

# The **STANDARD BEARER**

A REFORMED SEMI-MONTHLY MAGAZINE

Sexual sin is a horrible sin. It is first of all a great abomination in the sight of God. Those who walk in this sin surely incur the terrible wrath and judgment of God.... The very prevalence of this sin can easily make us forget how horrible it is in the sight of God.

See "Christian Attitude Towards  
Sex"—page 354

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## THE STANDARD BEARER

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## MEDITATION

## The Final Judgment

Rev. C. Hanko

*Ques. 52. What comfort is it to thee that "Christ shall come again to judge the quick and the dead"?*

*Ans. That in all my sorrows and persecutions, with uplifted head I wait for the very same Person, Who before offered Himself for my sake, to the tribunal of God, and has removed all curse from me, to come as judge from heaven: Who shall cast all His and my enemies into everlasting condemnation, and shall translate me with all His chosen ones to Himself, into heavenly joys and glory. Heid. Catechism. Lord's Day 19.*

What comfort?

A soul-searching question and a bold answer.

Would it not be more proper at this point to ask ourselves, Is it my comfort that Christ is coming

again as righteous judge? Do I daily look with uplifted head for my Lord's return? Do I so live in that consciousness which determines all my ambitions, all my thoughts, words, and deeds in my family, in my daily affairs, and among my associates?



"In all my sorrows and persecutions." I do experience sorrows intermingled with my joys, but do I suffer persecution? Is my walk as pilgrim and alien in this present world of such a nature that I am reproached and hated by the world? Is it not all too true that I often deliberately avoid the opposition of the world and invite the favor of evil men? Do I likely adopt more questionable practices of the world than I myself realize? Does the sin that wars in my members grieve me so much that I daily long to be translated with all God's saints to Himself into heavenly joy and glory?

"His and my enemies." I do have enemies. Round about me I also see the enemies of Christ, of His cross, His Word, and His saints. But do I generally regard God's enemies as mine and my enemies as His?

A soul-searching question indeed!

Yet I would not want to change one word of this question nor of its answer. Although sin still wars in my members and my flesh clings to this life, according to the new man in Christ I do heartily agree with both the question and the answer, and I breathe a prayer that I may learn to make this confession more perfectly my own from day to day.

I do experience sorrows. Many sorrows. I have a struggle against sin. I am daily disgusted with my depravity. I live in an awareness of persecution, even of trying experiences in this world of wicked men. I do hate those who hate God. They are my enemies. I am a stranger here, even as my fathers were. I do consider heaven as my home, so that with uplifted head I long to be delivered from this body of sin and death, to be with the Lord, and to worship in the beauty of holiness, without the hindrance of this body, fully devoted to the praise of the glory of the Father in eternal perfection. I do, indeed, look for the same Savior Who atoned for me on Calvary to declare me righteous in Him, and Who now assures me of that righteousness by His Spirit in my heart.

I join the church of all ages with the confession, I believe in Jesus Christ, Who is coming again to judge the quick and the dead.

"To judge the quick and the dead."

We can appreciate the fact that Scripture speaks of a final judgment, the culmination of the curse that rests upon all men since the fall in paradise. How thankful we can be that God does not postpone judgment, that He does not temporarily ignore our sins and the sins of all mankind, now showing a certain grace or favor to all men which ultimately will be changed to wrath and condemnation! Jesus did not come to condemn the world, for the world already lay under the condemnation

of the living God. Election and reprobation are carried out throughout history. "The curse of the Lord is in the house of the wicked, but He blesseth the habitation of the just" (Prov. 3:33). "He that believeth on the Son hath (not, will have, but hath) eternal life, and he that believeth not the Son shall not see life; but the wrath of God abideth (even now) upon him" (John 3:36).

God judges the wicked every day. He implants in them an undeniable awareness that He is God, and He alone. He manifests before their consciousness every day and every night His almighty power in the windows of the heavens, in the wonders of the sea, in the wonders of animals, plants and flowers, in the raging of the storm, the rumblings of earthquakes, and all the manifold works of the Most High in all His creation. All idols are but a sham, the inventions of men. It is the wicked rebellion of the human heart that rejects God, bows before idols, speaks of evolution over a long period of time, or of laws of nature that operate apart from God. No one can ever make the excuse that he did not know. God even places the sinner under the proclamation of the Word, even as He did with Pharaoh, with Nebuchadnezzar, with Herod and Pilate, and with many others. God demands repentance, for no man has the right to defy God and transgress His commandments. Why else would the wicked go about cursing the God of heaven? Why do so many put on a pretense of sorrow and repentance, as Ahab did, when they become aware of His judgments? By the clear and powerful testimony of the Almighty the hearts of wicked men are hardened, until the whole world reaches the horrible state of which Revelation speaks, "And they repented not!" No one will ever be able to deny that God is just in all His judgments.

