he will honor his wife as co-heir with him of this grace.

The thought that the Christian husband and wife are co-heirs of the grace of life makes the marital relation most meaningful. It clearly shows that a Christian marriage has a higher purpose than the mere satisfaction of earthly and natural desire. Nor is the end of marriage simply intended to be a temporary arrangement for the procreation of children. O, to be sure, marriage is intended by God to be a temporary arrangement, for they are neither married or given in marriage in heaven. And it is also surely true that marriage is divinely intended for the satisfaction of human desire and the procreation of children. But there is much more! It must be emphasized that marriage is also a spiritual arrangement, in which the Christian couple seeks to typify the true spiritual relationship that exists between Christ and His Church, between Christ the Bridegroom, and the Church His bride. Surely when the tabernacle of God shall be with men, and when the Christian husband and wife who are now co-heirs of the grace of life shall come to the full possession of that life in heavenly glory, then they shall no longer be husband and wife. Then they will possess the grace of life perfectly and eternally as individual heirs. But now, while they are on the earth, and living in their marital state, they must consider themselves as co-heirs of this grace. Of this they will also be deeply conscious in their relation to one another. When the husband considers this that his wife is his spiritual equal, and that she with him is an heir of eternal life, then he will honour his weaker vessel and hold her in respect not only as his wife but as a child of God.

How blessed to so dwell in the house of knowledge!
Such dwelling will indeed have a salutary effect!

Of this the apostle speaks in the last part of the text,

— that your prayers be not hindered.

Prayers here, of course, refer especially to their prayers together, their prayers in the home, in the marital relation. It is most essential for the well-being of the marital relation that husband and wife pray together. O, indeed, there is room for private and individual prayers. Prayer, which is a grace as well as a spiritual art, which may be developed with constant and faithful use, is the opening of the soul before God as it gives expression to its sense of blessing and need. Each individual Christian uses this spiritual art according as he develops spiritually and senses ever more deeply his dependence upon God, from Whom all blessings flow, his sins and short-comings, which humble him before his God. If he is truly spiritual, he will seek often the quiet of the inner chamber to bow humbly before the throne of grace. Just as essential it is that husband and wife, even before they become husband and wife, learn to pray together. They are to live together, no longer as mere individuals, but as one in the Lord. They have common needs, they experience common blessings, they serve the same God. They have the common task of bringing up the children God may give them in the fear of the Lord. God will sometimes send them the rod of affliction which they will share together. They soon experience that after the unforgettable happiness of their wedding day, that joy is often dampened by the sad experiences of their wedded life. Even the marriage form reminds them before their marriage "Whereas married persons are generally, and by reason of sin, subject to many troubles and afflictions," that wedded life is not always a happy wedding day. Then how wonderful it is when together they may send to the throne of grace their cry for help in time of need.

In order that they may continue to pray together, it is essential that the marital relation be not disturbed, is not violated in any sense or to any degree.

It stands to reason that if the wife does not live in submission to her own husband, if she is not constantly and faithfully emulating the good example of Sara, who called Abraham her lord; or, if the husband is not dwelling with her in the house of knowledge, and honoring her as co-heir with him of the grace of life, then they will not be able to pray together. And when they cannot pray together, the marital relation is in trouble.

Someone has said, "the family which prays together, stays together." There is no reason to doubt this.

Doing this, the God-fearing husband and wife will experience the blessedness the Lord intended they should have, when He brought them together.

And so also, they will fulfill in the most beautiful sense the high spiritual purpose God had in mind when He brought them together, — namely, to show forth the true unity that subsists in the believer's relation and the church's relation to Christ.

All Around Us

The Christian and Theatrical Entertainment

Prof. H. Hanko

The whole question of dramatic productions has once again become a topic of discussion. This is true for several reasons. First, it is, it seems, in every generation a question which needs to be debated anew mostly for the sake of the young people in the Church. Secondly, the advent of television has brought dramatic productions into the home and has made them a common form of entertainment. Thirdly, the number of so-called "Christian Movies" is growing, and it is even asserted that movies are an effective way to bring the gospel to the unconverted.

It seems sometimes that anyone who raises his voice in protest against the use of dramatic productions is something like a voice in the wilderness in our day. In fact, those who do seem to be such a few that their voice is scarcely heard. The attitude seems to be that anyone who can possibly oppose dramatic productions is so far out in left field that he is not even worth listening to.

It was of some interest then, to read an article in "The Banner of Truth" magazine in which a certain S. M. Houghton condemned severely dramatic productions. His article is of value both for this reason and because it includes a number of quotations from other writings which prove that the condemnation of drama has a long and illustrious history.

We cannot quote the rather lengthy article in full, but give some of the more pertinent paragraphs.

The writer of this article believes that it is high time to expose the folly, the vanity and unlawfulness for the believer in Christ of stage entertainments. . . .

It is undeniable that today the Christian Church at large displays a marked difference in its attitude to theatricals from that adopted by the vast majority of evangelicals from the Reformation onwards, not to mention such corroboratory testimony as may be drawn from the ancient Fathers. It is equally certain that to some extent this change of attitude has resulted from the impact of radio and television upon the Christian home. The fact is that theatricals are no longer to be defined as a diversion to be "enjoyed" in a special building set apart for the acting of plays; they have invaded the home and have become for good or ill a commonplace of domestic leisure. In this way the play has become a part of the life of the adolescent as much as of that of his parents. . . .

It is assumed by many modern evangelicals that the profession of the actor is not in itself open to Christian objection, and that if a play, be it tragedy or comedy, is morally clean, a man or woman may share in a stage performance without a violation of the law of Christ; in other words, in a manner acceptable

to God; or again, it can be a work performed in service to Christ. But we can by no means accept this claim. It is to be doubted whether the acting of, say, a love affair (and this is the very stuff of drama) which on paper may be read acceptably, can be performed on the stage without a violation of sound morality. For an actor to make love to an actress on the stage for public entertainment, even if the language employed is chaste and decorous, cannot but have harmful effects on the minds of both players. The sentiments of love may be rendered highly attractive by all the arts of a facile pen and a lively imagination, but for these to be expressed by voice and emphasized by gesture, and by the physical contacts of the players, is bound to have injurious effects on the characters of both. The giving expression to sentiments that are not actually felt, as though they were felt, and that, to gain public applause and (as in the case of professionals) monetary gain, is liable to strike at the very foundations of moral character.

The same evil effects may well be considered in a wider context. It is often claimed that the stage supplies a reflex of human life, and with this goes the plea that an audience is often treated to an analysis of human affairs, and to a dissection of the human heart, that cannot be easily learned elsewhere. But human life is a sad medley of good and evil; hence the stage presents both. It follows therefore that an actor must sometimes represent an evil person who thinks evil thoughts and perpetuates wicked deeds. The more an actor can de-personalize himself and throw himself into the part which he plays, the better actor he will be. Presumably this is a large part of the secret of dramatic success. An actor ceases for the moment to be himself, and becomes the king, the lover, the thief, the betrayer, the adulterer, or suchlike for which he is cast. If he is cast for an evil part he must simulate all that he can imagine belongs to such a character. In the process he is bound to suffer serious moral damage. Night after night he puts off his own character, even as he puts off his own dress, and with the costume appropriate to his part he puts on the character of another. The audience pays to see him do this. The psychological consequences cannot be good. Whatever the effect upon the audience, the cost to the actor is heavy indeed. His "calling" requires him to live in a world of unreality, to project himself into a make-belief manner of life which blunts the sentiment and may even render it nugatory, and which, in sum, is inimical to honest straight-forward thinking and living.

The matter is well stated by a writer of the mid-19th Century: "Never, even by accident, has the

theatre chanced to become the school of morals. In no circumstances have good men felt that it could safely be relied upon. This uniform result must have a cause; and is this not to be found in the very principle itself that underlies theatrical representation? It is pageant, show, illusion. It deals in unreal scenes. The success of its artists is in simulating; in appearing what they are not. The aim of the player is to personate another. Like the false glare of the scenery around him, he must be false himself to real character and feelings. His very name indeed (from the Greek 'hupocrites' — 'one under a mask') has passed over into the synonym of sham. We owe our term of hypocrite to this name. And can this habitual simulation be other than unfavourable in its influence? Must not its inevitable tendency be to the deterioration of character? Can that profession whose life-business it is to deal with the unreal, to put off one's own identity, to assume another's position, and personate another's character, be other than averse to that genuine sincerity and earnestness of purpose which are the granite base of all true performance or endeavour? . . .

Additional writers are then quoted. We shall include only a statement or two from each.

William Law . . . asserts that "theatre going is a sin against the whole nature and spirit of our religion. It is a contradiction to all Christian holiness and to all the methods of arriving at it. If you live in the use of this diversion you have no grounds to hope that you have the spirit and heart of a Christian. . . ."

