

# The Standard Bearer

**A REFORMED SEMI-MONTHLY MAGAZINE**

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## THE STANDARD BEARER

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## Editor's Notes

OF SPECIAL INTEREST to those of our readers who can read Dutch and who are interested in events in the Dutch churches is this announcement. We have received a limited supply of two brochures by Dr. Ph. J. Huijser which deal with the situation in the Netherlands. The first is entitled: *Het Verwordingsproces in de Gereformeerde Kerken: I, De Regerende Klasse*. The second is: *Het Verwordingsproces in de Gereformeerde Kerken: II, De Invloed van de Tijdgeest*. The first I reviewed well over a year ago. The second I will review in the near future. While I do not agree with these booklets in

every respect, I nevertheless think they are helpful in obtaining a picture of the situation in the Netherlands. As a special service to our readers, we have obtained a limited supply of these brochures. They can be obtained for \$1.00 each, postpaid. If you are interested, write to the Business Office: The Standard Bearer, Box 6064, Grand Rapids, Michigan 49506. Enclose \$2.00.

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SORRY! There is no room for *Question Box* in this issue. I have some questions on hand, and will answer as soon as possible. Please have patience.



## Editorials

# Confronted By The Same Issues

*Prof. H. C. Hoeksema*

In the February 15 issue I suggested that the Reformed Churches of New Zealand might soon be confronted by the same issues which they refused to face forthrightly at their last Synod. And I also promised to produce evidence of this.

The reader will probably recall that the Theological College at Geelong, Australia, while not an ecclesiastically controlled school, is nevertheless supported in part by the Reformed Churches of New Zealand as well as the Reformed Churches in Australia. It is also this Theological College which serves as the training school for future ministers in these denominations. It was at this College that Dr. K. Runia, whose doctrinal views came under attack in New Zealand, taught. Dr. Runia, as we informed you, has now gone to the Theological School of the *Gereformeerde Kerken* in the Netherlands at Kampen. And he went, as we have seen, with a clean bill of health as far as the New Zealand churches were concerned. The Theological College at Geelong, however, also lost another professor, Dr. G. van Groningen, who has returned to the Christian Reformed Church in this country, and who is now, I understand, at Dort College. The replacement for Dr. van Groningen as Old Testament professor is Dr. Sierd Woudstra, also of the Christian Reformed Church and most recently connected with Calvin Seminary.

It is in connection with some expressed views of Dr. Woudstra that I wrote in my February 15 editorial that the Reformed Churches of New Zealand would soon be confronted by the same issues on which they refused to exercise doctrinal discipline, as requested, at their 1971 Synod. In fact, this article will serve to call these matters to the attention of our New Zealand readers and to bring these items to the attention of at least some in the churches there. I do not know what the reaction may be. Judging in the light of past performance, I do not expect much. But this I do know, in the first place: the Reformed Churches of New Zealand will now be put to the test as far as the genuineness of some of their decisions of a positive nature is concerned. For I will show that Dr. Woudstra's expressed views and those of the Synod are not in harmony. And this I know, too, in the second place: here we have an illustration of the fact that it simply will not do for a church to refuse to face issues and to maintain doctrinal discipline. Issues just do not go away when one refuses to face them. In fact, they

have a way of returning to confront and to plague those who try to avoid them and who attempt to compromise and gloss things over. And this can, of course, prove to be embarrassing: for how can one condemn in one person what he refuses to condemn in another person? Or there is another possibility, which only too often proves to be reality: once a church has refused to exercise doctrinal discipline, it rapidly becomes easier to follow the path of least resistance, the path of temptation, and to let down the bars again and again.

The latter is a lesson for any communion of churches, including our Protestant Reformed Churches. It requires constant watchfulness to keep out the lie and teachers of heresy!

But what is the evidence in this case?

Through the courtesy of one of our readers who has been following our writings on the New Zealand matters and who also knew that Dr. S. Woudstra was scheduled to depart in February for Geelong, I received a complete cassette recording of a sermon on Ecclesiastes 7:16, 17 which was preached by Dr. Woudstra on December 26, 1971 at the Christian Reformed Church of Borculo, Michigan. This reader was immediately aware, upon having heard this sermon, that Dr. Woudstra had made various statements in the course of this sermon which ought to be of concern in New Zealand, and, I may add, in Australia also.

Now it is not my purpose to criticize the entire sermon, although, frankly, I am of the opinion there is much to be criticized. But I am interested only in the matters of direct concern in the case we have been discussing. Nevertheless, I took the trouble, for the sake of accuracy, to transcribe the entire sermon and then to have the typewritten copy compared by others with the recording and checked for accuracy.

The text referred to reads as follows in the King James Version: "Be not righteous over much; neither make thyself over wise: why shouldest thou destroy thyself? Be not over much wicked, neither be thou foolish: why shouldest thou die before thy time?"

The announced theme of the sermon was: "Don't overdo your righteousness; don't overdo your wickedness." To this was added: "Perhaps I may also put it this way: don't be too conservative; don't be too liberal."

How the latter is derived from this text is a puzzle



to me. But perhaps it was this not-too-conservative, not-too-liberal thought which led the preacher to make the following amazing application:

And another example. It's also a very practical example. And I think especially at the moment it's very pertinent in the Christian Reformed Church, too. As a church, of course, we have to hold on to the truth of God's Word. We have to be faithful to God's Word, to what God's Word says. But also in this respect one can be too righteous. One can make himself too wise. And you know when this happens? This happens when the church does not leave enough room for people who think just a little bit different than, let's say, you and I or someone else does.

And you know, in the Christian Reformed Church too, we do face problems. Doctrinal questions, too. But in all candor, I would ask you this question: do you really know what the correct interpretation of the first eleven chapters of Genesis is? I don't. Do you really know the greatness of the love of God? Oh, we may argue about this for years. But do we really know the answer? And again, we must admit we don't. Do we really know precisely what it means that the Word of God is infallible? It is infallible. But do we really know precisely what it means? No, we don't. Don't let's make ourselves too righteous, as if we know it all, and exclude everyone else.

There you have it!

The reference in the above quotation is, of course, to three issues in the Christian Reformed Church in recent years: the infallibility question, at issue some ten years ago and still at stake in "Report 36"; the interpretation of the first part of Genesis (also at stake in "Report 36"); and the question of the love of God and the atonement (at bottom, by the way, a question of election and reprobation), at issue in the now almost forgotten Dekker Case.

Now apart from anything else, one is compelled, it would seem, to face this question: what is Dr. Woudstra as a professor in Old Testament going to teach the students at Geelong? Is he going to teach them that the Bible is infallible, but that we don't know what this means? Is he going to teach them that we really don't know the correct interpretation of Genesis 1-11? Is he going to teach them that we really don't know whether and how God loves all men, and whether Christ died also for the reprobate?

In the light of his own admission of ignorance on these subjects, it would seem to follow that this is what he will be compelled to teach his students also. In other words, he is going to teach them *nothing*. Or worse, he is going to teach them to *doubt*, to leave these matters an *open question*, to be doctrinally imprecise and vague! All this, I presume, though he will subscribe to the "system of doctrine" of the Reformed confessions, as required at Geelong!

Complicating the problem is the fact that although they refused to exercise doctrinal discipline in connection with the objections to Dr. Runia's

teachings, the Synod of the Reformed Churches of New Zealand passed a motion which, on the surface at least, appears to be rather precise. It reads as follows, Article 43:

It was moved, seconded and adopted that:

"The Reformed Churches of New Zealand hereby unanimously re-affirm, IN SPITE OF CERTAIN ALLEGATIONS, that they maintain the Doctrine of The Infallible Scripture as summarised in the Confessional Standards. This includes:

- a. That we maintain the historicity of the details AS THEY ARE RECORDED IN GENESIS 1-3, e.g. Creation, Adam and Eve as the first created man and woman, the Fall through disobedience, and the subsequent Promise of Divine Redemption in Christ.
- b. Furthermore we maintain that the WHOLE TEACHING of the Canons of Dort (including Divine Election and Reprobation) IS in complete agreement with the Infallible Word of God.

Consequently we require ANYONE who speaks or writes, teaches, preaches, or counsels *on behalf of these Churches* to do so in accordance with this statement."

Now it must be remembered that the above statement is not entirely true. For the fact of the matter is that they did *not* require of Dr. Runia to teach in their behalf in accordance with this statement. In fact, they *refused* to require it of him.

Well, now they face the same issue with respect to Dr. Woudstra. Though he is not under the ecclesiastical jurisdiction of the New Zealand churches, nevertheless at Geelong he will be teaching "on behalf of these Churches." He says: I don't know what it means that Scripture is infallible. They say: we "maintain the Doctrine of The Infallible Scripture as summarized in the Confessional Standards." He says: I don't know what Genesis 1-11 means. They say: "That we maintain the historicity of the details AS THEY ARE RECORDED IN GENESIS 1-3. . . ." He says: I don't know the greatness of the love of God; we may argue about this for years. They say: ". . . we maintain that the WHOLE TEACHING of the Canons of Dort (including Divine Election and Reprobation) IS in complete agreement with the Infallible Word of God."

But there is more that bears investigating. For later in the same sermon Dr. Woudstra deals with the very same matter about which I first criticized Dr. Runia a couple years ago and before I had any contact with the brethren in New Zealand. I refer to Runia's denial of the unchangeability of God. In the course of his sermon Dr. Woudstra said the following:

The very fact that God's will must be done does not mean, therefore, that we may not wrestle in prayer as if, if it were possible, to change the mind of God. It has happened before that God changed His mind. You read the Old Testament: God changing His mind. The Old Testament says, of course, that God repented; and then He did the other thing. Well, it



simply means that God changed His mind. We may not dictate to God; but at the same time we must keep in holding on in prayer, trying to change the mind of God. And who knows what human beings may yet accomplish? (Here follows a personal example which I shall omit. And then the same line of thought is continued. HCH) We must not pray as if not expecting anything because God has decreed everything from eternity. Then you are working with a static concept of God. Perhaps it has been somewhat current in Reformed Theology, but I'm glad we're drifting away from it. We're not dealing with a static God. We're dealing with a God Who is willing to listen if only we continue in prayer, in much prayer. That's the kind of God we have. And who knows what this God may do if only we hold on long enough? So, don't be too righteous; but don't

give up either. Keep on with God. And if you don't, well, then, you are too wicked; and you must not be that either.

Shades of Dr. Runia's big words about a "static ontological theology!" Shades of his denial of God's unchangeability!

What will the Reformed Churches of New Zealand now do?

I sincerely wish — although I do not expect — that they would now face up to the issues, and that they would also re-open the case of last year's Appeal, try to undo their failures of Synod-1971, and do justice to the brethren who tried to lead them in the right way.

And if the Reformed Churches fail in this, I hope nevertheless that the eyes of many among them will be opened!