God also judges His people every day. The Word of God is a savor of life unto life as well as a savor of death unto death. It is foolishness to those perishing, but it is the power of God unto salvation to all who believe. The preaching of the Word is the chief key of the Kingdom, opening and closing its portals. Christ, the Sentinel, exercises that key, declaring through His Word who will enter and who will not, banning those who because of their sins have no right to enter in, drawing His own unto Himself on the basis of His atoning blood, and making them fit citizens of the kingdom. Every day we stand before the tribunal of the living God. Far be it for us to say that God loves us as we are in ourselves, wicked sinners, who transgress all God's commandments and keep none of them. "If thou shouldst mark transgressions, Lord, who could stand?" We confess with David, "The sorrows of death compassed me, the pangs of hell gat hold upon me: I found trouble and sorrow." To which



we add, "Then called I upon the name of the Lord, O Lord, I beseech Thee, deliver my soul." Only then do we hear the voice of Jesus speaking through His Word and Spirit, Go in peace, thy sins, though they are ever so many and so great, are forgiven thee. God declares us righteous in Christ on the basis of His atoning blood even now. What a comfort that has been for the saints of all ages!

From this it follows that there will be a final judgment at the end of time. Matthew 24 speaks of the signs of Christ's coming and of the end of the world. The gospel will have been preached to the ends of the earth, and the last elect saint will have been gathered in and prepared for glory. The apostate church, the harlot, will have instigated the antichristian world power to sit on the throne as if he were God. For a short time God gives both of them over to their evil devices, so that they gloat of having disposed of God, His Christ and His church. In their bitter hatred against God and against their fellow men they have subjected all creation to their selfish ends, with the result that they have corrupted and polluted the air, the soil, the rivers, streams, and lakes, and even the seas. When God pours out His vials of wrath, the nations arise in warfare against each other in the great battle of Armageddon. They are infuriated against the antichristian world power and the harlot for having deceived them into believing that they were invincible. They are enraged against God Who has brought total disaster upon them and shattered their fondest hopes. What actually happens is that Christ, the Lord of lords and King of kings, has brought to a climax the battle of the ages against Satan and all his cohorts, has brought them into a state of total bankruptcy by their own sins, has cast them into utter frustration, and is now ready to declare His victory over them and judge them according to their just deserts (Rev. 19:11-21).

The sign of the Son of man appears, likely as a visible appearance of the Lord of Glory in all the glorious majesty of His exalted position as Lord over all at the right hand of the Father. The saints will be raised and will be gathered unto Him before the eyes of the whole world. They will not experience the final outpouring of the vials of wrath, because they will be taken away beforehand, even

as Noah was taken with his family into the ark, and as Lot was brought out of Sodom before the judgment of the Lord descended on the earth. (See also Isaiah 57:1; Matthew 24:22.) When the sign of the Son of man appears the wicked will be filled with terror and will cry to the rocks to cover them and to the mountains to hide them from the face of Him Whom they have rejected all their lives with all their evil deeds.

Christ will then come with the millions of His saints of all the ages and with all His holy angels like a mighty, triumphant army to judge the earth in righteousness. The judgment seat will be set up. The Judge of heaven and earth will sit in judgment.

"That very same person."

Blessed expectation! That very same Jesus Who before offered Himself for my sake to the tribunal of God, and has removed all curse from me, will be my Judge. We must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ to carry away the deeds done in the body, whether good or evil. Every sinful desire, thought, word, and deed will pass in review before our consciousness. Just as a play back on a TV set, so in far greater accuracy every moment of our lives will be exposed before our conscience. We will stand condemned as never before. Yet, by the wonder of grace, we are forgiven! We are forgiven by Him Who sits in judgment over us! The same Savior Who died to atone for our sins on Calvary will not declare us righteous and worthy of eternal life on the sole basis of His merit. All of our works will be burned like straw and stubble, so that nothing remains. All of Christ's work in and through us will be the basis for our reward in heaven. Each of us will receive his own crown and with it his own position according to the gifts and talents entrusted to him, that he may fully live to the glory of his God.

We will be vindicated before our enemies. All the enemies of Christ, which are also our enemies, will be condemned to their own place in torment of hell.

Finally, united with the whole family of God, we will experience the rich and glorious promise, "I will be your God, and ye shall be My people" forever and ever! Praise be to His holy Name!