John Angell . . . : "I do not for a moment hesitate to pronounce the theatre to be one of the broadest avenues which lead to destruction; fascinating no doubt it is, but on that account the more delusive and the more dangerous . . . Vice in every form lives and moves and has its being there. . . ."

J. R. Green, the famed historian: . . . "The hatred of the Puritans to the stage was not a mere longing to avenge the taunts and insults which the stage had levelled at Puritanism; it was in the main the honest hatred of God-fearing men against the foulest depravity presented in a poetic and attractive form."

The author then addresses himself to a common argument in support of drama.

The fact is that theatrical performances, in order to be paying propositions, must pander to the baser passions in unregenerate men and women. They must

be a reflex of the world, the world that lies in the Wicked One. This, say some, is their merit; they are a mirror of life, and as life includes the foul and the sordid so too must the play. We grant that the playwright sets out to mirror life. So too does Holy Scripture. No book so revealing as to human nature! No book which better portrays human sin! But if the theatre and the Book do one and the same thing, wherein lies the vast difference between them? And why may not one be the handmaid of the other? For a variety of reasons; but principally for this — that, whereas the Book shows sin in its true colours, sin in its devilish origin, sin in its course, sin in its wages, sin in its awful and eternal consequences; on the other hand the theatre displays sin that men may be amused, entertained, and alas, all too often seduced. The Book smites the conscience and leads a man to say, "Woe is me, for I am undone, for I am a man of unclean lips and I dwell in the midst of a people of unclean lips, for mine eyes have seen the King, the Lord of hosts"; it causes him to cry, "God be merciful to me a sinner." But the theatre tends in another direction altogether. As it sets out to entertain, so also it blurs a man's sight of that which is truly spiritual and divinely holy; as it aims to amuse, it dulls a man's ability to examine himself in the pure light of revealed truth. . . .

The author concludes his article with some quotations from C. H. Spurgeon, with a condemnation of Passion Plays and with the following words:

In sum, then; with the Bible as our guide and with wise voices from the past concurring in our findings, we cannot but conclude that the believer is called to renounce the theatre as one of the vanities of this world, as an institution dangerous to player and spectator alike, and as a form of entertainment commonly given over to that which is inimical to true godliness.

If the author's arguments are valid, and we believe that they are, then what he has said holds true for every form of dramatic production whether it is offered live on the stage, whether it is shown on the screen of the theater, or whether it is piped into the home via television. It holds true for all forms of drama whether movie productions or so-called "situation comedies." And if performing in them is sin before God, watching such performances is equally sin. And if they are sin, they can only bear the wages of sin in the hearts and lives of those who participate.

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In His Fear

The Pilgrim and Marriage

Rev. D. H. Kuiper

It is not good for the pilgrim to be alone. This paraphrase of the Word of God as found in Gen. 2:18 is permissible because it was already in the Divine mind, before God created male and female, that man should reveal himself as a pilgrim and a stranger on the earth. Even though it is possible for a man or a woman to be a good pilgrim and faithful servant in the single state, this is certainly the exception. God is able to provide special grace to those few whom He wills to live without marrying that they may serve Him and His kingdom in some unique way. But for most men and women, marriage is good, right, and even necessary. It would not be good if they did not marry. We take a look at this institution of God, not only to discover what marriage is in itself, and not only to discover some of the implications of marriage for the Christian, but especially to find an answer to the question: what is the significance of marriage for the *pilgrim*? If pilgrimage is something that permeates all our life and outlook, and if marriage has an influence in all our living, then at what points exactly do pilgrimage and marriage touch? Does marriage help the child of God in his calling, or can it be a hindrance? We cannot even mention here all the rich passages of Scripture which speak of marriage, much less develop their deep meanings and imports. We shall confine ourselves to those which will allow us to form a clear picture of the pilgrim's calling.

Marriage Held in Contempt

Marriage has fallen on hard times. In this land, as in many others, the wedded state can hardly be recognized in terms of its original institution. There are trial marriages, common-law marriages, young people simply living together in the carnal assurance that society lacks the integrity to ostracize, much less punish them. Weddings are performed, if at all, in swimming pools, football stadiums, and even in the name of the Devil. And what shall we say of divorce, than which no single practice has caused more grief, mental breakdowns, suicides, and rebel children? In many counties, divorces far outnumber marriages. State legislatures are outdoing each other in liberalizing their divorce codes. The process must be speedy. Marital problems used to involve thorough investigation by the courts, counseling and warning, an attempt to patch things up and try again. Time was that you at least had to go to court and say something uncomplimentary about your mate: he caused you mental distress, he was cruel, you were incompatible or

had irreconcilable differences. No more. Today it is possible in some areas for husband and wife to fill out a form together, mail it to city hall, and by return mail receive their divorce decree. It is clear the only waiting involved here will be due to the volume of mail.

These goings-on in the world of sin and darkness have some influence on the communion of pilgrims called Church. Thankfully the Church does not immediately follow in the path of these immoral practices, but she is *influenced*. Let us recognize that by way of the devilish propaganda that infiltrates the Christian home (worldly literature and the television screen) our view of marriage stands in danger of being altered. It belongs to the ministry of the church and the instruction of the home to instruct and warn, therefore. The only weapon which can successfully be used on this *home-front* is the Word of the God Who conceived of marriage and the home.

The Idea of Marriage

Despite the cavalier fashion in which man treats marriage, it is not the creation of man, but an institution of the Lord God. When the Lord observed Adam as for a short time he stood alone, He noticed what Adam himself experienced, that "it was not good that man should be alone." God saw and Adam felt a lack. There was something missing with Adam so that he could not live a full life nor reach all his potential as a prophet, priest and king. Living in the Garden alone, he could never fulfill his calling before God and experience unmixed happiness and joy. Before such would be the case, and before God could pronounce "very good" upon all that He had made, He must create them male and female. Thus, marriage is also *good*. God brought to Adam a woman in marriage, and for all time "he who finds a wife finds a good thing, and obtains favor from the Lord."

In the second place, marriage was instituted as a bond of the most intimate possible nature. The Genesis narrative stresses this when it reveals "(God) took one of Adam's ribs, and closed up the flesh instead thereof; and the rib which the Lord God had taken from man, made He a woman, and brought her unto the man. And Adam said, This is now bone of my bones, and flesh of my flesh." The closeness of the marriage bond is taught also when the Lord expresses that it shall surpass the relation of parent and child, for a man shall leave his father and mother in favor of the wife he finds. What can be stronger and closer than the blood-tie between parent and child in which the

former bring forth the latter out of their loins? Marriage is! It is closer, stronger, more intimate. It is ever true that if a marriage is to succeed, a young husband and wife will have to consciously break former parent-ties. Perhaps the intimacy is shown most clearly by the amazing words: "And they shall be *one flesh*" (Gen. 2:24) These words, repeated by Jesus and emphasized by the apostle Paul, bring us closer to the heart of marriage than any other. Man and woman do not just come next to each other, they do not simply cleave to each other, but they become *one*, so that they are not twain, but one flesh! More is involved in that expression than the beautiful union of the sexual relationship. Being one flesh expresses the coming together of the entire nature of a man and a woman. There is a oneness of their body and soul, a unity of their thoughts and desires. A sharing of hopes and experiences and disappointments. Because they share one earthly life together, perhaps the observation of countless children that long-married couples resemble each other is not to be taken lightly; a child can often "catch" things we miss entirely. Alone, a husband and a wife are misshapen parts of a puzzle, but together they form a whole. Each supplies what the other lacks, they give and take, and take and give, without selfishness.

There is little more that we can say concerning this two becoming one. From experience we can relate specific instances in which the wife has been a tremendous factor in sustaining her husband in his work, or we can recall the sorrow of soul that comes to the married when death is about to snatch one from the other. But after we have all had our say, we will not have yet fully comprehended marriage as far as its basic intimacy is concerned. The more we understand of it the richer shall our lives together be, yet there will always be something here that mysteriously eludes us.