## The P.R.C. and the R.E.S.

### Introductory

Increasingly, it seems to me, the realities of what I would call — for want of a handier term — our ecumenical calling and responsibility are being pressed upon us as Protestant Reformed Churches. As will be evident, in a measure at least, to those who follow our *Standard Bearer*, the Lord has been bringing us into contact with individuals and groups all over the world who are, it seems, genuinely interested in maintaining the Reformed faith and who have been attracted to us because of our Reformed testimony. In many instances the means whereby such contacts have been established has been our *Standard Bearer*, which, though not an ecclesiastical paper, is nevertheless recognized as a literary voice of our Protestant Reformed witness. In other instances, other literature emanating from our churches has been instrumental. In still other instances, contact has been initiated through word-of-mouth testimony of persons within and outside of our churches concerning our churches and their position. Sometimes these contacts come in a most unexpected manner and from surprising sources. Some of these contacts are only personal and individual, conducted and fostered by private correspondence of various ministers in our churches — and I myself (and I know also of others) have conducted in recent years a rather voluminous foreign correspondence. Others of these contacts are of an official and ecclesiastical nature, and are already on the docket of our synodical Committee for Correspondence with Foreign Churches.

Personally, I am of the conviction that we cannot fail to see the hand of the Lord in this, especially as in these last days apostasy increases and the lines of demarcation are drawn ever more clearly between

those who want to maintain the Reformed faith and those who do not. Under the impetus of attack, those who desire to remain faithful are more and more attracted to one another. I believe we may expect more of this as time goes on. And I also believe that our Protestant Reformed Churches, just because the Lord has so signally blessed us in keeping us faithful to the truth, have a special calling not only to foster these contacts, but also to give help and leadership to others who manifest an interest and desire to maintain a like precious faith with us, and to do so as much as in us lies.

This calling must, of course, be met responsibly.

This means, in the first place, that we are not interested in ecumenicity for ecumenicity's sake, or for bigness' sake, or merely for the sake of being able to point to the fact that we, too, have contact and fraternal relationships with other churches. No, our interest is solely in the expression of that unity which is characteristic of the holy, catholic church. And this means primarily a unity of *faith*, which is the same as saying a unity in and on the basis of the truth as it is in Jesus Christ. And for us that truth is set forth in Scripture and the Confessions. This is primary. It must always be and remain the controlling factor in any contacts and relationships with other churches.

In the second place, we must have a certain healthy openness as churches. We must be able to distinguish between essentials and non-essentials, and be prepared not to reject those who differ from us in non-essentials. We must be able to distinguish between those who stand at enmity against us because of the Reformed faith and those who are fundamentally one with us in our common battle for the faith, but who may not be in every respect like us, may not see eye to



eye with us on every matter, or who may differ from us because of varying historical backgrounds, denominational struggles, nationality, etc. With the former one cannot work, except at cross purposes. With the latter one is called to co-labor, exactly in order that together we may bring to manifestation our unity in the faith.

In the third place, we must with carefulness determine the best means of investigating, establishing, and practicing any possible relationships with other churches. We are small and of limited capacity as a denomination; and some of those with whom there is a possibility of contact are also small. There are problems of distance and communication. But with the means and ability which the Lord provides, we must put forth our very best efforts. For this labor, too, belongs to our obedience to the Lord Christ.

But once more I wish to emphasize it: *all* our labors in this direction must be in obedience to and in the service of the truth! Any other kind of unity is not true unity.

It also lies in the nature of the case that in order for our churches to act responsibly in these matters they must be *informed*. And with a view toward informing our people, I purpose to editorialize a few times on various matters connected with our ecumenical calling.

The first item to which I shall call attention is that of the Reformed Ecumenical Synod. Once more our churches have received an invitation to send an official observer to the RES which will meet this coming summer in Sydney, Australia.

And the question confronting us is: what must be our response to this invitation? Should we accept? Is it our duty to accept? And would it be worthwhile, if it is proper, for our churches to send a representative to the RES-Sidney, 1972?

### Background

In order to consider this question intelligently we must go back a bit in history.

It was in 1950 that the whole question of possible membership or participation in the RES arose at our Synod for the first time. After considerable discussion — and disagreement — it was decided on the basis of various grounds to send official visitors to the RES-Edinburgh. This decision was taken in 1952. Although we never did actually send these visitors because of our internal difficulties in 1953, nevertheless this decision was important, especially because of the third ground adduced. That ground was: "We do not bind ourselves to anything by attending the sessions of the Ecumenical Synod as official visitors from our churches." The ground is, of course, a rather poor one in this negative form. But my point now is that this ground is factually incorrect. Under the Rules of the RES, official observers and official guests are required to express agreement with the Basis of the RES. And historically, it has been the

question of this Basis which has caused past synods to hesitate as to membership or even as to official observers or visitors.

This Basis (Article II) reads as follows:

### II. Basis

The foundation of the Reformed Ecumenical Synod shall be the Holy Scriptures of the Old and New Testaments as interpreted by the Confessions of the Reformed faith, namely the Second Helvetic Confession, the Heidelberg Catechism, the Gallican Confession, the Belgic Confession, the Westminster Confession, the Canons of Dort, the Thirty-nine Articles. It should be understood that these Scriptures in their entirety, as well as in every part thereof, are the infallible and ever-abiding Word of the living Triune God, absolutely authoritative in all matters of creed and conduct, and the Confessions of the Reformed faith are accepted because they present the divine revealed truth, the forsaking of which has caused the deplorable decline of modern life. It has to be emphasized that only a whole-hearted and consistent return to this Scriptural truth, of which the Gospel of Jesus Christ is the core and the apex, can bring salvation to mankind and effectuate the so sorely needed renewal of the world.

Because of the diversity in the forms of government of the Reformed Churches, uniformity of church policy cannot be stressed as a fundamental requisite, except in so far as the principles of this policy are contained in the Reformed Confessions, as, for example the headship of Christ and the marks of the true Church: the pure preaching of the Gospel, the Scriptural administration of the Sacraments, and the faithful exercise of discipline.

In 1968 our churches once more received an invitation to send an official observer, this time to the RES-Amsterdam.

In response to this invitation our Synod took the following decision which was forwarded to the RES Secretariat and to the calling church.

### Decision on Invitation to the Reformed Ecumenical Synod

1. That we are thankful for this invitation.
2. That the Protestant Reformed Churches are in full agreement with the Doctrinal Basis of the RES in so far as it refers to Scripture and the Reformed Creeds.
3. That, however, the Protestant Reformed Churches:
  - a. Do not see in the forsaking of this truth the cause of "the deplorable decline of modern life" in general (as stated in the Basis, Article 2 of the "Rules and Standing Orders of the RES"), but rather the deplorable decline and apostasy of the modern-day church.
  - b. Do not agree with the concluding sentence of the first paragraph of the Basis: "It has to be emphasized that only a wholehearted and



consistent return to this Scriptural truth, of which the Gospel of Jesus Christ is the core and apex, can bring salvation to mankind and effectuate the so sorely needed renewal of the world."

*Grounds:*

1. Neither Scripture nor the confessions hold forth the hope of such a wholehearted and consistent return to the truth of Scripture of which this statement speaks.
2. Neither Scripture nor the confessions hold forth the expectation of a renewal of the world through such a wholehearted and consistent return.
3. Neither Scripture nor the confessions speak of an effectuating of either such a wholehearted and consistent return or of such a renewal of the world.
4. On the contrary, Scripture and the confessions speak of the renewal of all things through the wonder of grace in our Lord Jesus Christ, and of the calling of the church to be a witness of the light in the midst of the darkness of this present world, and to maintain and proclaim the truth of the gospel, in order that the church may be gathered and preserved, with a view to the coming of our Lord and the realization of this renewal of all things.

Belgic Confession, Articles 27, 29, 37.

Heidelberg Catechism, Questions 52, 54, 123, 127.

Canons of Dordrecht, I, 7; II, 9.

John 18:36; I John 2:15-17; Matthew 24:3-14, 22-31; Revelation 6:1-8; II Corinthians 6:17-18; Philippians 2:15, 16; John 16:33; Revelation 21:1-8.

4. That in the light of the requirement that observers shall express agreement with said Basis as stated above, the Protestant Reformed Churches find it impossible to accept the invitation to send an observer to the Reformed Ecumenical Synod in Amsterdam.
5. That in the light of the requirement that observers shall express agreement with the Doctrinal Basis, and in the light of our inability to express full agreement, we inquire whether the RES is willing to grant the Protestant Reformed Churches observer-status with the understanding that they take exception to the above-mentioned elements of the Basis.

It will be evident that this is a radically different decision than that of 1952. Yet the decision as such did not shut the door to participation completely.

What the response of the RES was we shall see next time, D.V.

## *All Around Us*

# **THE CHRISTIAN AND MOVIES**

*Prof. H. Hanko*

The problem of movie attendance is a perennial one. It apparently dates back to the invention of the movie itself and must, it seems, be faced with each new generation of young people. It is a problem compounded by the advent of television which makes of each home a potential movie theatre. While our Churches have never taken an official stand on the movie, generally speaking movie attendance is condemned as being incompatible with the walk of the Christian in the world.

This was also at one time the stand of the Christian Reformed Church. As early as 1928 the Synod of the Christian Reformed Church faced the question of theatre attendance as one item in the well-known trio of worldly amusements: card playing, dancing and attendance at movies. At that time these worldly amusements were condemned by the Church and the members warned against their evils. It is interesting to go back for a few moments and discover the reasons why movie attendance was frowned on. The reasons

were four. 1) Attendance at movies might cause a brother to stumble. 2) No one knows whether a play or a movie is good or bad until he has seen it. 3) Some so-called good movies are worse than the bad ones. 4) Occasional movie attendance may develop in a person a taste for movies.

Now these grounds on the basis of which movie attendance was condemned are rather interesting. What is particularly interesting about them is the fact that Synod did not condemn movies *per se*. The objections were not principle objections, but practical. The movies themselves were not condemned; rather movie attendance was condemned because of possible bad consequences or because of possible misuse of the theatre.

One would not have had to be a prophet in 1928 to predict that this decision would not really settle the movie question. It is really a wonder that the decision lasted as long as it did. Repeatedly overtures were brought to Synod to review this decision. But as many



times as these overtures appeared, they were turned down and the decisions of 1928 reaffirmed.

That is, until 1965. At the Synod of the Christian Reformed Church in 1965 another overture was received to reconsider the decisions of 1928 and a study committee was appointed. This committee reported back to the Synod of 1966 and the report was substantially adopted. The decisions of 1928 had proved unworkable and were in fact being openly flouted in the church.

The crucial part of the report, which was also adopted, was that attendance at good movies was permissible. There were especially three reasons given to support this contention. 1) The first part of the argument is that entertainment, amusement and recreation are permissible in the life of the Christian. 2) Secondly, the committee argued that along with newspapers, radio, music, art, television, etc., the film arts are a legitimate cultural medium. 3) And thirdly, the committee stated that we may expect good works to be produced by the ungodly because of the gracious restraint of sin. This puts the matter squarely into the area of common grace.

We only want to comment briefly on the logic of the Synod of 1965 for it was rather shoddy to say the least. The first part of the argument (that entertainment is permissible in the life of the Christian) is, in itself, a true statement. No one, I think, will argue with it. What is extremely difficult to see is how this can be an argument to justify movie attendance. The assumption seems to be that any form of recreation is permissible. At least this is the assumption if it is used in support of movie attendance. But surely even the committee would not go so far as to say that all the recreation of the world is legitimate for the Christian. Some wicked find recreation and amusement in drinking. Others in drugs. Others in fornication. The mere fact that recreation is legitimate has nothing at all to do with the movie question.

The second reason given above is worse yet from the logical point of view. For one thing, Synod simply lumped together newspapers, radio, music, television and the film arts. And it called them all legitimate cultural media. This is precisely the point that needs proving. It may be that newspapers are legitimate cultural media; but there is no proof. It may be that television is a legitimate cultural medium, but Synod offered no proof. Whether the film arts are a legitimate cultural medium is again assumed to be true. One does not prove the point by putting the film arts in the same bag with music.