*Know the standard and follow it.  
Take time to read and study  
The Standard Bearer*





## EDITORIAL

# Freedom of Education

*Prof. H.C. Hoeksema*

Recently there have been two items in the news which have to do with the subject of freedom of education. Because they have to do with this subject, they are also of interest to us who hold to the principle of parental education, that is, to the principle that it is both the right and the duty, or calling, of covenant parents to train up their children in the fear of the Lord.

The first of these items has to do with a form of what has popularly been dubbed as *parochiaid*, that is, government financial assistance to non-public schools. As is well known, there have been various attempts to obtain such aid from time to time in some of the states, most of these attempts being initiated by a coalition of non-public schools. And in some of the states financial aid in one form or another has even been provided for a time, though sooner or later the laws were struck down by the courts. Against these attempts the *Standard Bearer* has repeatedly warned editorially, chiefly because of the undeniable danger that what the government pays for it also controls, so that *parochiaid* would inevitably imply loss of parental control of our schools.

But now there is a new proposal in the air, and that, too, at the federal level. President Reagan recently announced that he is proposing to Congress a tuition tax credit proposal to help parents who send their children to private schools. The idea of a tax credit, it must be remembered, is different from a deduction. A tax credit is subtracted directly from whatever amount of income tax one owes. For example, if your total income tax is \$1000 — to pull a figure out of the air — and you receive a tax credit of \$250, then the latter is subtracted from your total tax due, resulting in a net amount of \$750. The details of the plan are not yet public. It has been suggested that the credit could begin at \$250, and possibly rise to as much as \$1000 per child over the years. It would be limited to elementary and secondary schools. Several senators and representatives have already expressed support for such a plan; in fact, two senators have already introduced legislation providing for a plan similar to the President's. It is claimed that there are about 20,000 private schools in the nation, with an enrollment of

some five million students, 10.7 percent of the total student population. It is evident, therefore, that legislation of this kind would have a considerable impact.

What shall we say of the plan?

From a certain point of view, it may be said that a plan of this kind is probably the least offensive form of *parochiaid*. In the first place, it does not involve a direct handout of government funds to the schools. This has frequently been a problem with some of the earlier forms, and has laid them open to the charge of the government supporting religious institutions and even churches. In the second place, a plan of this kind avoids one of the objections often raised by public school forces in the case of state aid programs, namely, that state and local tax monies are taken away from public schools (which are always crying for more funds) and given to private schools. In the third place, the financial benefit of the program goes to the parents, so that ostensibly the government could not interfere with the schools and their curricula. These are some of the positive aspects of the proposal. This does not mean, however, that public school forces will not oppose it; already some voices have been raised against it. Nor does it mean that we are endorsing the plan; it remains to be seen whether it will be acceptable. And, to my mind, this matter of acceptability centers chiefly on the question whether even this indirect aid will involve any degree of government control of our schools.

We must be extremely careful in this respect.

Already it is being said that the credit could be taken only for those schools determined by the Internal Revenue Service not to discriminate.

This is precisely where the problem lies.

Although the matter has not been finally resolved in the courts, as of this writing, the IRS has claimed broad powers in this respect. The case of Bob Jones University has been much in the news in this respect recently. This school has been accused by the IRS of discrimination and therefore denied tax exempt status. However, as we understand it, Bob Jones University claims its stand with regard to



racial segregation or integration is not simply a matter of ordinary racial discrimination in the sociological sense of the word, but a matter of religious principle, based on Scripture. Now the question is not whether Bob Jones University's allegedly religious position is correct or not. The question is rather whether the IRS can penalize a religious institution for its religious position. If the IRS can do this, then — in the abstract, at least — it could penalize a church, and deprive it of its tax exempt status, for sexual discrimination if that church did not allow women in office. And one could multiply possibilities, following this same line of reasoning. Eventually the United States Supreme Court is supposed to resolve this issue.

I mention this, however, only to point out that even under this new proposal there is the potential for government interference in our schools. Before we can accept such a proposal, therefore, careful investigation will have to be made.

The second item having to do with freedom of education is the question whether private schools may properly be regulated by the state. Two parochial schools in Michigan are contesting Public Act 302 of 1921, a law which gives state Board of Education officials the power to regulate Christian schools. The reference is not to such matters as building codes and rules on sanitation and health, but to educational matters. Private schools in Michigan must submit annual reports to the state concerning various matters. For example, private schools must confirm to the state the fact that all their teachers are certified. Along with this, of course, goes the fact that the state determines what constitutes certification. The latter involves educational requirements for teachers. Most, if not all, states have similar laws and powers to regulate private schools.