Marriage is a Mystery

Just at the point when Paul in Ephesians 5 writes that "they two shall be one flesh," he is inspired to say as well, "This is a great mystery." In Scripture a mystery is not something contradictory, nor is it something which cannot be known at all, but a mystery is a phenomenon that cannot be understood without Divine revelation. Also, because we read such phrases as mystery of God's will, mysteries of the kingdom of heaven, mystery of godliness, we can also say that a mystery always stands related to our salvation. Marriage is a matter of revelation if it is to be believed and appreciated (confer Matt. 19:11), and it is related to salvation! "This is a great mystery: but I speak concerning Christ and the church." (Eph. 5:32)

If, therefore, we would understand a little more of marriage, and of the pilgrim's calling in the wedded state, we must understand the relation between Jesus Christ and those whom He saves. There is between

Jesus and His Church the closest relation possible. The Scriptures state this in a variety of ways. Christ is the Head and His Church is the Body. We are members of His body, of His flesh and of His bones. Christ is in us, and we in Him. "I live," says Paul to the Galatians, "yet not I, but Christ liveth in me. And the life which I now live in the flesh I live by the faith of the Son of God, Who loved me, and gave Himself for me." And it is certainly true that at the table of communion, we eat and drink the body and blood of Christ unto our souls, nourishment, until we reach the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ. Clearly, the relation between Christ and the Church is THE marriage. Christ is the Bridgroom and the Church is His Bride, given to Him of the Father before the world was. At the cross the Bridegroom made the Bride worthy of Himself, by gaining for her white wedding garments of righteousness and holiness. The return of Christ upon the clouds is the coming of the Bridegroom for His dearly beloved! The bride must be waiting for Him, and must keep herself unspotted and faithful. Finally, Heaven is pictured to us as the consummation of the marriage! Christ and His Church shall live together forever in one house, the house of many mansions.

The Pilgrim's Calling

The duty of Christian husbands and wives is to regulate their marriages according to the standard we are given in the Christ-Church relation. The husband must love his wife even as Christ loved the Church! This involves not the taking of what one wants by brute strength, but giving of one's self, for did not Christ give Himself for the Church? This is a giving of time, and affection, of your body and strength, of your knowledge and understanding. Be tender towards your wife, knowing she is the weaker vessel. Love and esteem her exactly because she is that. If you love your wife you will show yourself to be the head of the wife, the children, and the home. Finally, loving the wife involves prayer: for the wife, for the marriage relation, for each other after you have confessed your sins mutually.

The wife is to submit herself to the husband, for the husband is the head of the wife, even as Christ is the Head of the Church. Wives, you are not equal to your husbands. You have been made out of him, after him, and for him. Your life does not have a purpose which can be identified apart from the life and purpose of your husband. You do not have private objectives and aims. You are the supplementing, supplying part of the marriage that enables the husband to be strong and cheerful in his work. Be of a meek and quiet spirit, honor the husband, submerge yourself in the helping of your husband unto his calling. He has authority over you!

If the husband loves the wife and the wife is in subjection to the husband, the goal of marriage on

earth is reached. Then in the home and in marriage there is a reflection of salvation as it is in Jesus Christ. The love of Christ for His people that lead Him to give Himself to the death of the cross will be revealed in every Christian home. And the submission of the Church to Christ *in all things* will also there be

demonstrated. Our marriages will show that, if they are truly Christian. When they do, the pilgrim husband and wife not only exalt their Father in Heaven, but they also have a living testimony in their lives of their sure salvation!

(To be continued)

The Day of Shadows

The Dead Speak

Rev. John A. Heys

Yes, the dead do speak.

The author of the epistle to the Hebrews says in Hebrews 11:4 concerning Abel, "By faith Abel offered unto God a more excellent sacrifice than Cain, by which he obtained witness that he was righteous, God testifying of his gifts, and by it he being dead yet speaketh." Although he took his last breath of life about six thousand years ago, Abel speaks to us today on the pages of Holy Writ.

What we refer to at the moment, however, is the speech of those who are spiritually dead. These, though they may still be alive physically, and are, therefore, able to speak words which we can hear and understand, cannot perform anything that is spiritually good, nor in their speech manifest any spiritual virtue. The carnal mind, Paul declares in Romans 8:7, 8, is enmity against God, is not subject to the law of God, neither indeed can be: so that they that are in the flesh cannot please God no matter what they say or do. All, as David confesses in Psalm 51:5 are conceived and born in sin, because all are the offspring of a set of original parents who died spiritually the very day that they ate of the forbidden fruit.

Now we do not know the exact moment when Adam and Eve were born again and were thereby restored to spiritual life. Was it at once? And was their consciousness that they were naked and guilty before God due to this? Was it just before God came to them in the cool of the day with the question, "Where art thou?" Or did this have to wait until symbolically God clothed Adam and Eve with the righteousness of Christ, when He slew an animal and used the skin to cover their nakedness? Did the rebirth, and the work of sanctification have to wait until the legal basis was symbolically laid in the death of that animal?

We do know that the day that they ate of the forbidden fruit they ate death, and died spiritually, not simply sometime during that day but that very moment of their sin. And their speech to God reveals this to be the case. If already the seed of that new life had been implanted in them, they were not acting

according to it when they answered God's questions. Their answers were speech that proceeded from that carnal mind that is enmity against God. This does not mean to say that they could not already have been born again. But it does mean to say that they revealed their spiritually dead nature in their speech. Peter was a born again child of God who by that new life confessed that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of the living God. Yet, shortly thereafter Peter showed his carnal nature which was spiritually dead when, not once, nor twice, but three times he denied Christ, and finally did so with a curse! Now the life of regeneration never produces such actions as Peter's, nor as Adam's and Eve's answers to God. That life prostrates one on the ground in humble confession of sin. There is no trace, no evidence of this at all in Adam's and Eve's answers, but instead proud defence of the sin committed, and that before the very face of the Holy One!

Consider the awful boldness of the fallen human nature! The Holy God's clear and pointed question, "Hast thou eaten of the tree, whereof I commanded thee that thou shouldest not eat?", called for a simple and humble answer, "Yes, I did." Or, indeed, penitent Peter's "Lord Thou knowest all things" would suffice. But what have we here? Certainly there is not a trace of confession of sin, not a suggestion of sorrow, but only the explanation, "The woman whom Thou gavest me to be with me, she gave me of the tree, and I did eat." Unexpressed, yet definitely there, is also the accusation, "If you had not given me this woman, I would not have done this." Notice that it is not simply a statement that the woman gave him that fruit, and that then he ate. Adam is bold to state that the woman *that God gave him* to be with him did this. The accused sinner dares to charge the holy Accuser with evil! The prediction of God to Adam that they would die the day they ate is clearly proven to be truth. For Eve's answer is an equally proud one devoid of all evidence of sorrow for sin. She, too, denies fault and tries to place the blame on the serpent.

Yes, both admit that they ate, but neither one

confesses sorrow for sin. Fear of the punishment of their sin they clearly reveal. A broken and a contrite heart they do not show. Adam's "... and I did eat" is no more a confession of sin than Judas' "I have betrayed innocent blood." Evidence of spiritual life there is not in the speech of either Adam or of Eve.

The serpent is not questioned by God, and he speaks no accusation against either God or the devil who used him. The serpent had not died spiritually for the simple reason that the serpent never had any spiritual life. Physical life it had, and this physical life serpents are losing every day. But as irrational creatures, even in their glorious form of being the most subtle beasts of the field, they did not have and cannot have spiritual life, or therefore die spiritually.

The devil, however, had spiritual life as a former righteous and glorious angel before God's face in heaven. And he died spiritually before he came to tempt man away from his righteousness, and before he murdered man spiritually. (Jesus says of the devil in John 8:44 that he was a murderer from the beginning and abode not in the truth.) His speech clearly indicated his spiritual death when he approached Eve through the serpent. The words he spoke through the serpent were words of spiritual death. He slandered the living God. He called Him a liar. He presented Him as a cruel tyrant who was only trying to defend himself from what man might and could have. And Satan was doing this in an act of hatred in the form of lying about the fruit of that tree of knowledge of good and evil. When we speak then of the dead speaking, as our theme expresses it, let us by all means not overlook or forget that here from Satan's mouth also we have speech of the dead!

Let it also be noted that there is no question of God to the devil as to whether he had deceived Eve. There is no approach of grace to bring him to repentance, to teach him his misery and to promise him a Saviour Who will restore to spiritual life. There is no salvation for any fallen angel. Christ took not upon Himself "the nature of angels, but He took on Him the seed of Abraham," according to Hebrews 2:16. This is also implied in Romans 5:18 and I Corinthians 15:22. Because the whole human race was created in Adam, all could fall in Him, and all could be made alive in Christ, that is, all who are in Him by sovereign election could be made alive. Here in Romans 5:18 the translation is literal, and we do find the word men. By the offence of Adam, judgment to condemnation came upon all men because Adam was the head of the whole human race. By the righteousness of One, namely Christ, justification of life came upon all men, and not upon a single angel, for Christ took upon Himself a human nature as the last Adam, He is Head only of the elect. Look at the text in I Corinthians 15:22 again, "... in Christ shall all be made alive." Now all men shall not be made alive with everlasting

life. Many are already in hell. The idea is that all whom Adam represented died in him; and all whom Christ represents are made alive in Him. Adam's sin brought judgment to condemnation upon all whom he represented, the whole human race. Christ's righteousness realized righteousness unto life for all whom He represented, the elect Church. And Satan and the fallen angels as well as many men, are out of that sphere.