Further, the question is: What is meant by "cultural media?" Especially this question is crucial when one faces the additional question: Whose culture? The culture of Babylon? The culture of the wicked world which the apostle John warns the believer not to love?

But supposing that one would grant that the film arts are a gift of God not to be despised by the Christian. Does this still condone movie attendance? There are different types of film arts. There are the movies shot on an 8mm camera of the children playing in a swimming pool in the backyard. There are the movies which are used for educational purposes in driver's training programs and biology courses. There are the movies which present the wonders of creation and the lives of foreign people in attractive travelogues. But these are quite obviously different than the movies which contain dramatic productions. But this basic and fundamental difference is ignored in the report and with the poorest sort of logic the Synod simply put them all together and labelled them "legitimate cultural media."

It is not strange that this has led to a very sad situation in the Christian Reformed Church. There are movies produced in Hollywood and elsewhere which are given favorable reviews in church periodicals even though they are condemned by the world itself as being brutally violent, sexually perverse, and of little if any redeeming social value. (Rev. Van Baren documented this assertion in an article several months ago in the *Standard Bearer*. Our readers are urged to look up that article and re-read it.)

What brought all this to mind and what is really my purpose in writing of this is the January 21 issue of *The Banner* in which were found several articles which tell in a vivid way what the fruits of this decision have already been.

One article is entitled "Movies: What's The Answer?" This article is written by Karen Devos, an English teacher in Grand Rapids, Mich. Some of the statements in the article are shocking evidences of what has happened since the decision was taken.

The article begins in these words:

Many orthodox Christian churches have long taken the stand that commercial movies are an evil or "worldly" amusement and should be avoided by Christians.

Whatever value that policy may have had in the past, it is now obsolete. It is obsolete because any survey of almost any group of under-thirty Christians will reveal that most of them have seen at least one film in a theater in the last year, and it is obsolete because television has taken to showing last year's movies (or that of the year before) in prime time almost every night of the week.

The number of films on television has made it almost impossible to avoid movies. Therefore, I suggest that we stop treating movies as an avoidable evil and start making some intelligent, Christian analyses of them and decisions about them.

It is that little word "therefore" with which the last sentence begins that bothers me. What it means is that what has preceded is proper justification for movie attendance. We are surrounded by movies. We can



hardly avoid them. They come to us from all directions. *Therefore* they are good. It would seem to follow that if an evil comes at us so often that it is unavoidable, then this "evil" becomes permissible for the Christian. What kind of argumentation is that?

But the author goes on. She readily admits that there are bad movies which are "easily identifiable." There is also a whole philosophy of life and value system which is "subtly propagated in many movies" which is contrary to the Scriptures. But this latter need not deter anyone from attending such movies. What is needed is not so much that the Christian stays away from them but rather that he "might begin by learning something about how to interpret and evaluate films."

Then comes this paragraph.

As a college student I saw an Ingmar Bergman film, *Virgin Spring*, in which a man rapes a girl as an act of revenge. I will never forget the terror of the girl as the horror of what the revenge seeking had done to the man. The scene, one that many people would (and did) object to, was actually one of the strongest statements I've ever seen that seeking vengeance is destructive and evil. And there was certainly nothing in the scene to arouse sexual feelings.

If it were not all told in such a serious tone, one would think the author was being facetious. Not only do ungodly men have something of value, something Scriptural, something Biblical to say to the Christian; but they say this in depicting in dramatic production a monstrous crime.

In the same issue of *The Banner* we are informed that a corporation has recently been formed called B. E. Productions ("Better Entertainment for the Entire Family") "to produce and distribute (for profit) full-length, wide-screen, Hollywood motion pictures presenting Jesus Christ as Savior and Lord, based on the infallible Word of God."

At a cost of \$600,000 the first movie has been produced called "The Ballad of Billie Blue." It opened in Anaheim, California on December 8, 1971 and in Grand Rapids, Mich. the first week of February. Already another film is being prepared entitled "Run Baby Run" which is based on a best seller of the same title. The reviews in the *Grand Rapids Press* were enough to convince any sensitive Christian that this "Christian" film was, apart from the whole question of movie attendance, not fit for a child of God. But we need not rely on the *Press*. In the same *Banner* a favorable review of the movie appears which reads in part:

By the time you have followed Billie Blue's tempestuous career, lived through his heartaches, laughed through his lighter moments, and finally have a moment to reflect upon all you have seen and

heard, you can't escape the conclusion that the gospel of salvation in Jesus Christ has been effectively presented, and you feel right about praying that thousands of non-Christians may be led to buy tickets to this show.

*The Ballad of Billie Blue* is not beyond criticism. In fact, since previewing, constructive criticism has been solicited and taken seriously, to the extent that some scenes have been cut and some excellent footage added. (We wonder if these scenes were cut to secure a "G" rating. H.H.) But even so, this movie has its full share of violence and sex and repulsive characters. Sensitivity to the realities and problems of our society make this almost inevitable. To reach our adult world, the producers, in this film have had to focus on tragic adult situations. Billie's wife Mae is a vixen devoid of morals, and she shows it in every movement of her body, every word she spits out, every deed she does. She's an unfaithful wife, and a disaster as a mother. Her degeneration into professional prostitution comes as no surprise. . . .

That such a filthy piece of pornography should be produced by Christians is one thing, horrible in its own right. That this should be presented and praised as an effective means of bringing the gospel of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ makes one gasp in astonishment and revulsion. What is being done to Christ, the Christ of God, in the name of religion?

The conclusion of the matter is that the stand long taken by many of our leaders that dramatic presentations are evil in themselves because drama is evil is a correct one. We have not time or space to argue the case here. There are articles in former *Standard Bearers* and *Beacon Lights* which present the matter clearly. With this position we are in complete agreement. And we are increasingly convinced that such a principle objection against dramatic productions is the only one that can stem this terrible tide of worldliness which is infiltrating the Church.

One more remark. The article referred to above speaks of the movies brought into our homes by television. I must say a word about this. Whether our parents know it or not, the fact that they watch dramatic productions on television is a terrible stumbling block to our young people. They have spoken to me many times of the fact that they see no wrong in going to movies when these same movies are watched avidly in the homes from which they come. I must admit that I am on the side of our young people in this case. What is evil in Studio 28 is evil in the family room of the home. Paul speaks in Ephesians of the sin of parents when they provoke their children to wrath. Among other things he surely points to this evil in our lives as well. We may not and must not be stumbling blocks to our children.

Wanted: church members with singleness of heart and singleness of purpose.



## Meditation

# The Spiritually Adorned Wife

Rev. M. Schipper

*"Likewise, ye wives, be in subjection to your own husbands; that, if any obey not the word, they also may without the word be won by the conversation of the wives; while they behold your chaste conversation coupled with fear. Whose adorning let it not be that outward adorning of plaiting the hair, and of wearing of gold, or of putting on of apparel; but let it be the hidden man of the heart, in that which is not corruptible, even the ornament of a meek and quiet spirit, which is in the sight of God of great price. For after this manner in the old time the holy women also, who trusted in God, adorned themselves, being in subjection unto their own husbands: even as Sara obeyed Abraham, calling him lord: whose daughters ye are, as long as ye do well, and are not afraid with any amazement."*

I Peter 3:1-6.

Likewise, ye wives!

That is, in the same way that citizens are to be in subjection to their government, and as servants are to be subject to their masters, so the wives are to be in subjection to their own husbands.

It is apparent that the apostle is still speaking of the main exhortation in this section of his epistle, namely, that we are to see to it that our conversation in the midst of the world is to be a reflection of what we are by the grace of God. We are to walk honestly as strangers and pilgrims, abstaining from fleshly lusts which war against the soul, and positively performing the good works which God has before prepared, in order that we should walk in them. This we are to do even when we are falsely accused as evildoers; in order that they, beholding our good works, may glorify God in the day of visitation. This main exhortation the apostle now applies also to our walk in the marital state.

Likewise, ye wives, be in subjection to your own husbands!

You are to be in subjection to them, no matter whether that husband honors and obeys the Word of God or not. When the apostle speaks of husbands who obey not the Word, he evidently has in mind heathen husbands. Undoubtedly some of the wives who are addressed in the text were also at one time heathen women; but having come into contact with the gospel, they were converted. Undoubtedly, too, these Christian wives who were married to heathen husbands, concluded that because of their spiritual differences they ought to leave their husbands; or, if they continued to stay with them, they ought to treat them with disrespect. The apostle exhorts them in the text: "Don't run away from them; neither should you treat them with disrespect. But live with them in such a way that, though they do not honor the Word of God, they nevertheless may, beholding your chaste conversation, be won by the wives."

Let no one conclude from this sound advice that a woman should seek to be married to an ungodly husband, in the hope that later she may be instrumental in converting him. Nowhere does Scripture advocate or condone such a marriage. Such marriages stand always forbidden and condemned by the Word of God. Always Christians are exhorted to marry in the Lord. However, where such a heathen marriage has been consummated, and the wife by the grace of God is brought to the knowledge of her salvation in Christ, let her not leave her husband, nor mistreat him because he is not a Christian. Rather let her by her sanctified walk reveal herself to him as a Christian.

Let her show to him her true spiritual beauty!

True beauty does not consist in that which is merely external. It does not consist in the braiding of the hair, in the wearing of gold, or in the putting on of apparel.

True beauty consists in the hidden man of the heart, in that which is incorruptible, even the ornament of a meek and quiet spirit. *That* is, in the sight of God, of great price!

That the apostle informs us that true beauty does not consist in these external things, does not mean that he is laying down a hard and fast rule regarding the outward appearance of the woman. It certainly is not his intention to imply that a woman should not care about her outward appearance. Surely, there can be nothing sinful in itself that a woman pretties herself up to please her husband. Does not Scripture everywhere speak of the bride who is adorned for her husband? If this is permissible on the wedding day, surely it cannot be condemned if she continues to so adorn herself all the days of her marital life.

But what a pity that a woman should imagine that her real beauty consists only in this outward adornment! Still more pitiful, yea, sinful and carnal it would be that she should spend all her time and her husband's wages, only to be adorned in this external



sense. It should be quite evident that the woman who spends most of her time sitting before the mirror, using paints, powders, and perfumes, or buying up the latest fashions, or covering herself with fancy jewelry merely to entice her man, cannot be motivated by inner spiritual principles, but by the motivations of a sensuous, vain, and sinful heart. Jezebel also knew how to doll herself up, but no one who knows what the Scriptures say about her, would call her a beautiful woman.

True beauty is spiritual!

It consists in the hidden man of the heart. The hidden man is the heart. And the heart is it out of which are all the issues of life. As one thinketh in his heart, so is he. The heart is the ethical center of our being, which gives direction to our whole life. And the apostle has in mind, of course, the *regenerated* heart.

Out of this heart proceeds meekness and a quiet spirit. Meekness is that spiritual virtue that always considers the other better than self. And the quiet spirit is the expression of the meek spirit. These are incorruptible! These are the cosmetics which are precious in God's sight. Only when the wives are adorned with these spiritual virtues, are they truly fit to fulfill the mandate, — to live in subjection to their own husbands.

After this manner in old time the holy women also, who trusted, or hoped, in God, adorned themselves.