With the proliferation of private schools — many of them Christian and church-related schools — in recent years, there have been a good many court fights over the right of such schools to exist and over the question whether the state has the power to regulate them and even to regulate them out of existence. Some religious magazines, among them the Adventist magazine *Liberty*, have rather frequently carried reports about these cases. In the Michigan case, reported in the *Grand Rapids Press*, the attorney for the two schools battling the State of Michigan is William B. Ball, of Harrisburg, Pennsylvania, who is rather well known for his handling — and winning — of such school cases.

According to the report in the *Press*, the two schools involved are parochial schools, that is, church owned and operated. One is the Bridgeport Baptist Academy, and the other is the Sheridan

Road Christian School. The schools are reported to be claiming that the Michigan law "infringes on their First Amendment rights to free exercise of religion and to freedom from government establishment of religion." The pastor of the Bridgeport First Baptist Church is reported to have told the judge in the case, "Our Monday-through-Friday school is as much church as our Sunday school is.... Every course we teach is a religious course." The report does state that only one of the school's eight teachers is state certified. However, the pastor claims his school's teachers are more than qualified, and that he answers to a higher authority than the state. At the school the teachers must be "born-again" Christians and also have the "technical" qualities and familiarity with subjects to be able to teach. Apparently the court battle centers on the question whether the state has the authority to require reports and whether refusal to submit reports is "sufficient cause to suspend operation" of the schools.

A couple of spokesmen of Grand Rapids area schools are quoted by the *Press* on the subject. Both said their schools are conforming to the state law. One expressed sympathy for the schools currently in court. Another spoke out in favor of the idea of certification. But both also qualified their agreement with the law, realizing that state regulation could conceivably go too far.

Our own schools have over the years always adhered to state regulations and have required our teachers to be certified.

I suppose that as long as the law functions somewhat innocuously, there is no problem for us. We certainly want qualified teachers in our schools; and while certification is no guarantee that a teacher is qualified (but only formally certified as such), nevertheless the requirement of certification is thus far not hard to live with. Besides, our schools, being parental, do not have precisely the same legal problems that a church-school would have.

Nevertheless, it is not beyond the realm of possibility that a state law of this kind could also become an instrument of persecution of our schools. The power to regulate is also ultimately the power to regulate out of existence. And when that power is in the hands of worldly persons, who have no sympathy for our Christian schools and who are very much influenced by the powerful, self-seeking, covetous teachers' unions, it is not difficult to imagine that a law of this kind may some day be used to regulate our Christian schools in such a way that their existence becomes impossible. When that day comes, refusal to submit to such a law becomes mandatory!

Let us be on our guard!



## TRANSLATED TREASURES

# A Pamphlet on the Reformation of the Church

*Dr. A. Kuiper*

(In the first part of this paragraph Kuiper has been discussing the question of reformation by gradual church renewal. He has compared the deterioration of the church with a sickness which strikes a body and he has compared the work of reformation to the work of a doctor who attempts to cure the diseases of the body. Particularly, he has emphasized the need for personal repentance and conversion which comes from a deep and profound conviction of sin as being absolutely essential to all church renewal. It is this subject which he continues in the remainder of this paragraph.)

But then, on the other hand, if that conviction of guilt in the people of God is living, and the Spirit of the Lord drives souls to awakening so that the law and testimony are again taken up and the covenant with the Almighty is again established in the heart and the home and the land, how then can the obedience of faithful servants be lacking?

That cannot be because the truth of God is as a fragrant oil which anoints the whole body. If the name of the Lord is again established in the hearts of His people, then not only godliness, but also the truth returns, and all heresy is threatened. Unnoticed, then, without anyone doing anything, the fundamentals of the truth again appear clearly before each one's eyes so that they are seen and followed. And where once again the foundations of God's mysteries of the soul provide assurance, there the power of that truth works of itself also in the thoughts which concern the institution of the church. The partially neglected office again begins to shine in its beauty. He who first brought his own opinions to the pulpit in pungent sentences, now denies himself and his former word, and again reveals the power of the Word of his God. He who once pawned his service to that Word, now causes that Word to punish sin in season and out of season and to promote godliness in the land. And when the power of that Word at last enlightens him and also throws light on his office, there also the duty to church government must enter his own consciousness and the minister of the Word can find no rest until the house of God is rebuilt.

The question from whom this church renewal which takes place in a gradual way must proceed, is not difficult to answer. It comes only if the Holy

Spirit energizes ecclesiastical government or, better said, ecclesiastical gatherings.

One man alone or else a few together can never bring about a decisive or gradual church renewal, and the members of the church can, for the same reason, help even less to bring this about.

When one understands clearly that gradual church renewal consists in the exercise of ecclesiastical discipline and in the improvement of the Church Order, and when one knows that only lawful consistories, classes, and synods are qualified to attain both of these, then it is also clear that gradual church reformation can be brought into existence only by these ecclesiastical assemblies.