Once again, Christ would have to die thousands of times to save the angels. They did not fall by the sin of one, but each fell individually, not being created in Satan but being created individually. And salvation for each angel, that is fallen angel, would have to be done for each angel on an individual basis. I John 2:2 does not mean that Christ is the propitiation for the world of angels, but of the world of men.

But let the living listen to what the dead speak, and then let them learn the lesson of God's grace. The world cannot hear this lesson or this speech of the dead. Even as a physically dead man cannot hear the speech of the physically living, the spiritually dead world cannot hear the speech of God, or the lesson in the speech of the spiritually dead Adam, Eve and Satan. Yea, the flesh of the believer cannot hear this. And so often in the church this speech is not heard. So often we stop our ears and refuse to listen. Those who try to do away with this speech of the spiritually dead by labelling the first eleven chapters of Genesis as fiction, we will leave to God as far as the judgment as to whether or not they have been born again to spiritual life is concerned. But that action of theirs is no more the work of that new life in Christ than was Adam's and Eve's speech in paradise when they were approached by the God against Whom they had sinned. We will do the same with those who deny that man actually died spiritually that day, and with their Pelagianism insist that man still has a free will, is desperately sick, weak, and to a very great degree spiritually paralyzed, but retains the ability to choose salvation when it is properly presented to him. They, likewise, if indeed born again, are not speaking for the principle of that new life, for that life never contradicts God, Who in Ephesians 2:1 declares that we are *dead* in trespasses and sins, and in Psalm 51:5 that we are conceived and born in sin.

But let us be sure that we hear the message that God gives us here when He records this speech of the spiritually dead. It is this: Salvation by grace! The truth comes through loud and clear: Adam and Eve deserved to be struck down and cast at once into hell for their brass, their proud self-justification, their refusal to confess their sin. Their act of eating of the forbidden fruit was enough to call for their physical death the day they ate, and for an entrance into the eternal death of the lake of fire *at once!* But this speech before the holy God of heaven and earth

compounds their evil and guilt. Only grace explains that God will stay there before them, listen to such proud speech of spiritually dead creatures, and then give such a wonderful promise of better things than those from which in a moment they would be driven. Only because He saw them in Christ, as the Lamb slain from before the foundation of the world, did He approach them with His questions and take this dirt from them and provide a way of salvation.

And note Genesis 3 carefully from beginning to end. You read not a word of an offer of salvation to Adam and Eve, as though they retained some spiritual power of life to be able to accept. There is no "gospel invitation." All the salvation action recorded is of God.

He brings to the conviction of sin. He speaks of the salvation He will work. He slays an animal and clothes Adam and Eve. He, the living God, gives life to these who manifest spiritual death by their speech. Truly with Jonah we must say, and we want to say, "Salvation is of the Lord." And we want to sing, "Saved by Grace." When by that grace we are born again to spiritual life we can and will do that. The dead speak nonsense and words that deny God His glory. The spiritually alive speak words of wisdom and praise of God. Do you listen to the words which your soul and mouth speak? Do you confess your sins and praise God for His forgiving grace?

Contending for the Faith

The Doctrine of Atonement

Rev. H. Veldman

Continuing our brief discussion of the Canons in connection with the Second Head which treats the atonement of our Lord Jesus Christ, we now call attention to Article VI of the Second Head of these Canons:

And, whereas many who are called by the gospel, do not repent, nor believe in Christ, but perish in unbelief; this is not owing to any defect or insufficiency in the sacrifice offered by Christ upon the cross, but is wholly to be imputed to themselves.

Although it is true that these heads of doctrine in the Canons of Dordt are followed by a section in which the Synod rejects the errors of the Remonstrants, and that in these heads of doctrine the fathers first set forth the truth positively, yet also in these positive articles our fathers set themselves against the errors of the Arminians. This is also true of Article VI. The Arminians, we understand, accused the Reformed view of being unable to preach the gospel to all the hearers of it. In a way, the Remonstrants are correct. Of course, according to the Remonstrants the preaching of the gospel is an offer of salvation to all the hearers of it. And, if it be true that the preaching of the gospel be such an offer, then it must follow that, believing in the Reformed view of salvation, in sovereign predestination and particular atonement, we cannot preach such a gospel to all the hearers of it.

Be this as it may, is it true, as suggested in this sixth article, that the failure of many sinners to be saved is due to any defect or insufficiency in the sacrifice offered by Christ upon the cross? This, according to the Remonstrants, is a fault to be laid at the door of the Reformed view of salvation. According to the Arminian, the Reformed preacher of the gospel cannot

admonish all his hearers to repent and believe in the Lord Jesus Christ. And this he cannot do because he believes in an unconditional election and particular atonement of Christ upon the cross of Calvary. How can a preacher command and urge all sinners to repent and believe when God has sovereignly predestinated only some unto salvation from before the foundations of the world and when Christ has died only for some and not for all? Imagine a sinner, if you please, who, upon hearing the gospel, should feel sorry for sins, desire salvation, and knock at God's door pleading for mercy. Would not the Lord be compelled to say unto him: "I know that you are sorry for your sins and desire pardon and salvation, but I cannot give it to you because I have not loved you and Christ has died for you, and therefore there is no salvation for you?" This is the charge which the Remonstrant hurls at the Reformed preacher of the gospel. This Reformed view must ascribe the perishing of the sinner to the insufficiency of the cross of Jesus Christ.

This charge the fathers deny in this sixth article we are now discussing. They declare that the sinner's perishing is to be imputed wholly to himself. Is this charge of the Remonstrant true? Is this the experience of the sinner when he does not repent and believe and perishes? Indeed, no sinner has ever knocked at God's door only to be turned away empty-handed. "Whosoever cometh unto Me I will in no wise cast out," is the clear teaching of Holy Writ and also the experience of every repentant sinner. The blood of Christ is not insufficient. In itself, as far as its value is concerned, it is surely sufficient to blot out all the sins of all mankind. Every sin confessed is certainly blotted out by that blood. Secondly, that the sinner perishes is

to be ascribed to his unbelief. Viewed subjectively, from the viewpoint of the sinner, he despises the Christ and tramples His salvation under foot. Remember, the Christ, although not offered to everyone who hears the preaching of the gospel, is nevertheless set forth before him in that preaching of the gospel. And the perishing sinner responds to that preaching, reveals the attitude of his heart and mind to that Christ. He refuses to repent, because he loves the darkness rather than the light. He despises the salvation set before him, because he loves evil and corruption. He rejects the salvation of God's fellowship and covenant, because he loves this world and the things that are below. This is the history of the wicked sinner throughout the ages, also of wicked and carnal Israel in the Old Dispensation. They could not enter into the promised land of Canaan because of their unbelief, Heb. 3:19. Their failure to enter into the promised land was not because of the terrible wilderness — God did deliver His people and carried them upon eagles' wings. That they did not enter in was not because of the mighty heathen nations — God destroyed those nations. That they did not inherit the promise was not because they were few and weak — one of them could have set a thousand to flight. No, but viewed subjectively, from the viewpoint of the sinner, he does not repent and believe in the Christ because of his unbelief. And unbelief is never merely a matter of the mind, but also of the heart. The sinner hates God and His Christ, and it is this which prompts him in his rejection of the gospel. And it is this truth which the fathers maintain here in this sixth article. We cannot and may not preach a universal love of God; there is no universal love of God. We cannot and may not preach a universal atonement of Christ upon the cross of Calvary; Christ did not die for all men, but only for the sheep given Him of the Father from before the foundations of the world. We do and must command all men to repent and believe. And the sinner refuses to repent because of his unbelief. It is this truth which is clearly set forth in our Canons, in this sixth article of Head II.

ARTICLE VII.

The seventh article in this Second Head reads as follows:

But as many as truly believe, and are delivered and saved from sin and destruction through the death of Christ, are indebted for this benefit solely to the grace of God, given them in Christ from everlasting, and not to any merit of their own.

In this seventh article the fathers declare that they who believe are saved from destruction through the death of Christ. It is well to call attention to the fact that the fathers declare that they who are saved are those who believe. The Arminians, because of their wrong emphasis upon the importance of faith (according to them, a sinner is not delivered from sin and death

because of the death of Christ, inasmuch as Christ died for all men and therefore also for those who perish, but because of his faith) accused the Reformed preacher of the gospel of really having no place in his preaching for the activity of faith. According to them, the saved sinner is saved because God has elected him and because Christ has died for him, and therefore his calling to believe is relatively unimportant and without significance. The fathers, however, also in this seventh article, emphasize the importance of the activity of faith. They know very well that only they who believe in the Christ as set forth in the preaching of the gospel are saved. And they do not hesitate to state this repeatedly, also in this seventh article of Head II.