Holy these women were, not in and of themselves. They became such only by the sovereign grace of God. They had been chosen to become saints. Consequently, they believed in the promises of God, and placed their hope in God as the God of their salvation. Consequently, too, they adorned themselves with a meek and quiet spirit, which was reflected in their attitude toward their husbands. They were in subjection to their husbands.

As Sarah obeyed Abraham, calling him lord!

Most beautiful model!

The apostle refers undoubtedly to the instance recorded in Genesis 18:12, where we read: "Therefore Sarah laughed within herself, saying, After I am waxed old, shall I have pleasure, my lord being old also?"

This lordship which Sarah recognized in Abraham, she obeyed. To it she was entirely in submission. She honored in her husband a lordship which God had given the man over the woman. She knew nothing of, nor would she have any respect for, the modern liberation movement, the reason being, that her adornment was the hidden man of the heart, which revealed itself in a meek and quiet spirit.

Such a model should be emulated!

Whose daughters, or, as the original text has it, whose children ye became if you do good, and are not put in fear by any terror. God-fearing women are spiritually the children of Sarah, and will follow the example of their spiritual mother. They will live by the

same faith she possessed and demonstrated. And in respect to their husbands, they will also follow her example. They will recognize the God-appointed order in the home, that the husband shall be the head of his wife, and that she is to be subordinate to him in all lawful things. And that means that the wife does not serve her husband out of the fear of fright, because he is stronger and more powerful than she, but because she recognizes the truth that God has placed her husband over her as her lord, who is to be respected and honored for his superior authority as the head of the home. Not in any sense does this mean that she is to be his slave; nor does it mean that the husband can do with her as he pleases. But it does mean that the position of the wife in the home is not equal to that of the man. The divinely ordained order of the home which Sarah understood, and which all God-fearing women will understand, is that the wife is placed in subjection to her husband by God. The God-fearing wife, who lives in subjection to her husband, and is controlled by this principle in the marital state, not only does good, but at the same time reveals that spiritually she is the true child of Sarah.

To be beautiful in this true sense of the word, and to emulate such a beautiful model, will have a beauteous effect. That is, the wives will be doing precisely as the Word of God here exhorts — they will be living in loving submission to their own husbands.

To understand this, it must be borne in mind that this subjection will not be in all respects the same as the subjection of citizens to their government, or of servants to their masters. The relation between wife and husband, and vice versa, runs much deeper than that which obtains in our relation to government and employers. It is the most intimate of all human relations, the relation of love. Where that relation is one of most intimate mutual love, that is, where the wife truly loves her husband, and the husband loves his wife, and that relation is tempered by the ordinance of God — there you will see a most beautiful home and family life. This is the ideal which every God-fearing woman and every God-fearing man will desire, and also experience, when they are married in the Lord. In such a marriage the God-fearing couple will be able to see realized the type of the true spiritual relation which subsists between Christ and His church.

On the other hand, when the husband is an unbeliever and the wife is a child of God, who lives in subjection to her husband, emulating Sarah, the beautiful model, who is adorned with a meek and quiet spirit, and striving to live out of the principles of the Word of God — there you will see a truly beautiful wife.

This is precisely what the apostle is speaking about in the text. We could paraphrase the first part of the text thus: "When some husbands are unbelievers, and therefore respect not the Word of the gospel, let the



believing wives, without saying a word, live honestly as a Christian wife should, with a view to winning their husbands to the faith, as the husbands witness your good conduct, being in subjection to them because you fear God.

How beautiful is that wife who scrupulously obeys the Word of God in our text!

Oh, to be sure, she may experience many difficulties, and all obedience to the Word of God will have to be done in the shade of the cross. But the wife who lives according to this Word must be seen by all, including her husband, as a most beautiful woman. And far better, God beholds in her the beauty of His grace!

## *The Day of Shadows*

# SHAMELESS NAKEDNESS

*Rev. John A. Heys*

It would seem as though we have come full circle!

In paradise Adam and Eve were naked and were not ashamed. They fell into sin, and the first thing recorded of them after they fell is that their eyes were opened, and they knew that they were naked. Although we do not read literally that now they were ashamed, it becomes quite evident that such was the case, for we do read that at once they sewed fig leaves together and made aprons to cover themselves. In light of the fact that before they sinned they were not ashamed, though they were naked, and being aware of their nakedness after sinning they sought clothing, what else can it mean but that now they are ashamed? But today without any shame men and women in nudist colonies parade in the raw before each other. And outside of these nudist camps women without shame, at the shameless demand and shamelessly expressed desire of men, go about in all degrees of undress even unto stark nakedness before men, and that even while serving food! Then, too, on every level today not only are the matters of man's sex life, its members and activities, spoken of freely in public without the slightest hesitancy or trace of shame, but immoral speech is openly spoken and publicly printed. Indeed it does seem as though we have come full circle, to where our first parents stood in their state of righteousness in paradise.

All this, if you please, is entirely apart from the Cross and Spirit of Christ. It would, therefore, seem as though the world has brought us (many in the human race at least) back to Adam's and Eve's shameless nakedness. We have here, it would seem, to a degree rediscovered paradise lost, and learned how silly it was for Adam, and is for us today, to have such shame before those of the opposite sex.

Shall we ask, What has God wrought? Or with grief shall we declare, What hath Satan wrought! Surely this unashamed nakedness in the world today is not something that God wrought through the Spirit of

Christ. Indeed, this shamelessness has crept into the church in varying degrees with Sunday-go-meeting mini-skirts as short as, if not even shorter, than those worn by the unbelievers in their Sunday-go-sporting clothes, and with recreation's scanty bathing suits that outdo those of some in the world for brevity and enticing revelation! Yet this does not make this removal of shame the work of God through the Cross and Spirit of Christ. It is not a condition in the world that the church has succeeded in realizing. The opposite is true. The world has succeeded in bringing into the church the evil in which it rejoices.

Adam and Eve knew no shame because they knew no sin. And they knew no sin because they still were wholly dedicated with body and soul in a joyous service of love before God. Today's unregenerated advocates of exposing the human body without shame likewise know no shame because they know no sin. But they know no sin because they have given themselves over completely to the satisfaction of their lusts, which have now become their gods. Adam and Eve had pure minds, and therefore they knew no shame. The unregenerated have filthy minds that are hardened by their sin and cannot know shame any more. They are calloused by a walk of abandon in this sin. And this boldness, this shameless nakedness which they practice is not here by a conquering and removing of sin, but it is here because of a steady development of sin!

To understand this presence of shame in Adam and Eve, although formerly they had none, we must remember that it was a mutual experience. Eve alone did not feel shame before Adam; but Adam felt shame before Eve as fully as she did before him. They were both ashamed, and both made fig-leaf aprons. We must, therefore, reject any explanation, or attempt to explain this shame, that suggests that it was due to the fact that now Adam found that he had no control of his passions. If that is the explanation, then Eve also



found this out at the same moment Adam did. If we take the position that Eve felt a strong aversion to being thus before Adam's eyes, then we must insist that Adam also had just as strong an unwillingness to be naked before Eve.

Now it cannot and should not be denied that there is a symbolism in their nakedness. The words of God to them, "Who told thee that thou was naked? Hast thou eaten of the tree, whereof I commanded thee that thou shouldest not eat?" indicate that sinning against God and their awareness of nakedness go hand in hand within them. And the significance of this surely is that they were naked before God and knew it! It was not simply a nakedness before each other. They did not simply try to hide from each other by means of fig-leaf aprons. They tried also to hide from God by these aprons, and later by running under the trees of the garden.

Yet it is also a fact that they did feel shame before each other, and that they covered just specific areas of their bodies. They did not try to cover themselves completely from God's eyes by those aprons. And when God tore from them their Arminian-inspired, salvation-by-works covering of fig leaves, He also gave them coats that covered only those parts of the body that Adam and Eve now realized had to be covered. Their shame was, therefore, more than an awareness of guilt before God. And remember that they were man and wife. What is more, man still today to a great degree feels this same shame even in his unregenerated state. In unregenerated man there still is the "glimmerings of natural light," as the Canons of Dordrecht state it, "whereby he retains some knowledge of God, and of the differences between good and evil, and discovers some regard for virtue, good order in society, and for maintaining an orderly external department." Who would be so foolish as to deny this? Although this hardening process, which comes with the development of sin, removes this shame from many, it still is in the souls of unbelievers today, and they can wage strong warfare against pornography, and prostitution, and the like. But let it not be foolishly maintained that God's grace causes these unbelievers still to have shame and to cover their bodies before each other.

The article quoted from the Canons (Heads of doctrine III, IV, article 4) says much more than what was quoted above. It adds that "so far is this light of nature from being sufficient to bring him to a saving knowledge of God, and to true conversion, that he is incapable of using it aright even in things natural and civil. Nay further, this light, such as it is, man in various ways renders wholly polluted, and holds it in unrighteousness, by doing which he becomes inexcusable before God." Now it would be a very strange *grace* of God that would give the unregenerated man a natural light that makes him incapable of doing

what is right in the sphere of the natural and civil and which enables and empowers him to pollute his way and to walk in unrighteousness. And here, in this article, exactly, instead of a restraint of sin by this so-called "common grace" of God, is taught a *development* in sin, and of sin, which man could not have performed without those glimmerings of *natural* light. Spiritual light it is not. And that God preserved in man after the fall his rational, moral (thinking, willing) nature was not a matter of "common grace" but of saving grace. With a view to His elect children God kept in man that nature in order that Christ, His Son, might come into our flesh, and in order that there might be that which could be regenerated to the activity of saving faith. It was with a view to His Church — not the human race in general — that God did not take away from man the formal side of His image, and did not let him fall to the level of the brute beast of the field that can never have faith in God or love in its heart for Him. God kept that thinking, willing nature in mankind in order that He might be able presently to put enmity in some men against the serpent and his seed.

But the point we wish to make, while we still have space, is that although Adam and Eve were husband and wife, and therefore to commit literal adultery or even fornication were impossible, the moment they died spiritually they, because of these glimmerings of natural light, as well as the fact that they fell into the arms of Christ and were regenerated, became aware at once of the sinful drive within them to use their powers and faculties, yea, their whole being, for themselves and apart from the service and love of God. By eating of the forbidden fruit they broke the first table of the law, pushed God aside, sought to rob Him of His sovereignty and embraced the idol that Satan presented them. God's name and God's works meant nothing to them any longer. But in this shame that they felt they also realized their potential to break the second table of the law as well. As man and wife they could hardly steal from each other, Adam could not break the fifth commandment, for he had no authority over him among the creatures. Bearing false witness against each other could not come until there was a third party on this earth. Murder was possible and covetousness could likewise be practiced. But before them in their nakedness was the whole array of sexual immorality from which their eyes could not withdraw themselves, and which therefore required that they be clothed. This, at the moment of their fall into sin, became the *closest* sin of the second table of the law into which they could direct themselves, now that hatred of God had come into their hearts to replace the love wherewith they were created. Indeed, man's sin in paradise did not simply open up the door to all kinds of rebellion and acts of hatred against God. It also introduced all the evil that man would commit



against man, using the neighbour in a personal lust that asks not after the good of that neighbour.