That which certain ministers and members of the church want to do in respect to church reformation exactly destroys the gradual character of church renewal and introduces radical surgery — a method of church reformation which we will discuss later. That which an individual minister or the members of the church can accomplish in this respect amounts to this that they implore church reformation from the Lord. They testify to and urge the obligation to reform. They as members of the church, through petition or protest, or also as ministers through advice and vote in the ecclesiastical assemblies, seek to discharge this duty of reform.

If a church, as is often the case, has entered into fraternal relations with other churches, then gradual church renewal is even more difficult. Then the question whether the church is in a position to exercise discipline and to improve the Church Order depends not only on the willingness of the consistory, but also on the cooperation of the other churches in classes and synods.

We do not mean that members, ministers, or also consistories must be kept for a lengthy time from the duty of church renewal by this obstacle. We mean only that as long as members, ministers, or consistories have exerted their own effort toward improvement, the medical way is abandoned and *eo ipso* (by the nature of the case), they proceed to the surgical method.



In this paragraph, which deals only with the medical method or with the gradual process of church renewal, this extraordinary or surgical method must be set aside, and it is with a view to this that we set down the rule: gradual church renewal in churches existing by themselves can only proceed from the consistories; but for churches in federation with other churches, church renewal can proceed from the consistory only in cooperation with classes and synod.

Concerning the way to follow in church renewal we can only give a hint because there are always here the: *variis modis bene fit*, i.e., one can accomplish this purpose in more than one good way.

The hints of a more general kind are restricted to these five:

1) The exercise of ecclesiastical discipline should precede doctrine and walk.

A renewal of ecclesiastical discipline against heretics, sectarians, and schismatics which is not at the same time a renewal of discipline against the fornicator, drunkard, and blasphemer, will stand condemned before the conscientious people of God.

2) The making of careful distinction should control the renewal of ecclesiastical discipline.

An office bearer who is a poor teacher or who lives wickedly is more guilty than any member of the church who departs from the truth or wanders into sin. All discipline must begin with the discipline of those who hold an office. Only such office bearers who take heed to each other have the right to judge others.

Even so, with the renewal of discipline, after it has been long neglected, office bearers are to warn earnestly and frequently, in tender mercy, in the desire to win by the power of love; and then to proceed to censure and excommunication in connection with obvious impenitence or hardening.

Especially with respect to doctrine, sternness over against office bearers is paired with long-suffering over against the common members of the church.

There must be no hesitation with office bearers. He who would teach others must speak the word of the church. He who refuses or cannot, must not be spared. To spare him is to sacrifice the church. It is an appearance of love for one only with lack of love for the thousands in the background.

Nevertheless also this must be carefully considered: the solution to the problem of an earnest attempt towards church renewal is not resolved by immediately and inexorably deposing all preachers, elders, and deacons who refuse to sign the Three

Forms of Unity; or, of such as those who after signing are charged with opposition to these forms. The fanatic who desires to ruin the church works in this way. But it would not be the church of Christ which prays for her enemies and denies herself to retain them.

The difficult task rests upon the ecclesiastical gatherings to distinguish spiritually between those who out of the evil of their hearts oppose the truth, and those who err out of ignorance. Unfailing patience, much power of persuasion, many gifts of wisdom are necessary to win those who can still be won before the thread is cut.

Naturally, it must finally come to this extreme with all who are hardened in their opposition. But who does not dare to hope that this would be different with many others?

For members one can go farther yet; and in the first instance only those must be attacked with discipline who openly oppose the teaching of the church through word or writing. But this discipline takes place only after the elders have enlightened with instruction, and by this means have gradually sorted out between those who with stubborn wills reject the truth and those who would drift along in the riverbed of the truth.

3) The improvement of the Church Order does not mean a mechanical improvement but an improvement which proceeds from the organic life of the church.

This comes about not by rules of order but by principles of church government. The purpose must be to let the sovereign grace of God rule in His church. For this reason, all that stands in the way of that sovereignty or hinders its complete operation must be removed. All the rest is secondary and necessarily unimportant. The yielding of all human words before the Word of God and the direct flowing forth of all human authority from King Jesus must be maintained with great urgency.

4) To attain this goal the composition of the reforming gatherings must be closely watched.

The majority must actually not decide. It is much better as long as people convince one another in the spirit of prayers that a unity of insight be attained. But because, finally, a majority could be taken against us, the composition of these meetings must not be a matter of indifference to us.

5) In these gatherings men must not themselves deny the principle for which one strives.

This can happen in many ways and one must watch against them.