Now the fathers, in this article, speak of those who *truly* believe. Do the fathers, using here the word "truly" refer to the superficial view which the Remonstrants entertain of the activity of faith? According to the Arminians, faith is a condition of salvation. According to them, faith is a condition for God's work of salvation. After all, Christ died for every man, head for head. And the preaching of the gospel is an offer of salvation. God would have all men be saved. This means that the salvation of the sinner is dependent upon his believing, that the Lord must wait until the sinner believes, and that faith is a condition which man must fulfill prior to God's work of salvation in him. This is the Remonstrants' conception of faith. But the fathers must, of course, have nothing of this. And, therefore, they use the word, "truly," emphasizing the true nature and character of faith.

The believers now are indebted for their faith, through which they are saved and delivered from sin and destruction, solely to the grace of God, given them in Christ from everlasting, and not to any merit of their own. That they believe does not in any sense of the word lie in themselves. It is not due to any merit of their own. If left to themselves they, too, would reject the gospel and perish. Faith is not a condition of salvation, something we must fulfill before we can receive the benefits of Christ, but it is itself one of those gifts of Christ, bestowed upon God's people in sovereign grace and mercy. The death of Christ upon the cross is not dependent for its efficacy upon the faith of a sinner, but it merited also the gift of faith. Really, we must understand, the cross does not save us because we believe, but we believed because the cross has redeemed and saved us. Faith is a fruit of the cross. And the fathers emphasize this when they speak in this article of faith as a benefit.

That we believe is to be ascribed only to the grace of God. This article emphasizes this truth. We may notice that the fathers here speak of the grace of God. This grace is the free gift of God. And we do well to note that the benefit of faith is set forth in this article as rooted in this grace, this free gift of God. This grace is the favour but also the power of the Lord whereby He

bestows upon His own the benefit of faith; it is surely free. In the Scriptures it stands opposed to works, as we read it in Rom. 11:6: "And if by grace, then is it no more of works: otherwise grace is no more grace. But if it be of works, then is it no more grace: otherwise work is no more work." So there is no merit in our salvation whatsoever.

And how the fathers emphasize that this benefit of faith is a free gift of God's sovereign grace. We are indebted *solely* for this faith to the grace of God. In no sense of the word can a sinner ever boast of the fact that he believed. Besides, God gave us this grace in Christ. And notice, please, how the fathers connect our faith and salvation with our Lord Jesus Christ. It is all

in Him and we receive it from Him as a free, sovereign gift. And, finally, the fathers also speak in this article of God's eternal decree. We read that this benefit has been given us in Christ from everlasting, and this refers to Divine election. So, before we were born, from before the foundations of the world, God gave us this gift of faith in Christ. We surely had nothing to do with it! The grace of God, therefore, was ever upon us, even eternally, and there is nothing we could possibly do or need do to merit it. Salvation is of grace alone, without any merit on our part. This is the language of the fathers; this is the language of Holy Writ; and this is also the experience of every child of God as he is called out of darkness into God's wonderful light.

Friendship With God

God's Triune Life--The Source of All Virtue

Rev. B. Woudenberg

The attributes of God are often distinguished as "communicable" and "incommunicable."

The incommunicable attributes are those which cannot be communicated to or have existence in the creature. They belong to God alone and He cannot share them with another. These are such things as His sovereignty, His infinity and eternity, His immutability, independency, and such as that. They are important for they are the unique attributes of divinity. Without them God would not be God. Through them God is exalted in transcendent greatness far above every other being, so that we can only stand before Him in awe and wonderment to worship, and the words of the psalmist become our words, Psalm 113:2-4, "Blessed be the name of the LORD from this time forth and for ever more. From the rising of the sun unto the going down of the same the LORD's name is to be praised. The LORD is high above all nations, and his glory above the heavens."

Actually when we try to understand and give content to these concepts in our minds we are brought inevitably to the limits of our human comprehension. In fact, when it comes to the incommunicable attributes of God we find it almost impossible to think of them in anything but negative terms. So God is "infinite," which is to say, He is "not finite," He is not limited as to space in the way we are. God is "immutable"; He is 'not changing' the way we are. God is "independent," "not dependent" as we are upon another. And so it goes on. Always in the end we stand before the rhetorical question of Isaiah 40:18, "To whom then will ye liken God? or what likeness will ye compare unto him?" And the answer which

always echoes back is that of Isaiah 55:8, 9, "For my thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways my ways, saith the LORD, for as the heavens are higher than the earth, so are my ways higher than your ways, and my thoughts than your thoughts."

And yet, if this were all we knew of God, something would be wrong, something would be missing. God would be so distant from us, so foreign to us that we could only stand in a quivering fear before Him. We might stand in awe before His greatness, but we would not be drawn to Him. We might, perhaps, try to satisfy His demands so as to escape His wrath, or even to gain what reward He might offer; but to draw near to Him and to walk with Him, we would not so much as desire. We would be like the children of Israel at Sinai who, after standing before the thunderings of the law, drew back from the mountain and cried to Moses, Exodus 20:19, "Speak thou with us, and we will hear: but let not God speak with us, lest we die."

But this is not all. There is more. God has also His "communicable" attributes, that is, those which God shares with us so that we may know Him in terms which our experience can understand. God made us with the intention that this should be so, as we are told in Genesis 1:26, "And God said, Let us make man in our image, after our likeness." Nor did God ever leave this purpose, for we hear Jesus praying in that great prayer of His last night on earth, John 17:21, "That they all may be one; as thou, Father, art in me, and I in thee, that they also may be one in us." God has within His Triune Being a life of personal fellowship and virtue which He has willed to share with His creatures. Here is where we find the "communicable"

attributes of God.

Comprehended here are all of the moral virtues ascribed by Scripture to God; and they are many — mercy, knowledge, justice, love, holiness, wisdom, goodness, etc. And these are all interrelated, they are one in Him; e.g., His knowledge is merciful and His mercy is with knowledge; His wisdom is just, and His justice is wise; and so we could go on interrelating all of the virtues together. But there are three of them that are most basic to all — holiness, love, and truth.

God is a holy God. Repeatedly Israel was assured of this when being given the commands of the law, Leviticus 19:2, "I the LORD your God am holy." Isaiah in his prophecies was very conscious of this, for before he was ever called, God had taken him up in vision to hear the seraphims exclaim before the presence of the divine greatness, Isaiah 6:3, "Holy, holy, holy, is the LORD of hosts: the whole earth is full of his glory." And then when God spoke through him it was with constant assurances, such as in Isaiah 43:3, "For I am the LORD thy God, the Holy One of Israel," and "For thus saith the high and lofty One that inhabiteth eternity, whose name is Holy; I dwell in the high and holy place."

Holiness is on the one hand separation — separation from all that is corrupted and sinful. Accordingly the instructions of God to Israel were, Leviticus 19:7, 26, "Sanctify yourselves therefore, and be ye holy" for I am the LORD your God. . . . And ye shall be holy unto me: for I the LORD am holy, and have severed you from other people, that ye should be mine."

But we should not forget that latter part of Leviticus 19:26 either, ". . . that ye should be mine." That is the positive side of holiness — complete dedication to that which is good.

Certainly both of these elements describe the fellowship of the Triune life preeminently. Between Father, Son, and Holy Spirit there is freedom from every evil by which their unity might in any way be corrupted. Rather there is a perfect dedication of life. We receive a little idea of the beauty of this interrelationship within God in the life of Jesus. There we have the Son always professing, John 6:38, "For I came down from heaven, not to do mine own will, but the will of him that sent me." In turn we hear the Father once and again exclaiming, Matthew 3:17; 17:5, "This is my beloved Son in whom I am well pleased; hear ye him." In turn, this is what we are told of the Holy Spirit, John 15:26, "But when the Comforter is come, whom I will send unto you from the Father, even the Spirit of truth, which proceedeth from the Father, he shall testify of me." It is in this perfect interdedication to each other and their common life together that all holiness begins.

Love must relate immediately to the essential, moral nature of God, for John tells us twice, in I John 4:8 and in 4:16, "God is love."

But what is love? So rich and broad is the Biblical concept of love, so far beyond what the world wishes to make of it, that it is difficult to contain it all within a comprehensive definition. Nevertheless, there are a few things which do stand on the fore.

Closely related to the essence of love is giving. This comes out when John, between those two emphatic assurances that "God is love, says further of it, I John 4:10, "Herein is love, not that we love God, but that he loved us, and sent his Son to be the propitiation for our sins." And John is simply reaffirming what Jesus said himself in John 3:16, "For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life." Thus when Paul enters into his rich and wonderful development of love, he assures us in I Corinthians 13:5 that love "seeketh not her own." Love is that which gives of itself to another.