Be not deceived, then, by any propaganda that comes from the lust mills of the world. You do well to have shame before those of the opposite sex when you are caught naked. Blushing brides and virgins who take the marriage vow are still to be commended and are not to be called prudish and old-fashioned. Any lack of shame that results from the world's fashions and ridicule of the work of the living God Who saw fit to clothe Adam and Eve, and did not rebuke them for seeking a covering, will not take away guilt from before His holy eyes, but it will harden you to break also the other commandments in the second table of the law. The law is one, and a hardening in respect to one of the ten commandments will make you calloused in regard to the others as well.

In the resurrection, however, our grave clothes will not be restored; and we will have no need of them. For Christ shall restore us to a shameless nakedness through the covering He has given us for our sins. The beauty of the resurrection body will not be covered, nor will it need to be. That beauty of it presented in

I Corinthians 15:42-44 will be seen. There, in the glory of the kingdom they will neither marry nor be given in marriage, but shall be as the angels in heaven. There, in the new Jerusalem there will be a full church, and there will be no need to bring forth the covenant seed, and no need for a sex life, or sex organs. Besides, we shall have pure minds and every thought and desire will be directed to God and His glory.

Indeed, Christ covers us so fully that we may shamelessly be naked in the new Jerusalem. He covers the sins of our present bodies; and as a result we have no guilt anymore, nor love of sin. In the new Jerusalem we shall know ourselves to be naked before God and before each other; and yet we will have the comfort of being covered by Christ's righteousness. We will not need to hide, and will have nothing to hide from each other to avoid shame and temptation; and we shall be in honour and joy with perfect dedication unto God with body and soul. This dedication of our souls will result in a consecration of the spiritual bodies so that both in body and soul God shall be all in all, even in all of our experiences.

## Education Feature

# Discipline In The Christian Home And School (2)

*Mr. T. De Vries*

We have seen that God gives us authority; now we must see that that authority is used and not despised. The Christian parent has not only the opportunity to discipline, he also has the calling. He must discipline. Paul wrote to Timothy that a Bishop in the church must have certain requirements, one of which is that he have "his children in subjection with all gravity." (I Timothy 3:4) Paul meant not just subjection to the parent, but to God.

Solomon tells us in Proverbs more than once that we must discipline and correct our children even to the point of spanking with a rod. In chapter 19:18 he writes, "Chasten your son while there is hope, and let not thy soul spare for his crying." Solomon tells us farther in chapter 13:24. "He that spareth his rod hateth his son, but he that loveth him chasteneth him betimes." It may not be easy to discipline harshly, but this may be necessary. When Solomon speaks of love for the child he does not mean parental love, but rather the love for Christ, and therefore the love for his children.

When we consider that our children are not really ours but that they belong to Christ, we realize the seriousness of discipline. When the Israelites in their

wickedness sacrificed their children in the fire, God says to them, "You have caused *my* children to pass through the fire."

This calling to discipline is one of serious implications. In Psalm 78 and Deut. 6 we read that we must teach God's precepts to our children, that they go not astray. This does not mean to give them an academic knowledge of God or to teach them to parrot a catechism lesson. It means that discipline is a full-time job, which involves instruction as well as correction. We must teach our children to know and love God, and to live a life which demonstrates that knowledge.

Because we are Christians and because we are dealing with Christ's children, we do not use just any method of discipline. Our methods certainly do not come out of a book by Dr. Spock, and, in fact, ought not to be reduced to a formula. There are, however, some specific references to methods of discipline in the Bible, and there are many others which are to be understood.

We need not look far back in this week to remember when our discipline or correction was motivated by anger or frustration or was not aimed at correcting our



children for God's sake. What was the result? Again looking back it was, we admit shame-facedly, not what we had hoped for. Have we, in fact, given much thought to our methods of discipline?

First, we must discipline because of, and through love. In Revelation 3:19 we read that "God rebukes and chastens as many as He loves." He does not chasten His people in hatred; He could not, because He loves them. We must have this same goal. We cannot tell our children one minute that we love them, and then strike them out of anger the next. Love not only gives the motivation to discipline, it gives the control to discipline with a view toward correction. Harsh punishment is often required to correct a child, but both parent and child need to realize that this chastening is motivated by love, not vengeance, spite, or by an attempt to produce fear. God's chastisement of His people is not lightened because of His love for them.

Children realize that punishment is a natural result of disobedience. They are also quite well aware of the difference between right and wrong. For the parent or teacher to punish out of love is a difficult calling, one which takes much diligence and prayer to fulfill.

Love's opposite, hatred, brings about either no discipline or a mean, un-Christianlike act of revenge. Paul says in Ephesians 6:4, "Ye fathers provoke not your children to wrath, but bring them up in the nurture and admonition of the Lord." Discipline out of anger or because of superior strength is wrong; this then becomes a personal contest, not a God-given calling.

Secondly, discipline must be consistent and be consistently applied. We would not think of giving children their physical necessities only occasionally: the same must be true of discipline. Because we love our children and because we love Christ, discipline will be applied full-time. God does the same for us. He does not overlook a sin here or there. If He did, He would also be a God who overlooked a need here or there, or He would overlook one or two of His children.

Our children get confidence and a feeling of security from this consistent discipline. When discipline is spotty, the child realizes that other support from the parent is spotty. It is the poorly disciplined child who is emotionally insecure. He must constantly test authority to see if it is viable; he must look for support from sources outside the parents.

It is important in this context that the attitudes of the home and school toward discipline are alike. The teacher receives his authority from the parents; if the parent has not used his authority the result is tragedy for all concerned, especially the child.

Thirdly, we can discipline by example. Children, especially small ones, are great imitators. This makes for a powerful tool. All children learn more than just mannerisms from their parents; they generally fall into

the same life style. This is not to say that we bring salvation to our children through trying to be perfect. Salvation is not the goal of discipline. As Christ is an example to us, so also we ought to be examples to our children.

Negatively put, we cannot expect our children to prepare well for catechism if we ourselves do not prepare for Men's Society or Bible Class. We cannot expect our children to respect the teacher if we ourselves talk about him negatively. We cannot expect our children to do well in school if we degrade "book-learnin'."

Fourthly, we can discipline through encouragement. This is something that is often forgotten. We can encourage children to fear God as well as we can encourage them to do well in school or in sports. A sometimes valid complaint on the part of children is that they always hear it when they do wrong, but never receive encouragement when they do right. We must demand and expect proper behaviour and our children must realize that, too. However, a kind and helpful word can go a long way in teaching our children the fear of the Lord.

In Proverbs 15:1 we read, "A soft answer turneth away wrath; but grievous words stir up anger." This is a positive idea, one which can be kept in mind. We do not want to punish merely because there has been a sin, but also so that we carry out our calling to teach the fear of God.

The child also has a calling in discipline, and that is to obey. Discipline is not a one-way street; it is an act which calls for the cooperation of children in order to be effective. We might even be able to say that obedience is the harder of the two callings to fulfill.

Obedience is a calling of all God's people. All of us are duty-bound to show respect to many authorities. Never are we on our own to make our own laws, despite what the Declaration of Independence would have us to believe. There are no laws of man; ultimately there is God's law. On the earth there are the laws of God which are given through the government and the church.

Christian obedience is defined as the hearkening to the Word of God, and the complete submission to it. It is the practice of that Word in thought and deed.

Obedience on the part of children is the following up of God's Word, not just the word of the parent. It is submission to Christ in all the child's walk and conversation. In Ephesians 6:1 we read, "Children obey your parents in the Lord, for this is right." In God's creation parents are wiser than children; the social order is based on the family unit with strong parental leadership; and, a child's welfare depends on his obedience. These reasons are, however, only incidental to the main goal in obedience. In all things, including obedience, we are to honor and glorify the Name of God.



This virtue of obedience is to be inculcated in the home. In this way obedience becomes a way of life, not just an escape followed in tight spots or when authority is present. In the baptismal formula we recognize "that we and our children are conceived in sin." We also recognize that we and our children are received by grace into Christ. We have a small beginning of that new obedience. Patiently and prayerfully the child must learn obedience from his parents.

The obedience of children is important enough to be the subject of one of the Ten Commandments. Observe that this commandment is directed toward children, not toward parents. The child who honors his parents in early life will also honor all authority in later life. Unlike most of the other commandments, the fifth is positive. There are many "don'ts" which could be read into the commandment, but this is not necessary. The simple question, "Am I honoring my father and mother?" can be applied to any activity. Any Christian child can answer it. The Heidelberg Catechism explains that obedience means "That I show all honor, love, and fidelity to my father and mother, and all in authority over me, and submit myself to their good instruction and correction, with due obedience."

Children must obey their parents and teachers willingly and cheerfully. The outward pretense of obedience along with inner rebelliousness is no better than outright disobedience. Paul urges in Col. 4:23 and 24, "Whatsoever ye do, do it heartily as to the Lord, and not unto men, knowing that of the Lord ye shall

receive the reward of the inheritance: for ye serve the Lord Christ." God removed Saul from his position as king of Israel for disobedience. Saul put on the pious front that his disobedience was activated by the desire to sacrifice to God. Samuel told Saul, "Behold, to obey is better than sacrifice and to hearken than the fat of rams. For rebellion is as the sin of witchcraft and stubbornness is as iniquity and idolatry." I Samuel 15:22b-23a. Only God's children will ever obey their parents. For this reason the promise of eternal life is extended only to them.

Children must receive discipline in faith, realizing that it comes from God and is given for their profit. Parents and teachers are just as sinful as children, but this is no reason for disobedience. This discipline is, nevertheless, from God. Paul tells us that rulers are ministers of God to thee for good. Discipline must be received in love, love for Christ Who disciplines all His people for their good. Discipline must be received in repentance. Just as the parent must correct his child, so also must the child repent of his evil deeds. Correction is not given for the righteous act.

In conclusion, I would like to emphasize three points. First, that parents are authorities placed by God to teach their children the fear of the Lord. Secondly, that only the love of God will cause them to discipline. Thirdly, children are to receive discipline because it comes to them from God through Christ. The calling to discipline is certainly a difficult but blessed one.

## *The Strength of Youth*

# *Children, the Heritage of the Lord*

*Rev. J. Kortering*

With so much emphasis being placed upon birth control today, one may properly ask, where does God fit into this picture? Is it so that man has taken complete control of human reproduction and that God has nothing to say about it anymore? Is it so that in areas of the unbelieving world, man has over-populated the world and God is standing helplessly by? Is it so that in the area of the believing church, Christians are preventing child-birth and therefore man is curtailing the development of the covenant by not bringing forth the covenant seed? Where does God fit into this strange picture?

### **THE SOVEREIGNTY OF GOD AND CHILDBIRTH**

The Word of God provides sufficient evidence that God is sovereign. To be sure, this is a Calvinistic term;

it is such however, because it is Biblical. Three things are involved in the sovereignty of God. First, we recognize that God is the Author of life. This is true from the beginning of time, as Creator. The Genesis account makes this plain, as well as Heb. 11:3. This is also true for us today, God upholds and governs all things, our coming into the world is by His control and our existence is under His guidance. All of life owes its existence to God alone. The whole of Psalm 139 is a beautiful testimony of this truth. Secondly, it follows from the above that God has the right to do as He pleases with this life which He brings into existence. Here we touch upon the sovereignty of God regarding the future destiny of all men as determined by predestination. It also includes the daily events in the



lives of everyone; God's sovereignty means that He has the right to control our lives, so that everything takes place exactly as He wills. Look up Matt. 10:29, 30. Thirdly, God possesses all the power to accomplish exactly what He wills for every creature. It is not so that God has desires for mankind, but cannot accomplish them for lack of power. There is no power apart from our sovereign God. He controls all the power of nature, the power of the nations, as well as the power of His own sovereign grace to save His people from their sins. Everything is under the control of God.