First of all, one must see to it that no decision of such a gathering is made except the will be also



behind the decision to execute it. Personal opinions must not dominate. There must be spiritually, clearly conscious conviction aroused; even though it be each according to his measure.

Secondly, one ought to decide if the meeting itself militates against the demand of God's Word

or against the sovereignty of King Jesus.

And, thirdly, he who has cooperated in a decision ought not to step back when it comes to the execution of it. He who sets his hand to the plow and looks back is not fit for the kingdom of God.

## THE STRENGTH OF YOUTH

# The Strength of Youth: Asset or Liability?

Rev. Rodney Miersma

A word of explanation concerning the title of this article is first in order. All the articles in this section of the *Standard Bearer* are under the theme *The Strength of Youth*, referring to the spiritual strength of the young people in the church of Christ. However, we can also speak of physical strength, referring not only to the body of the young man as he flexes his muscles, but also to the beauty of the young woman, and to one's keen mind and particular talents and abilities. It is this physical strength of youth that is referred to in the title of this article with the express purpose of addressing the young people with the question, "Does your physical strength stand in the way of your spiritual strength? Is it a stepping stone or a stumbling block? Asset or liability?" Paradoxical as it may sound, it is nevertheless true that often our strength is our weakness.

What is meant by this? This, that as one in youth begins to become aware of his physical strength, or the development of a beautiful body, as well as becoming aware of one's abilities or talents, he will begin to glory in them, boast in them, and trust in them, all of which leads away from God Who is the giver of all these virtues and to Whose praise they must be used. Thus, for the youth these physical assets or virtues become all too often spiritual liabilities. This need not be, but is very often the case due to the old man of sin within each of us.

Let me try to illustrate for a moment. Is it not true that often the young man will trust in his physical strength and mental acumen without seeking the Lord to direct these gifts in the proper way? Is it not true that often the young woman uses her physical beauty as the only means to direct the attention of the young man to her as if this were the only thing that mattered? Inward, spiritual virtue is

disregarded, as well as prayer, for they are of no benefit to the one that trusts in herself. Young people go forth as if they have the answers to all the problems of the world. Parents, teachers, ministers, and the civil authorities are all behind the times, with little understanding of the age of today and its needs.

Dear Christian youth, what we must always remember is that the strength of youth is in the Lord. As soon as one glories and trusts in his own strengths (physical, mental) he becomes weak spiritually. One must always seek the Lord for His Spirit.

An example from Scripture is Samson. His strength was of the Lord. Often we make the mistake of ascribing the strength of Samson to some natural and inherent power, as if in a magical way it flowed forth from his long, uncut hair. Nothing could be farther from the truth. The reservoir of his strength was not within himself, but it was of God. This is the testimony of Scripture itself, for he is listed among the heroes of faith in Hebrews 11. Thus, the phrase "through faith" turns us to the origin and reason of his strength, God Himself.

You see, Samson was a Nazarite. Such a one was separated unto God, was God's peculiar possession, and was devoted and consecrated to God. This was manifested by certain outward signs, the abstinence from strong drink and not cutting one's hair. Often a third sign was added, the refraining from touching a dead body. In this way the outward visible signs pointed to an inward spiritual consecration.

As such, Samson is a living picture of Israel to Israel. He is a visible testimony that his strength lies in consecration to God. As long as Israel con-



secretes herself to God she is invincible. Walking in obedience she puts to flight armies that are much larger than her army.

But Israel was sinning grievously and Samson is called to be a living testimony to remind Israel that she is a precious, chosen possession, called to a life of separation from the world and consecration to God.

This same Samson speaks to us today, to the church and to the youth of the church. You and I are called to be Nazarites, to live a life of separation from the wicked and consecration of love to God. In Samson we see the central truth of Scripture: our strength, and our only strength, lies in fellowship and union with our covenant God in Christ by faith.

However, not only does the positive side of Samson's life speak to us, but also the negative. Believing Israel, and also the church as manifested today, condemns herself for she sees in Samson her own sins. Samson is a warning to us, and especially to the young who think that they are strong in their own way. In separation from God, Samson was very weak. His strength lay in consecration to God; his weakness was separation from God.

Look at his life. His spiritual weakness was in his alliances with heathen women. That was his sin, union with the wicked and alliance with the profane. That was also Israel's sin. She was called to consecration, but time and time again she separated herself from God, made friends with the unholy, and perpetrated all the abominations that displeased the holy God. In such a condition of alienation from God, Israel, like Samson, was absolutely powerless, a prey to every foe, a byword among all nations, and the butt of the jokes of men.