But love is also more. Love is a state of exultant pleasantness and joy. This is the cry of the Song of Solomon, 7:6, "How fair and how pleasant art thou, O love, for delights!" In turn Moses, speaking of God's love for Israel, said, Deuteronomy 10:15, "For the LORD had a delight in thy fathers to love them, and he choose their seed after them, even you above all people, as it is in this day." This joy is related, of course, to the giving. This is the paradox of Christianity: joy comes not from seeking one's self and its pleasure, but from the giving of one's self to another. Jesus put it this way, Matthew 16:25, "For whosoever will save his life shall lose it: and whosoever will lose his life for my sake shall find it."

The result is that love forms a bond: as Colossians 3:14 calls it, "The bond of perfectness." Certainly it is that preeminently in God. In God there are Three who never in any sense withdraw into themselves from the others; Their life is one and has existence only as that which is shared in perfect giving with each other. God is love! And thus their life is one of perfect and eternal joy, as Christ prayed in deep strains of heartfelt anticipation, John 17:5, "And now, O Father, glorify thou me with thine own self, with the glory which I had with thee before the world was."

And then there is truth.

One can hardly think about the concept truth without hearing the cynical question of Pilate echoing through the ages, John 18:38, "What is truth?" He had arrived at that degree of educated sophistication where he knew how equivocal the claims of truth could be. Even in the realm of physical observation, what is real to one is called sheer illusion by another; and when it comes to the mental and spiritual — well, what is the use? And it is hopeless as long as man remains the standard by which truth is to be determined. But it is different with God.

Clearly truth, too, relates very directly to the essence of God. Often God is called in Scripture, "The

God of truth," (Isaiah 65:15, etc.). In turn Jesus said of himself, John 14:6, "I am the way, *the truth*, and the life." And when speaking of the Spirit He said, "When he, the Spirit of truth, is come, he will guide you into all truth."

It means that truth has its only beginning with God, and in Him, when Father, Son and Holy Spirit think and will together that which is shared within the Triune consciousness and when what is willed by them comes into reality. Isaiah 55:11 puts it this way, "So shall my word be that goeth out of my mouth: it shall not return unto me void, but it shall accomplish that which I please, and it shall prosper in the thing whereto I sent it." Numbers 23:19 puts it even more explicitly, "God is not a man, that he should lie; neither the son of man, that he should repent: hath he said, and shall he not do it? or hath he spoken, and shall he not make it good?" It is from this Triune mind of God that all reality and truth comes forth.

To be sure, men may, and many do, put God aside

in the determination to find the truth behind reality by themselves without help. In fact, the search may for a time seem quite exciting and even near to success; but in the end it always fails and all that remains is that cynical, despairing question of Pilate, "What is truth?" It is because they have refused, just as Pilate did, that which Jesus had just said, "John 18:37, "To this end was I born, and for this cause came I into the world, that I should bear witness unto the truth. Every one that is of the truth heareth my voice." Or earlier in John 8:31, 32, "If ye continue in my word, then are ye my disciples indeed; and ye shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free."

And so one could go on through all virtues. Each in its own way would relate to one of these three and so to God from whom all that is virtue begins. Of all that is good, God is the only source, as James 1:17 says, "Every good gift and every perfect gift is from above, and cometh down from the Father of lights."

The Strength of Youth

Confession of Faith:(4)

Rev. Robert D. Decker

"Whosoever therefore shall confess me before men, him will I confess before my Father which is in heaven. But whosoever shall deny me before men, him will I also deny before my Father which is in heaven."

Matthew 10:32, 33

Closely related to our living the new and godly life is the whole subject of "church government." The third and final question to be answered by those publicly confessing their faith in the Savior is: "Will you submit to church government, and in case you should become delinquent (which may God graciously forbid) to church discipline?" The significance of this question is becoming more and more apparent in our day. We will understand that significance when we understand the point of this question. The question does not deal with cases of church discipline only. Rather it covers the whole matter of living in obedience to the authority of God, which is conferred upon Christ the King of the Church and exercised by Christ through the officebearers He ordains in His Church. It ought to be perfectly obvious that in our day of a so-called "crisis in authority" this matter takes on added significance. Not only is it true in the world, but also in the church, that there is a general lack of respect for God-ordained authority becoming more and more apparent. It just is not what it used to be. This writer remembers the day when catechumens had a profound respect for the

minister of the gospel. A respect that was manifest in their behavior in the catechism room was in the past generally the case on the part of pupils. Today the minister has a constant battle to fight on this score. Perhaps the fault must be laid at the pastor's door for his failure to maintain the dignity of his office; but certainly it is also true that the world's rebellious stance has "rubbed off" on us more than we care to admit. It is well, then, that we take the time and effort to examine this question in the light of the Scriptures and our confessions.

What is church government? Very simply put, it is the rule of Christ exercised by and in the church as instituted in the world. It is the rule that Christ exercises through the offices He has instituted in the church; namely, that of pastor, elder, and deacon. The Scriptures speak very clearly on this in many passages. We find an especially beautiful passage in Hebrew 13:7 & 17. There the Bible says: "Remember them which have the rule over you, who have spoken unto you the word of God: whose faith follow, considering the end of their conversation. Obey them that have the rule

over you, and submit yourselves: for they watch for your souls, as they that must give account, that they may do it with joy, and not with grief: for that is unprofitable for you." These texts speak volumes.

Notice the Scripture admonishes us to obey "them that have the rule" over us. We are to obey them for no other reason. We do not obey them because they are older or wiser or stronger. We do not obey them because of any kind of outward restraints or punishments they are able to enforce or inflict. We obey them simply because they have the rule over us. And they have that rule over us because God in Jesus Christ gave them that position. They are not in office because they received the majority vote at a congregational meeting. They do not rule by the "consent of the governed." The Church of Jesus Christ is NOT a democracy; it is a theocracy. The Bible makes that very plain in I Corinthians 12:28: "And God hath set some in the church, first apostles, secondarily prophets, thirdly teachers, after the miracles, then gifts of healings, helps, governments, diversities of tongues." Understand that! God has set them in the church. God has appointed them to their office and laid the holy charge upon them to "watch for your souls, as they that must give an account." God may do that (and He does) through the means of a congregational meeting and the rest, but it is God, nonetheless, Who places His servants in office. Ephesians 4:11 teaches the same truth. Here we learn that the ascended Christ: "... gave some, apostles; and some prophets; and some, evangelists; and some, pastors and teachers." This text teaches not only that God ordains officebearers in the church, but that these officebearers are *gifts* of God to the church. In verses 12 and following of this chapter Paul teaches us of the rich blessings the church receives through these officebearers, when he writes that they are given by Christ: "For the perfecting of the saints, for the work of the ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ: till we all come in the unity of the faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God, unto a perfect man, unto the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ. . . ." Other Scriptures teach the same. The elders are to "feed the flock of God and take the oversight thereof" (I Peter 5); and deacons as well as elders are to "take care of the church of God." (I Timothy 3)

Thus we are to obey them, and that is for our own profit and blessing. Turning back to the passages cited above out of Hebrews 13, we find that these elders who have the rule over us speak to us the Word of God. Their faith is for us to follow. And in all of this they watch for our souls. They continually watch out for us. And, they do that not to catch us in some wrongdoing, but to protect us from the wiles of the devil and the host of other dangers that threaten the child of

God in this life.

Will you then submit to church government? Will you yield yourself to the rule of Jesus Christ? That must be our resolve, if we are to confess our faith in Jesus Christ. By so doing we are saying, "Christ is Lord of my life!" "He bought me with His own precious blood; in Him I am blessed with all spiritual blessings in heavenly places; His Word I love and my pledge now is to submit myself to His gracious rule."

That means that we submit to the Word of Christ as preached by His ambassadors from the pulpit. It means we recognized Christ as He speaks to us in the catechism room. We receive Christ into our homes when the pastor and elder come on family visiting. When we are sick Christ visits us, when in sorrow He comforts us, and when we are in need of correction He admonishes us. Obey them that have the rule over you and submit yourselves. In so doing we live in obedience to Christ. And that is for our profit. When officebearers must give account to God Who calls them with grief because of the stubborn disobedience of those over whom they rule, it is unprofitable not for the officebearers but for the disobedient!

Still more, when we confess our faith we promise to submit to church discipline in case we become delinquent. Sad to say, in many cases this vow is broken. When one falls into sin and has to be visited and censured, more often than not he will "ask for his papers" and leave the church entirely, or go to a church which fails to manifest that mark of the church known as church discipline. Such a person must understand that he severs himself from the church of Christ by refusing to bow under the authority of Christ. And God is not mocked.