This also includes bearing children. There is not one child born into this world without it being according to the will of God. This applies to the world in general; it also applies to the children born to believing parents.

The problem of over-population was not unforeseen by God. The Christian church should not take the attitude that we have to help God out of a situation that somehow puts His program of salvation into jeopardy. On the contrary, the entire problem of pollution of the earth, which is closely connected with a large population, is exactly under the sovereign direction of God. This is God's way of judging man for His greed and covetousness. If we study the book of Revelation, we learn that the seals which are being broken, Rev. 6:1-17, the trumpets that are sounded, Rev. 8 and 9, and the vials poured out, Rev. 15 and 16, affect the whole creation and men living upon the earth. These constitute God's judgments upon fallen man, who has been unfaithful in God's earth. Before God casts the wicked into the everlasting torment, He will demonstrate to Him that all his dreams for worldly prosperity apart from Jesus Christ have failed. The entire creation will testify against man for his being an unfaithful king. Hence today, the so-called overpopulation of the earth and all the associated problems are God's sovereign judgments upon man. God controls the population of the world for His own purpose in fulfilling righteous judgment.

As believers, this also applies to us in a personal way. The Psalmist David expressed it this way, "For thou has possessed my reins: thou hast covered me in my mother's womb. I will praise thee for I am fearfully and wonderfully made; marvellous are thy works; and that my soul knoweth right well. My substance was not hid from thee when I was made in secret, and curiously wrought in the lowest part of the earth. Thine eyes did see my substance, yet being unperfect; and in thy book all my members were written, which in continuance were fashioned when as yet there was none of them," Psalm 139:13-16. Each one of us was born into this world by the will of God. Before God there are no accidental childbirths. No children are added to the number that God eternally willed according to election, none are excluded. The sovereignty of God controls the exact number of children born to

covenant parents. Believing husbands and wives must realize that in the final instance God has the absolute say as to when and how many children we may have the privilege to bring forth. This places the sovereignty of God in perspective; it controls our whole life. As believers this is of great comfort. If it is the will of God that we bear none or few children, this is not of our doing, but God's, and this provides peace and confidence in our sovereign God. If it is the will of God that we bring forth many children, this, too, is of the Lord. He never over-burdens, He never expects the impossible, He provides us with these children and He promises that He will over-rule our whole life and strengthen us to fulfill our calling in training these children. We can appreciate the words of Psalm 127:3, "Lo, children are an heritage of the Lord; and the fruit of the womb is His reward." All our children are literally handed to us by God.

### SOVEREIGNTY AND RESPONSIBILITY

We considered in our previous article the exhortation of Scripture to bear children. God's command is clear; to the married He says, I will that the young women marry and bear children. Marriage and children are united in perfect harmony according to the will of God. This is the sacred calling and responsibility of every married person.

Besides this, we also recognize that God over-rules the whole of our lives. This is true in every instance. If God calls us to work as a farmer, the success or failure of this work is determined in the final instance by God. A farmer may work at plowing, planting, fertilizing, cultivating, and all the rest, but God gives the increase. The fruit of one's labor is of God. It is true in marriage no less. The calling to be joined in marriage is of the Lord; every married person must be able to say, it is the Lord's will that I marry this particular person. Once believing this, the calling within marriage is also clear. We considered this in connection with the exhortation concerning husbands and wives. This applies also to the desire and effort to bring forth children. God doesn't come and spell out to us the exact details of our married life. He doesn't reveal to us what His will is concerning how many children we should bear. No young couple can say at the outset of their marriage how many children it may be the will of God for them to bear. It is wrong to pre-determine this for ourselves; if we enter marriage and say, we will have two children and no more, we are revealing our pride by trying to play God. What if God gives us none, or three, are we going to say that is not of the Lord? You see the foolishness of such planning?

One may ask, what should be the attitude of married people toward the number of children? Must we simply breed like rabbits? Is a wife just a baby machine manipulated by the husband? What is correct? Is there a correct view of birth control?



In answering this, we must realize that ultimately we rely upon God for the answer. Here, too, we must be within the will of God with our answer. How beautiful it is when husband and wife realize that through their love-life God provides children, and these children are of the Lord. Through the sharing of love and life, children are born. This is of the Lord. Believing parents have the privilege to live within the bonds of marriage realizing that each time a child is conceived and born, it is God's work and such children are gifts of God. Without any human interference and control, such parents rely entirely upon God for the children so conceived. This must be considered the proper approach.

Suppose that through the normal relationship of husband and wife, children are born rapidly and husband and wife become concerned whether children are born too soon, or the family is becoming too large, then what? Here, too, we must be careful that we are not conditioned by the world in determining the frequency of childbirth and size of family. We have to consider these things before the face of God, and not our own selves or society. If one's circumstances are such that a wife's health is involved, if the ability to provide is of real concern, surely these things are also determined by God. God gives to husband and wife the physical, mental and spiritual strength to bear children and to raise them in the fear of the Lord. All do not have the same gifts. The Lord measures these out, and each married couple must evaluate the size of their family within this context. Does God provide the material means to provide for these children? (Here, too, consider the Scriptural standard of provision, not the standard of our lucrative age). Does God provide the physical strength to bear a goodly number of children? Does God provide the spiritual strength to add more children, (Here we must not simply say, I like more kids, but one must say that he or she is able to share their love with another child).

If we approach this subject with a sincere desire to obey the Word of God and consider the will of God regarding children, we will be in a spiritual state of

mind to know what the will of God is concerning the number of children. Then we will not be selfish, but spiritual. We will not say first of all, I want to tell God how many children I want, but we will prayerfully seek His direction as to how many He wills that we bring into the world. Only in the way of obedience can we rejoice in the will of God.

### CHILDREN OF GOD

Believing parents may trust that God, Who supplies us with the necessary strength to conceive and bring forth children, will also give the ability to train them properly.

From the foregoing, we may conclude that our children are also God's children. They are not only born by the will of man, they are also born by the will of God. This means that God prepared them for us, they have a place in His eternal will of election, and even before they are born, they are known unto God.

True it is that not all children of believers are in the covenant. Romans 9:8 makes this clear. This, however, is not revealed to parents at the time of childbirth. Hence, our Reformed fathers assure us, "Since we are to judge of the will of God, from His Word, which testifies that the children of believers are holy, not by nature, but in virtue of the covenant of grace, in which they, together with the parents, are comprehended, godly parents have no reason to doubt of the election and salvation of the children whom it pleaseth God to call out of this life in their infancy," Canons I Art. 17. The same holds true for the living, so long as they do not reveal themselves as despising that covenant, as Esau.

This makes all the difference in dealing with our children. They are the children of God, though conceived and born in sin. They are included in the covenant, Gen. 17:7, Acts 2:39. They are entrusted to our care by God; not that we must win them for Christ, but rather that we may be the instruments in God's hands to bring the faith which God has implanted in them to conscious expression.

This parental responsibility follows from the sovereignty of God's direction in giving us children.

## From Holy Writ

# Exposition Of The Book Of Hebrews

Rev. G. Lubbers

### THE SCOPE OF ISAAC'S BLESSING UPON HIS TWO SONS (Hebrews 11:20)

The sacred writer calls attention to the faith of Isaac and the act of faith of the latter blessing his two sons, twin sons they were. The firstborn was named Esau, and the younger was called Jacob at the time of their

birth. Both were children of prayer. When Rebecca was barren, Isaac entreated the LORD for her sake, and the LORD heard his prayer, and Rebecca conceived and bore twin sons! Isaac must have been concerned in this matter, for the Word of the Lord had been to Abraham, his father, "In Isaac shall the Seed be



called.” (Gen. 21:11) And this Seed is Christ, and His church out of every tongue, and tribe and people and nation. All nations shall be blessed in Abraham in the Seed. And this Seed would be called in Isaac. So important was this matter that Isaac must have a wife from Abraham’s kindred in Haran. He may not have a wife from the heathen nations of Canaan. Wherefore when Rebecca becomes Isaac’s wife, and they receive no children, the latter entreated the LORD for her. He is concerned about the fulfilment of the promise of Abraham, that he would become a great nation!

But the Seed would be according to the “purpose of election.” (Romans 9:11) This purpose must stand! Wherefore when Rebecca is great with children, and these two sons wrestle in her womb for the supremacy, the Divine word came to her, “Two nations are in thy womb, and two peoples shall be separated from thy bowels; and the one people shall be stronger than the other people; and the elder shall serve the younger.” (Gen. 25:23) This word came to Rebecca before the children had done any good or evil. (Rom. 9:11) The scope therefore of the blessing of Isaac of his two sons many years later was within the frame-work of and was the fulfilment of this Divine announcement to Rebecca.

This Word of God concerning the two sons must have been kept by Isaac and Rebecca in their hearts all through the seventy years which elapsed from the time of the birth of these twin sons till the time when Isaac blesses them concerning things to come. Surely this was something which was no mere hearsay, but it was a word which was the answer to Rebecca’s fearful outcry” if it be so wherefore do I live.” Would the having of these children make her happy if the outcome is a fierce struggle between Jacob and Esau before they are even born? Surely, the divine word of the purpose of election *stands* here in this answer to Rebecca “before the children had done good or evil.” Truly, salvation is not of works, but of Him who calleth efficaciously! (Rom. 9:12) The elder shall serve the younger.

We see here the unity of Scripture when we compare this with what we read in Hebrews 11:20. For when Isaac blessed Jacob and Esau “he blessed them concerning things to come!” Now these things to come must be the things to come across a long span of time, many centuries. They referred to the future, instead of the past and present. They were the “things not seen” as faith is the evidence of the same. And these things stretched out into the future some 1800 years, even till the time of Christ. These are the things which the prophet Malachi makes the great theme of his prophecy.

He stands four-square on this word of earlier prophecy of the Lord to Rebecca and as uttered by Isaac in his blessing of his sons. Malachi catches the rays of this prophetic light and sets it in focus as they

are to be realized in the fulness of time through John the Baptist as the forerunner of the Christ. That Scripture interprets Scripture is the sound rule of hermeneutics.

Yes, these things, future events, are what will befall these two nations. For in Rebecca’s womb there are not simply two individuals struggling. The struggle is far more portentous and gigantic. It includes the persons of Jacob and Esau as these are the heads of two great and separate nations. Wherefore we read in Malachi 1:1-4 “I have loved you, saith the LORD. Yet ye say, Wherein hast thou loved us? Was not Esau Jacob’s brother? saith the LORD: yet I loved Jacob, but Esau I hated, and made his mountains a desolation, and gave his heritage to the jackals of the wilderness. Whereas Edom saith, we are beaten down, but we will return and build the waste places; thus saith the LORD of hosts. They shall build but I shall throw down, and men shall call them The border of wickedness, The people against whom the LORD hath indignation forever.”

Here is elective love and reprobative hate worked out in history’s pages for some eighteen hundred years. Such is the *scope* of the prophecy of Isaac, when in prophetic role he sees the future through his physically dimmed eyesight, yet in the prophetic blessing he sees clearly the things to come, and which will befall these two struggling nations. The outcome of the struggle, as well as the struggle, is of the Lord! Unless we see these directives of Scripture itself, we can only see a Jewish and Edomitic saga in their respective national roles. And the latter is pure humanism.