Beloved youth, if you want to know just how powerless you are when you desecrate your calling to be holy, when you separate from God and amalgamate with the world, take a peek at Samson

after his capture by the Philistines. We must go to the prison house and as we peer inside we see Samson going round and round at the grinding wheel. Here we see a blinded, impotent man performing the hardest and lowest of labors performed by slaves of the lowest degree. A horrifying picture! Such are we apart from God, slaves of sin.

Youth, where is your strength? As members of the church you must know that the church must live in the consciousness that her only strength lies in her fellowship with God. We cannot remain strong when we separate ourselves from God's Word and the pure preaching of that Word, nor when we live the life of the world. Only when near to God Who is infinitely far from the world of wickedness are we mighty to overcome.

This is God's Word to the youth and to all His saints, "Draw nigh to God, and He will draw nigh to you" (James 4:8). Samson did. Out of the depths of his soul we hear him cry, "O Lord God, remember me, I pray Thee, and strengthen me...." "Remember me," the same cry as the penitent thief on the cross. This is the cry of the child of God as he sees himself a sinner, by nature apart from God, weak and helpless.

What have we learned from this? We see that we are not to trust in our own strength, but to live near to God in blessed covenant fellowship and communion. Therein resides the true, real strength of youth. Zechariah, the prophet, put it this way: "Not by might, nor by power, but by My Spirit, saith the Lord of hosts." With this in mind may we ever sing the words of the Psalmist as they have been put to verse in *Psalter No. 87 stanza 2*:

Not human strength or mighty hosts,  
Not charging steeds or warlike boasts  
Can save from overthrow;  
But God will save from death and shame  
All those who fear and trust His name,  
And they no want shall know.

## GUEST ARTICLE

# Christian Dating

Rev. R.G. Moore

"As the Father hath loved Me, so have I loved you: continue ye in My love" (John 15:9).

"If ye keep My commandments, ye shall abide in My love, even as I have kept My Father's commandments, and abide in His love" (John 15:10).

The texts quoted above, as well as others that we consider in this article, form the Scriptural basis for our activity of dating. The question concerning dating came up during the past year in one of the letters that I received for my articles in the *Beacon*



*Lights.* However, due to circumstances I did not answer this particular question before. I believe that the topic is worthy of an article in our *Standard Bearer*. Thus, this article.

The question or topic for this article arises out of the fact that there is a growing tendency for covenant youth of our churches to date young people from outside the sphere of our own denomination, and even outside the sphere of faith altogether. Further, this is sometimes done with very little concern for the spiritual things of God's kingdom — and sometimes with the idea that it does not really make so much difference to which church one belongs as long as I believe. This attitude has caused parents and friends of those so dating to be filled with concern for their very spiritual welfare. And this too for good reason. Certainly this is the implication of the texts quoted above.

We will entertain our topic by turning to the Scripture for guidance and directives concerning this important aspect of our life as strangers and pilgrims in the midst of this world.

"Blessed are they that dwell in Thy house: they will be still praising Thee. Selah" (Psalm 84:4).

"Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, Who hath blessed us with all spiritual blessings in heavenly places in Christ.... To the praise of the glory of His grace, wherein He hath made us accepted in the beloved" (Eph. 1:3-6).

It is evident from these texts that here we have our starting point. As children of God, we believe that the purpose of our being is for the praise of God and His grace. Unto this end we were chosen in Christ; unto this end have we been predestined unto the adoption of children; unto this end have we been redeemed by the blood of Christ; unto this end are we called by Christ's Word and Spirit. It is God's good pleasure that we glorify Him. And further, it is exactly as we dwell in His house, and glorify Him that we are counted blessed. This means in all of our life, and it is certainly true also of our dating.

And all of life, all relationships in life, all activity in the lives of God's children must reflect this blessed purpose. However, because we still dwell in a flesh that opposes this purpose it is needful that we hear Christ as He calls us unto faithfulness to this end. Also this when as covenant youth we go about our dating.

Jesus exhorts us, "as the Father hath loved Me, so have I loved you: continue ye in My love" (Jn. 15:9). The Scripture ever calls us to continue in the love of Christ, to serve God with all of our heart, mind, soul, and strength. This is the high calling of our God.

By nature we will not keep this word, nor respond to it. Nor is it so that we must continue in Jesus' love in order to be saved. For then salvation would be impossible. But we who are Christ's are saved, and our calling is to serve God in the strength of His grace. Thus we hear God's Word speak: "Herein is love, not that we loved God, but that He loved us, and sent His Son to be the propitiation for our sins." And further, "Beloved, if God so loved us, we ought also to love one another" (1 Jn. 4:10-11).

The fruit of God's love is that He has sent His Son to cleanse His elect from sin, and by His Spirit to break the bondage of sin in us. He dwells by His Spirit and word in us on the basis of that redeeming work. The fruit of which, further, is that God's covenant children love God and one another in the Lord.