Finally, the relation between this third question and the previous two is evident. Only by submitting to the authority of God in Christ and thus living in obedience to His Word are we able to live that new and godly life, which expresses the doctrine of the Old and New Testaments as contained in the articles of the Christian Faith.

At the risk of redundancy we repeat that it is only through the diligent use of the means of grace; the preaching of the Word and administration of the Sacraments that God is pleased to save us. The Word of God to covenant youth then is this; confess your faith in Christ; hold on to sound doctrine, live that new and godly life; and do that by the grace of God which is yours through the offices which God has ordained in His church. Submit then to the government of the Church of Jesus Christ. Yield to the authority of Christ. The way is narrow, and few find it. It is the way to everlasting life. And that is joy beyond compare.

TEN for TWO-- Have you written in about it?

Studies in Election

Its Evidences

Rev. Robert C. Harbach

Any real study of the doctrine of election will mean a study of plain Scripture, the whole Scripture throughout, from beginning to end. The holy Scripture alone is our standard of doctrine and practice. Faith and life have their rule in the doctrine of Scripture. There is really only one doctrine — the doctrine of Scripture. It is called the doctrine of the Lord, the doctrine of Christ or the doctrine of God, the latter receiving the main emphasis, for Scripture is God-centered. The doctrine of Scripture may be thought of as a great diamond of the faith once-for-all delivered unto the saints, and so having many facets. Then we may speak of the doctrine of election, the doctrine of creation, the doctrine of atonement, the doctrine of regeneration, calling, faith, justification, sanctification, etc., just as we may speak, as Scripture itself does, of the doctrine of baptisms, of the resurrection of the dead and of eternal judgment. Never in the plural does the Bible refer to “the doctrines” or to “sound doctrines.” It is always in the singular. Of course, we do, and may, speak loosely, of the doctrines of the faith, or of the doctrines of grace, or of the doctrines of Calvinism. Yet there is but one doctrine of grace, for there is but one grace. Calvinism is really *the* doctrine of Scripture. The name Calvinism is a term of convenience which immediately illustrates what we mean by Reformed doctrine or biblical doctrine. But Scripture does not speak of all kinds of doctrines, in the plural, for the biblical usage of the plural, “doctrines,” as found in the Word of God, refers not to the faith or that which is of the truth, but to denial of the faith and all kinds of errors. Then you read of “doctrines, the commandments of men” (Matt. 15:9), “the doctrines of men” (Col. 2:20), “doctrines of demons” (I Tim. 4:1), “divers (various) and strange doctrines” (Heb. 13:9). The doctrine of Scripture is the truth standing over against the lie, and then it is “*the* doctrine” (I Tim. 4:16), “good doctrine” (4:6), “sound doctrine” (Tit. 2:1), and “the doctrine which is according to godliness” (1 Tim. 6:3). Just so with the truth; there is only one truth. Truth is a unit. The Word of God has such language as “the truth of the Gospel,” not “truths” of the Gospel, or “the truth of God,” but not “truths” of God. It is “truth versus error,” the truth versus the lie, not truths and untruths. An exhaustive concordance will show that the word *truth* never appears in Scripture in the plural form.

Paul the apostle is known for the expression, “the doctrine,” and in all his epistles “the doctrine” has a

high intellectual side, but it also has running through it a spiritual vein. So it is with that facet of the doctrine we are treating. Election has a doctrinal emphasis; it also has a practical emphasis. We now enter upon the latter. We have seen in what way election has been instructive. It now remains to be seen how it is related to practice. Since the divine foreknowledge of love is the originating cause of all things, and the final cause of all things, and election streams from that fountain, then the relation of election to a practical life of godliness is one of cause and effect. The effect of divine election is the production of every saving good.

One outstanding product of the truth of God’s absolute sovereignty, of His election of a glorified, perfect church, is that of humility. The person who has a true conception of God’s sovereignty, and consequently, of God’s election, has had all his pride abased. He takes his place in the dust at his Maker’s feet! At first, a man may believe, like Cain, that God will surely be satisfied with his lofty efforts to exert his cultural skills and develop mankind and the earth into an advanced civilization! Certainly, then, if there is a heaven, he must be on his way to it! It must come to him as somewhat of a shock to learn that God is the God of election. How that changes the picture! God has from eternity chosen to Himself a people in His Son Jesus Christ and under His headship. He has also determined upon the means that He shall use to accomplish this great end. He now begins to show some concern as to whether *he* is one of those ordained to glory. He is impressed deeply with the eternal issues involved. Thinking becomes painful and unsettling. He is no longer “at ease in Zion.”

If he persists in the direction of his old self-inflated carnal assurance, he will not want anything to interfere with his counterfeit peace. He will begin to rebel against the idea of electing grace, distinguishing grace. But that very grace will humble him and bring him to inquire more openly and honestly into the truth. To him it may seem, to begin with, like plunging into an icy stream of frustration to learn that God’s eternal purpose of grace is limited to an elect people. He finds it much more comforting, so he may at first think, to believe that stupefying philosophy that God loves all men. To face the question whether I am one of the chosen in Christ is most difficult because it is not easy to give a satisfactory answer. Who is sufficient for these things? It is not an issue the hypocrite will face. But the regenerated elect will not draw back from it. He will wrestle in prayer until he obtains the desired

help from God, "and all is made plain."

Then assurance will be wrought. Now that he has come this far, finding himself trembling with doubts and fears, he need not think that this is evidence that he doubts the Word of God. That he doubts himself or doubts the reality of his Christian profession is one thing. But *now* he believes the Word of God. He does not doubt that! He believes the Lord's chosen people are a "little flock" (Luke 12:32). What he doubts is that he belongs to that flock! He believes, but he cries, "Help thou mine unbelief!" Of necessity, for now he believes that "the heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked" (Jer. 17:9). He realizes something of the deceitfulness of sin, and regardless of whatever others think, he prays God to undeceive him! He longs for full assurance of salvation. He desires to know his election of God. He is inclined to believe that certain knowledge of this is possible (I Thess. 1:4). He finds no comfort in the Romish dogmatism that no one can know his election, unless favored with an unusual, personal revelation from God. He wants to stand, not in a supposed apostolical succession, but in the assurance the apostles had, that their names were "written in heaven" (Luke 10:20). They were men who knew their election! They did, because they took God at His Word. "*Rejoice* because your names are written in heaven," Jesus exhorted. One does not rejoice in the unknowable, the unknown or the uncertain. The Romanist with his constant doubt as to his soul's welfare, and his utter lack of assurance of salvation, still claims to have faith. Is it possible to have faith, saving faith, and that of long standing, and still not know one has salvation? Or is it not rather that the man who has faith soon learns that true faith is a sure mark of election, since "as many as were ordained to eternal life believed" (Acts 13:48)?

The implication is, that knowing, brethren, your election of God, is something attained by faith. It comes not by ascending up to heaven to get a glimpse of the register of the names in the Lamb's Book of Life, not by peering into the book of God's eternal decree. Much less does such knowledge come by some preternatural event or extraordinary providence. C. H. Spurgeon struck at this self-delusion when he said, "... some imagine themselves to be elect because of the visions they have . . . but these are as much value as cobwebs for a garment . . . at the day of judgment . . ." (Sermons on Sovereignty, p. 73). No, but rather it is this way: "God hath from the beginning chosen you to salvation through sanctification of the Spirit and belief of the truth" (II Thess. 2:13). The witness of my own spirit is that I believe the truth, and therefore, that witness continues, God has chosen *me* to salvation! I believe the truth of the Gospel because the witness of

God's Spirit with my spirit that I am a son of God impels me to that conviction. It is God who works faith in me. Faith is the operation of God (Col. 2:12).

We happily know our election by the evidences of election. One of its evidences is that of true prayer. The elect are a praying people. "Shall not God avenge His own elect who cry day and night unto Him?" (Luke 18:7). Their prayer is that of a deep, heart-felt cry out of the depths of sin, misery and death — a prayer like the publican's prayer: "God be a mercy-seat to me, the sinner!" Their prayer is, "O wretched man that I am! who shall deliver me?" and he prays this with groanings which cannot be uttered. He prays as an elect child of God blessed in God's sovereign election. "Remember me, O Lord, with the favor that Thou bearest unto Thy people: O visit me with Thy salvation, that I may see the good of Thy chosen, that I may rejoice in the gladness of Thy nation, that I may glory with Thine inheritance" (Ps. 106:4, 5). The elect pray as no others do. They seek the things (above) no others seek. They know God's grace is only for the elect. They pray for His saving grace for themselves. But they also covet the same for all the rest of God's elect. They pray for the good of His chosen ones. In prayer they rejoice with those that do rejoice in the Lord. They rejoice in the gladness of that holy nation (I Pet. 2:9) which is God's "elect race" (ASV). In the communion of prayer they glory with the Lord's heritage. They aim to endure all things for the elects' sakes!