#### *GOD’S OVERRULING PROVIDENCE IN ISAAC’S BLESSING JACOB* (Hebrews 11:20)

We should notice that in the text in Hebrews 11:20 Isaac blessed “Jacob and Esau.” He blessed them in this order. Here are two twin-brothers. And in the blessing the distinction is made between the two, the very distinction which the LORD had announced prior to their birth and subsequent to their pre-natal struggling in their mother’s womb. The threads of history are woven by the LORD. If ever it became evident that man cannot will the will and decree out of the world, but that His purpose of election stands, it was here. It was all contrary to the natural impulse and desire of Isaac, the father of the sons. Isaac loved Esau, notwithstanding the Divine word concerning his place of “service” to Jacob. There was even a certain fleshly weakness here. Esau was a man of the field, generous, wild and, yes, profane. (Hebrews 12:16) He did not see the difference between the holy covenant and promise and the common unholy life of the Canaanites, which was full of adultery and fornication. He was a fornicator! This all both Isaac and Rebecca knew. It was a constant source of grief to both of them. For when Esau revealed his profanity at the age of forty



years in the choice of his wives, Judith and Basemath, this was a "grief of mind to both Isaac and to Rebecca." (Gen. 26:35) Notwithstanding this, Isaac's soul clave to Esau. Besides, Esau had deliberately despised "the birthright of the promise" when he sold "his birthright," as this was his in Isaac's house. Esau was well-instructed in the matter of the promise. Had grandfather Abraham not lived the first seventeen years of his life? Both little boys were instructed on Abraham's knee. But Esau loved this world, the lusts of the flesh, the lust of the eyes and the pride of life! This Isaac knew. But he preferred not to think of this when he saw Esau. This was the flesh of Isaac.

Isaac is going to rush head-long in his own way. He will give the birthright blessing to Esau. But God intervened. He used a sinful act of deception on the part of Rebecca and the cooperation of Jacob. We know the history well, do we not? Rebecca made a delicious dish of the meat of the flock and Jacob must be like Esau in every respect except to the ear. The voice is Jacob's. And, frankly, I believe that Isaac knew it too. He had his misgivings. But he is taken in his own craftiness by Rebecca and Jacob, but not least by the LORD Himself who overrules all the plans of Isaac! For we read the short but meaningful "So he blessed him!" He blessed him by being taken in his own craftiness! Isaac was overruled by the LORD. He blessed Jacob according to the purpose of election: Jacob have I loved and Esau have I hated!

Small wonder that we read that, when Esau appears and desires the blessings, and when it becomes exceedingly clear that Esau is Esau and Jacob is Jacob and that the latter had been given the birthright blessings, Isaac "trembled very exceedingly and said, Who then is he that hath taken venison, and brought it to me, and I have eaten all before thou camest, and have blessed him? yea, and he shall be blessed!" Esau came back soon, but not soon enough. On the time-clock of God he was too late! Humanly speaking, had he been a little bit sooner he might have succeeded in obtaining the blessing which he so coveted and which his father was more than willing to give him. But it was not to be so. The purpose of election stands! God overruled it all. All the strands of this history are in the

LORD'S hands. Yea, and he shall be blessed, says Isaac of Jacob. How wondrous are the ways of God, unfathomed and unknown!

*THE BLESSING OF JACOB* (Hebrews 11:20; Gen. 27:27-29)

The terminology of the blessing wherewith Jacob is blessed by Isaac is indeed poetical. It seems, at first flush, that Isaac is hesitant to give a blessing which is thoroughly spiritual. We ought to remember that the *personal* blessing of sharing in the Kingdom appears to have been given to Jacob when he returned from Haran after he arrived at the brook Jabbok. Here Jacob is met by a man, the Lord Himself. And the Lord wrestles with Jacob till he cries "I will not let Thee go except Thou bless me." It was there that his name is changed to Israel. He there comes face to face with God. It was his Peniel. Not so here in Isaac's tent. Here it is the conniving Jacob who would anticipate the Lord. And the terminology emphasizes more what Isaac foresees and prophesies concerning the future of Jacob's nation than what Jacob receives in faith at that moment.

This ought to be evident from the elements of the "blessing" here. It is poetic prophecy concerning Israel's greatness in the midst of the "nations." The starting-point is the "smell of the field." One almost feels that Isaac is thinking that he is blessing Esau. He may have had misgivings, but he certainly blessed the "Esau" which he here entertained by receiving his "venison." It all seems so natural: dew of heaven, fatness of the earth, and plenty of grain and new wine. Even the terminology of the blessing: "let peoples serve thee, and nations bow down to thee; be lord over thy brethren and let thy mother's sons bow down to thee," points toward a development which from a formal point of view could be given to "Esau." And the question arises: How can the writer to the Hebrews write: "By faith Isaac blessed Jacob and Esau. . . .?"

The faith of Isaac became evident when he consciously applied this to Jacob, over the tears and protestations of Esau "Yea, and he shall be blessed." It was then that Isaac not only foretold this future in prophetic vision, but applied this to Jacob as he would be the superior nation, the one in whom the "seed is called."

## *Contending for the Faith*

# The Doctrine of Atonement

*Rev. H. Veldman*

As stated in our preceding article, the doctrine setting forth the atonement of our Lord Jesus Christ constitutes the second head of the Canons of Dordt. The first head treats the doctrine of God's sovereign

predestination. And we also stated in our preceding article that the truth of God's sovereign predestination is vital and of primary importance. The truth that the Lord is sovereign in His decree of election and



reprobation demands the truth of limited or particular atonement. They stand or fall together.

The second head of the Canons treats the death of Christ and the redemption of men thereby. We must notice that the fathers speak of the death of Christ as redemption. This is of the utmost significance. In reality, the Arminians or Remonstrants deny this vital truth. O, it is true that they also speak of the death of Christ as redemption. But this is really only a play on words. Fact is, they do not believe in the work of Christ upon the cross as redemption. The word "redemption" is strictly a reformed term. And, of course, it is thoroughly Scriptural. When discussing these articles of the second head of the Canons, we do not purpose to treat them in detail. This has been done in the Standard Bearer in the past by Prof. H. C. Hoeksema. These are wonderful articles, and our readers do well to study them. They are admirably suited to be used in our various societies.

Art. I of the second head reads as follows:

God is not only supremely merciful, but also supremely just. And His justice requires (as He hath revealed Himself in His Word), that our sins committed against His infinite majesty should be punished, not only with temporal, but with eternal punishment, both of body and soul; which we cannot escape, unless satisfaction be made to the justice of God.

Now it is surely a striking thing that our fathers here say something about God. We read nothing in this article of the death of Christ as such. Before the fathers set forth this truth of the atonement, they first say something about God, what God is in Himself.

This first article teaches the necessity of atonement through satisfaction alone. Why? Because of what God is in Himself. Notice that we read here of God's revelation of *Himself* in His Word. This, we must understand, is fundamental. Our conception of the Lord determines our conception of all things. If we err here we will necessarily err all down the line. This, of course, is a fundamental fault of Arminianism. Arminianism, which is fundamentally modernism and humanism, is not interested in God, but only in man. God cannot save man except in the way of the complete satisfaction of His justice and righteousness. And this is true because God is just. The Lord is not supremely merciful but also supremely just. The justice of God is the maintaining of His righteousness, is therefore that virtue whereby He rewards the good and punishes the evil. God *is* just and He can never deny Himself. God always acts in perfect harmony with His own infinite being. As the God of all righteousness, He eternally wills Himself, loves Himself, and always maintains Himself.

Sin must therefore be punished. Our sins have been committed against the infinite majesty of the Lord. Also this truth is minimized and ignored by the Arminian. He is not fundamentally concerned with sin.

This is true of all the philosophy of the world. Sin, however, is as great as God is great. Sin is disobedience against the Lord, is man's maintaining of himself over against the living God. Sin, therefore, is fundamentally eternal. Sin is that evil whereby man would establish himself forever. The sinner is or expresses his concern because the living God would establish Himself forever. But he has no objection against maintaining himself forever. But God is God. And He is infinite in His majesty. He punishes, therefore, not only temporally but also eternally. Temporally must not be confused with temporarily. The latter means "for a while," whereas the former means that God punishes in time. That God punishes temporally and eternally means, therefore, that He always punishes. There is never a moment when the Lord does not punish. This truth deals a devastating blow to the theory of Common Grace. God never permits sin to go unpunished.

Sin, therefore, must be punished in man, in the entire nature of man, in his body and soul. Atonement, therefore, is possible only in the way of the complete satisfaction of this justice of the Lord. All our sins must be paid before there can be any possibility of our return into the favor of God. This truth is also emphasized in Lord's Day 5 of our Heidelberg Catechism.

To be sure, God is also supremely merciful, as stated at the beginning of this article. How true this is! Did God not so love the world that He gave His only-begotten Son, that whosoever believeth on Him should not perish but have everlasting life? But the Lord is never merciful at the cost of His justice. Such would be impossible. The necessity of punishment is not abandoned by God's mercy. This is the presentation of many today. It is claimed that the love and mercy of God make it impossible for the Lord to punish the sinner temporally and eternally. This reasoning is wholly fallacious. Fact is, in God all His virtues are one. It is for this reason that God's justice is a merciful justice and that His mercy is a righteous and just mercy. If, therefore, His mercy is to be revealed, it must be revealed only in the way of God's justice and the full satisfaction of His righteousness. This truth of Art. I must ever be kept in mind.

Finally, the fathers do not quote from the Scriptures in this first article. Now it is probably true that they do not quote the Scriptures here because the truth expressed in this article is stated in Lord's Day 5 of the Heidelberg Catechism, and the Remonstrants were also bound to that confession. However, throughout the positive part of this second head of the Canons we find very few quotations from the Word of God. This need not alarm us. Fact is, the fathers do quote from the infallible Scriptures in the second part of this second head, dealing with the rejection of errors.



## ARTICLE II

Since therefore we are unable to make that satisfaction in our own persons, or to deliver ourselves from the wrath of God, He hath been pleased of His infinite mercy to give His only begotten Son, for our surety, Who was made sin, and became a curse for us and in our stead, that He might make satisfaction to Divine justice on our behalf.

We cannot make this satisfaction for our sins as required by the justice of the alone living God. In the first place, we cannot pay the penalty: eternal death. This means that we must be dead forever. To die this death, pay this penalty would imply that we could never possibly rise again. In the second place, we could never meet the requirement as demanded by the justice of God to make this satisfaction. This justice of the Lord demands, not only that we pay this penalty, but also that we satisfy this justice of the Lord in perfect obedience. We are by nature children of disobedience. Hence, we could never pay even a single penny of our debt to God. And, in the third place, we cannot make this satisfaction because we can never make amends for any sin committed in the past. We must always love the Lord with all our heart and soul and mind and strength. It is for this reason that we could "never take time out" to pay for any wrong committed in the past. Nothing we could do now, no amount of perfect obedience can right a wrong of the past. Fact is, even if we would be perfectly obedient to the Lord, we only do what we are required to do. Our good works, therefore, could never be meritorious.

In this second article of Head II the fathers call our attention to how the Lord revealed His mercy to His people. Since we could not make this satisfaction for our sins, it pleased God of His infinite mercy to give His only begotten Son for our surety. The word "surety" surely implies the idea of substitution. The word here means "surety, bail, guarantee." When I owe someone a sum of money or I am under an obligation to pay a penalty as prescribed by the law, then he who is my surety takes upon himself that responsibility and will pay that penalty should I be remiss in my obligation. This is the meaning of the expression in this article. God gave us His only begotten Son to be our surety. This eternal Son of God, as in our human nature, assumed the responsibility to pay for our sins before the bar of God's justice. This was an act of God's infinite mercy. God gave us His Son. The Triune God gave Himself, in His Son, and He gave Himself. In that unfathomable mercy the Lord gave His son for a surety for our guilt.

The fathers here refer to two passages of Holy Writ: 2 Cor. 5:21 and Gal. 3:13. In 2 Cor. 5:21 we read: "For He hath made Him to be sin for us, who knew no sin; that we might be made the righteousness of God in Him." And in Gal. 3:13 we read: "Christ hath redeemed us from the curse of the law, being made a curse for us: for it is written, Cursed is every one that

hangeth on a tree." That Christ was made to be sin for us does not mean, we understand, that He was made sin in the spiritual, ethical sense of the word. It does not mean that He became a sinner in the sense that He actually became corrupt, sinful. 2 Cor. 5:21 tells us of Christ that He Himself knew no sin. He was conceived and born without sin and corruption. He was the holy child Jesus. He never knew sin, never could sin. For Christ to sin was an impossibility. This is because He is Immanuel, God with us. But He was made sin in the judicial sense of the word. He was condemned by the Lord as the Chieftain of sinners, not because of any sin He had committed, but because all the sins of all the elect throughout all the ages were upon Him.

The fathers do not answer the question why only God's begotten Son could be this surety for us. We need not discuss this at this time. To this question we have the answer in Lord's Day 5 of our Heidelberg Catechism. There it is explained that our Saviour must be one who is very God and also very and righteous man. Finally, this second article surely emphasizes the wonderful and boundless mercy of our God. How far from the truth is the accusation of wicked men that the reformed view of the Saviour makes of the living God a cruel tyrant! How absurd and wicked is this charge! Fact is, God, of His infinite and boundless mercy, gave His only begotten Son, gave Him for us who are miserable sinners, gave Him to us even into the infinite and eternal death of the cross. Fact is, they who deny this Scriptural truth of the atonement, who teach that Christ died for all men, head for head, they are the ones who really deny the mercy of God. In this universal view of Christ's death upon the cross there is neither justice nor mercy. There is certainly no justice in it. And neither is there any mercy in it, inasmuch as, according to this view, Christ did not pay for sin, and therefore nothing really happened upon the cross of Calvary.

## WEDDING ANNIVERSARY

On Saturday, March 4, 1972, our dear parents,  
MR. AND MRS. HENRY J. HOLSTEGE  
hope to celebrate their 35th wedding anniversary.

We thank our covenant God for the riches of His mercy and blessings toward us. Our prayer is that God may continue to lead them in all their way, that together, in all things, we may acknowledge Him.

Mr. and Mrs. Leonard Holsteg  
Jim, Lenny and Tom.

Mr. and Mrs. Jay Holsteg  
Lori, Debbie, Randy and Tracy.

Mr. and Mrs. Larry Lubben  
Dawn, Denise and Monty.

Mr. and Mrs. Harvey Holsteg  
Greg, Brenda and Hiede.

Byron Center, Mich.

Mr. and Mrs. Claire Holsteg.



*IN MEMORIAM*

On the 20th of January, 1972, it pleased the Lord to call home unto Himself our beloved husband, father and grandfather, JOHN P. MIEDEMA, at the age of 86 years.

"And God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes; and there shall be no more death, neither sorrow, nor crying, neither shall there be any more pain; for the former things are passed away." (Rev. 21:4).

Mrs. John P. Miedema (Minnie)

Mrs. C. Mohr (Katherine)

Mr. and Mrs. Albert Miedema

Mr. and Mrs. Gerrit Systma (Pearl)

Mr. and Mrs. Robert Miedema

Mr. and Mrs. Jerry Gritter (Donna)

26 grandchildren Mr. and Mrs. Harold Miedema

16 great-grandchildren Mr. and Mrs. Kenneth Miedema

*RESOLUTION OF SYMPATHY*

The Junior Mr. and Mrs. Society of First Protestant Reformed Church wishes to express its sincere sympathy to its members, Mr. and Mrs. Duane Gunnink, in the passing of Mr. Gunnink's father,

MR. GERRIT GUNNINK.

May they find comfort in the following words of Scripture, "Precious in the sight of the Lord is the death of His saints." (Psalm 16:15).

Rev. G. Van Baren, Pres.

Mrs. Gary Bylsma, Sec'y.

*IN MEMORIAM*

Our Lord suddenly took unto Himself on January 26, 1972, our beloved husband, father, and grandfather REINHOLD DEWALD at the age of 69 years.

In this time of sorrow, we cannot but think of his favorite Scripture text — Matthew 11:28 — "Come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest." And be comforted anew and believe that He does all things well.

Mrs. Reinhold Dewald

Mr. and Mrs. Alvin Rau

Mr. and Mrs. Lorenz Bertsch

Mr. and Mrs. Le Roy Dewald

Mr. and Mrs. John Kuiper, Jr.

20 grandchildren Mr. and Mrs. Milo Dewald

*IN MEMORIAM*

The Sunday School and the Men's Society of the Hudsonville Protestant Reformed Church wish to express their sincere sympathy to one of their members, Mr. Henry Boer, in the recent, sudden loss of his father,

MR. JACOB BOER.

May our gracious God comfort him and his family in the blessed hope of the saints, fixed upon that glorious inheritance, incorruptible and undefiled, that passes not away, preserved for us by our God in Jesus Christ in the heavens.

Mr. Hilbert Kuiper, pres.

*RESOLUTION OF SYMPATHY*

The Choral Society of the Hudsonville Protestant Reformed Church wishes to extend its sympathy to Mr. and Mrs. Henry Boer in the recent passing of his father,

MR. JACOB BOER.

"Blessed be the Lord, that hath given rest unto His people." (I Kings 8:56).

Paul Schipper, Pres.

Betty Haveman, Sec'y.

*RESOLUTION OF SYMPATHY*

The members of The Radio Committee of The Reformed Witness Hour hereby express their Christian sympathy to their fellow member, Duane Gunnink, in the passing of his father,

GERRIT GUNNINK,

of Edgerton, Minnesota.

May our ever faithful covenant Father give comfort to the bereaved family by means of His Holy Spirit and Infallible Word, is our prayer.

Don Faber, Pres.

Patricia Karsemeyer, Sec'y.

*RESOLUTION OF SYMPATHY*

The Senior Mr. and Mrs. Society of Hope Protestant Reformed Church expresses sincere sympathy to Mrs. John Kuiper, Jr. and Mr. Milo DeWald in the loss of their father

REINHOLD DEWALD.

"For we know that if our earthly house of this tabernacle were dissolved we have a building of God, a house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens." (II Cor. 5:1).

Owen Peterson, Pres.

Nancy Kuiper, Sec'y.

*RESOLUTION OF SYMPATHY*

The Adult Bible Class of the Hudsonville Protestant Reformed Church hereby expresses its sincere sympathy to our members, Mr. and Mrs. Henry Boer, in the loss of their father

JACOB BOER.

May God comfort them by His Word and Spirit. "And we know that all things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are called according to His purpose." (Romans 8:28).

Peter Lubbers, Pres.

Mrs. Erne Miedema, Sec'y.

*RESOLUTION OF SYMPATHY*

The Martha Ladies Aid Society of the Hull Protestant Reformed Church expresses its sincere sympathy to its members, Mrs. Albert Vogel and Mrs. John Boer, in the passing of their half-sister,

MRS. CHARLES STEENSMA.

"For we know that if our earthly house of this tabernacle were dissolved, we have a building of God, a house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens." (II Cor. 5:1).

Rev. J. Kortering, Pres.

Mrs. John Hoekstra, Sec'y.



## News From Our Churches

February 14, 1972

At the time these lines were being written, Redland's congregation was meeting for the purpose of calling a minister from a trio consisting of Rev. R. Harbach, Rev. G. Lanting, and Rev. M. Schipper.

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In looking through the Sunday bulletins, from which comes the greater share of news from this column, I ran across the following interesting item from the "Requested Announcement" section of Hull's January 30 bulletin:

"Our congregation's history is to be included in the centennial book of Hull. If any of you have old pictures of the history of our congregation (former ministers, activities, church building, etc.) please inform the pastor."

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Church bulletins from east to west have been carrying announcements concerning activities sponsored by the young people, in their attempt to raise money for the 1972 Young People's Convention. In California there was a Spaghetti Supper; in Colorado, a Baked Goods Sale (two of them, in fact — and within three weeks of each other); and in Michigan, an Auction and a basketball game featuring "the married men of Holland, Hope, and Hudsonville vs. the married men of First, Southeast, and Southwest."

The convention, you perhaps recall, will be held in Loveland. The Young People's Society there has chosen the theme, "Come, Lord Jesus," from Rev. 22:20. The three speeches, as well as the discussion-groups, will treat various aspects of the truth of the last things.

\* \* \* \* \*

Our young people are engaged, incidentally, in other activities, as well — activities less conspicuous, perhaps, than the sponsorship of basketball games, but of very real importance, nonetheless. A committee of young people at First Church, for example, takes care of the recording of the services, and the supplying of the tapes to the shut-ins and others who are unable to attend the services.

That service, by the way, has been offered, also, to others, who are not members of First Church. We refer to a "News and Views from First Protestant Reformed" bulletin, sent by the Church Extension

Committee to homes in the immediate vicinity of the church. One paragraph in that bulletin reads as follows:

"At First Protestant Reformed, we regularly make tape recordings of the sermons preached. These are brought to our shut-ins who request this. However, we do want to offer this service to those outside of our church. We have a committee of young people who would be pleased to bring over the taped sermon — and if necessary, a recorder on which the tape can be played. If you should be interested, we would invite you to call the pastor that arrangements could be made."

\* \* \* \* \*

Another bulletin, that of South Holland this time, contains a paragraph which also reflects favorably on the attitude of some of our young people — as well as on the pastor, needless to say. It would be a mistake, I think, to paraphrase the paragraph, or to quote only excerpts; so, here's the whole thing:

"The pastor will be teaching a class in the Essentials of Reformed Doctrine in his study, at the request of a young brother of the congregation. This class is scheduled tentatively for Monday evening at 6:45 P.M. Any others who wish to attend and become familiar with our Protestant Reformed viewpoint are cordially welcome. Every effort will be made to schedule this class at a time convenient for those who wish to attend."

The pastor, by the way, is Rev. Decker.

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At the risk of appearing lazy, I'm going to quote a little more, from that same January 30 South Holland bulletin.

"The consistory is beginning the annual family visiting. We will be basing our discussions on I Peter 3:1-12 and Ephesians 6:1-4 under the general theme 'The Covenant Family.' We pray that through this means we may be strengthened in the faith and knit together in the love of Christ."

The practice of announcing, in advance, the theme to be considered during the visits to the various homes of the people of the congregation — is that an innovation in our churches? Perhaps not; but in the two years that I've received bulletins from most of our churches, I encountered no precedent. Whatever the case may be, it strikes me as being worthy of imitation.

D.D.