Another evidence of election is a looking for and longing for the final coming of Christ, whether He comes by death or by His return in final glory and visible majesty. Naturally, the Christian flinches at the thought of physical death. It is not only an abnormality, but the first, the persistent, ubiquitous and last enemy we have to face. Then his own indwelling sin makes the thought of death still more difficult. For how shall such a sinner stand before the holy God, the Judge of all the earth? But the new man in him has strength to raise his soul above such hindrances. The renewed man cannot be satisfied with his sin-laden existence, his imperfect prayers and distracted communion with God. He longs for full and perfect fellowship with the Lord. He feels as Paul did about it, "having a desire to depart, and to be with Christ, which is far better" (Phil. 1:23). This is an attitude common, perhaps not to every professing Christian, but to every child of God, and to the entire election of grace. They long for that "crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous Judge, shall give me at that day, and not to me only, but unto all them also that love His appearing" (II Tim. 4:8).

(To be continued)

Introductory Offer: Ten Issues for Two Dollars! Write today!



WEDDING ANNIVERSARY

On April 23, 1972, MR. AND MRS. JAY BOMERS celebrated their 25th wedding anniversary.

We thank our Covenant Father for preserving them for each other and for us these many years. Our prayers are for His continued blessing on them throughout their earthly walk.

Their children and grandchildren

Bruce

Lorie

Heidi

Timmy

Brenda

Mr. and Mrs. Wm. Huber

Heidi Jo and Billy.

IN MEMORIAM

On Tuesday afternoon, March 21, our Heavenly Father called to Himself our beloved Husband, Father and Grandfather,

GILBERT VAN BAREN

at the age of 69 years.

"For I know that my Redeemer liveth, and that He shall stand at the latter day upon the earth. And though after my skin worms destroy this body, yet in my flesh shall I see God." Job 19:25 and 26.

Mrs. Gilbert Van Baren

Mr. and Mrs. Arthur Zandstra

Mr. and Mrs. Anthony DeYoung

Mr. and Mrs. Seymour Vroegh

Mr. and Mrs. Eugene Kuiper

Mr. and Mrs. George Donald Vroom

Mr. and Mrs. Gise Van Baren

Dr. and Mrs. Melvin Hugen

Mr. and Mrs. Gilbert Van Baren

Mr. and Mrs. Frank Van Baren

Mr. and Mrs. Cornelius Nymeyer

Mr. and Mrs. Don De Young

Mr. and Mrs. Arthur Hoffman

29 Grandchildren

South Holland, Illinois

WEDDING ANNIVERSARY

On May 9, 1972, our beloved parents, MR. AND MRS. HIB KUIPER hope to celebrate their 25th wedding anniversary. We, their children, are grateful for this occasion and thank them for the many years of love and Christian instruction they have given us. It is our prayer that in their remaining days they may experience the continued blessings of our covenant God.

"Blessed be the Lord, who daily loadeth us with benefits, even the God of our salvation." (Psalm 68:19).

Mr. and Mrs. Leonard Brink (Linda)

Donna

Jay

Daryl

Hibb

and Lon and Stacey Brink

Hudsonville, Mich.

RESOLUTION OF SYMPATHY

The Men's Society of the Loveland Protestant Reformed Church expresses its Christian sympathy to Mr. Frank Van Baren and his family in the death of his father,

MR. GILBERT VAN BAREN.

May the Holy Spirit comfort them with the promise of the resurrection: "For the Lord himself shall descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel, and with the trump of God: and the dead in Christ shall rise first: Then we which are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds, to meet the Lord in the air: and so shall we ever be with the Lord" (I Thess. 4:16, 17).

Rev. D. Engelsma, Pres.

Mr. M. Alsum, Sec'y.

NOTICE!!!

According to the decision of the Synod of 1971, the Consistory of First Protestant Reformed Church of Grand Rapids, Michigan, was appointed the calling church for the 1972 Synod. The Consistory of First Church hereby notifies the Churches that the 1972 Synod of The Protestant Reformed Churches in America will convene, the Lord willing, on Wednesday, June 7, 1972, at 9 A.M., in First Church. The pre-Synodical service will be held Tuesday evening, June 6, at 8 P.M. in First Church. Rev. G. Van Baren, president of the 1971 Synod, will preach the sermon. Synodical delegates are requested to meet with the consistory before the service. Delegates in need of lodging should contact Mr. James Heys, 1432 Giddings Ave., S.E., Grand Rapids, Michigan 49507.

James Heys, Clerk

News From Our Churches

REPORT OF CLASSIS EAST

Classis East met in regular session on April 5, 1972, at Hudsonville. Each church was represented by two delegates. The agenda was routine except for the submission of an overture by an individual concerned about the site of the proposed seminary building.

The reports of the Stated Clerk and Classical Committee were read. The Stated Clerk reminded Classis and particularly the clerks of consistories that all forms must now be obtained from Rev. D. Kuiper, the Stated Clerk of Synod.

The Finance Committee of Elders J. Boone and J. B. Lubbers reported expenses of \$11.08. The following classical appointment schedule prepared by a committee of Rev. R. Harbach and Elders H. Kuiper and D. Meulenberg was adopted by Classis: HOPE: April 23 — C. Hanko; May 7 — G. Van Baren; May 14 — R. C. Harbach; May 28 — J. A. Heys; June 4 — M. Schipper; July 2 — H. Veldman

Rev. C. Hanko and Rev. J. Heys were chosen as church visitors with Rev. H. Veldman as alternate.

The questions of Article 41 of the Church Order were answered satisfactorily. After the concluding remarks of the chairman in which he thanked the Classis for their cooperation and wished the churches God's blessing, Elder H. Vander Kolk closed the session with prayer.

Classis will meet next on July 5, 1972 at Holland, Michigan.

Respectfully submitted,
Jon Huiskens, Stated Clerk

May we remind you, again, of Hope School's celebration of its 25th anniversary? For a quarter of a century, the dedicated boards and teachers at Hope have been providing distinctive instruction for our covenant children. The teachers and board members of the past twenty-five years certainly deserve a word of commendation. More important, of course, is the fact that the continued existence and growth of the school has been possible only through the blessing of God on the efforts expended there. That the present board is very much aware of that fact is evident from its choice of theme for the celebration — "God's Covenant Faithfulness" — as well as by the steering committee's stated purpose in planning the celebration, namely, "to acknowledge God's goodness to us."

That we, who live within reasonable distance of the school, share in their gratitude can be shown in no better way, I think, than to attend the program being

planned to celebrate the anniversary. And an interesting evening it promises to be. Rev. D. Engelsma, a Hope alumnus, will be the main speaker. In addition, Mr. John Buiter and Miss Agatha Lubbers, present and former administrators, respectively, will provide some highlights of the present situation and of past history, again respectively.

The date for the program, remember, is May 12, and the place is Grandville Junior High School gymnasium. After the program, you'll no doubt want to drive over to Hope School for the "open house" there.

The inclusion of this next item will mean that the "News from our Churches" is made up entirely of *school* news this time; but that's all right once in awhile, isn't it?

The written product of last summer's Social Studies workshop has recently come off the press (located in one of the Seminary rooms in First Church's basement). It consists of about 120 mimeographed pages, bound in a soft-covered volume. It's entitled "Biblical Perspectives in the Social Sciences," and includes seven different essays dealing with "problems or concerns which arise repeatedly in the study of history." "The Proper Relationship of Church and State" is one such topic. A couple of others are "The Idea of Revolution," "The Decline of Nations," and "War and Peace." In the book's preface, the workshop director, Mr. Lamm Lubbers, suggests that "the principles stated are meant to stimulate the creative and dedicated teacher to make explicit and specific the principles from the Word of God in his teaching."

That the participants of the workshop were thus stimulated is plain from the following statement from Mr. Gerald Kuiper, in a written evaluation of the two-week session: "The workshop has reminded me again of the importance of the subjects I am privileged to teach. I also feel that I am better prepared to teach from a distinctive point of view."

A third summer workshop is being planned for this coming summer. The topic, this time, is "Written Communication Skills." A director has been chosen — Mr. Darrel Huiskens, junior high teacher at Hope School — and applications are being taken, presently, for participation in the workshop. It's the hope of the Federation, which sponsors the event, that the 1972 workshop will be "a worthwhile experience for the teachers, and, therefore, of value, ultimately, to the students who receive instruction in our schools." D.D.