Hence, as children of God, in principle we continue in the love of Christ also in our relationships of dating. For this reason also the covenant youth will have ears for the word of Christ; and because our natural inclination is to darkness, we must be instructed of our Lord, "If you keep My commandments, ye shall abide in My love." To abide in Christ's commandments is to live in conscious harmony with His Word. And Jesus tells us to seek "first the kingdom of God, and His righteousness; and all these things shall be added unto you" (Mt. 6:33). This must be true of us also in our dating, if we are to be blessed in this aspect of our life. When we put our faith before all else, and by grace are guided by the Word, indeed shall our dating also be well pleasing unto our covenant God.

The question for our covenant youth then is, Does my dating stand in the service of the glorying of God's name, and in the continuing in the love of Christ? This question was not found to be significant to many in the days of Noah. We read: "That the sons of God saw the daughters of men that they were fair; and they took them wives of all which they chose.... And God saw that the wickedness of man was great in the earth, and that every imagination of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually. And it repented the Lord that He had made man on the earth, and it grieved Him at His heart" (Gen. 6:2-6).

From the above texts we are instructed negatively — that is, from the point of view of dating and marriage that are an abomination before the Lord. From such we should flee, and if so walking, repent and turn from these ways. For that which determined the choice of life's partner was all wrong. In the first place, in the days of Noah, they looked upon their future prospects for marriage on the basis that they were "fair." There was an attention given only to the outward appearances. They



looked upon their future spouses and to dating only from the view of that which would satisfy the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life. And in that light the worldly had much to offer. For they were not concerned with the type of clothes they wore or the lack of them! They had no scruples nor concerns for how they obtained their money of things. Of course, if this becomes our criterion for dating, then the worldly have all the advantages in displaying their wares. For they set their goals upon earthly splendor, and stand in enmity to God and His Word. They looked for the "fair" and thus sought the antithesis of what the child of God should look for in seeking his fellowship and spouse. This may not be the basis for our dating, covenant youth.

This brings us to a second aspect of the sin found within the church in the days of Noah. This same sin is often, all too often, being manifest in our day also by those within the church. It is the sin of saying we will do what we choose. We know what is best for us. We can do what we choose and still be blessed. In the days of Noah it is said "and they took them wives of all them which they chose." In effect they said, "I have the right to choose what is pleasing to me." They did not seek to know the Lord's will concerning the seeking of a godly wife or husband. It did not matter to them that God directs His people to have no fellowship with darkness. The love of God was not the motivation of their seeking a spouse, or the basis for their fellowship in dating.

But rather the philosophy that I am the sole determiner of my own destiny guided their dating and selection of spouses. They did not go to their parents for advice. They said, "I am old enough to find my own way." They would not listen to the Word as proclaimed. Their desires, their natural likes and dislikes and preferences ruled the day. And the calling of God, "be ye holy, for I the Lord your God am holy," was considered unimportant.

The fruit of such indiscriminate and self-centered dating and marrying is to incur the great displeasure and wrath of the living God. That is evident in the text we quoted above. May God give us grace to flee this abominable reasoning and philosophy.

Rather, the principle that underlined the marriage of Isaac ought to be our guide in our dating and marrying. Isaac's wife was not taken from among the unbelievers, but from one of like faith. This was the important matter, the only important ground for his marriage. This is evident from the word of Abraham to his servant as he sent the servant to take a wife for Isaac: "I will make thee swear by the Lord, the God of the earth, that thou shalt not take a wife unto my son of the

daughters of the Canaanites, among whom I dwell: But thou shalt go unto my country, and to my kindred, and take a wife unto my son Issac" (Gen. 24:3-4).

Isaac as a believing son also desired this, as is evident from the fact that he waited for the return of the servant with the woman who would be given him of God. He awaited the wife who as one in faith, would be the godly mother of the covenant seed. In this connection we read: "And the servant told Isaac all things that he had done. And Isaac brought her into his mother Sarah's tent, and took Rebekah, and she became his wife; and he loved her: and Isaac was comforted after his mother's death" (Gen. 24:66-67). For being joined together in the Lord, Isaac was indeed comforted. Rebekah was a believing, covenant helpmeet. Now, while our tradition is not that our father finds us our wife or husband, nevertheless the same principles apply — we make spiritual virtues the determining factor in our dating and marrying. Indeed, then too we shall be comforted.

So in faith we ought to date and to seek husbands or wives that are one in faith. This is just as important in the new dispensation as it was in the old, for God's Word still comes to us: "Be ye not unequally yoked together with unbelievers: for what fellowship hath righteousness with unrighteousness? and what communion hath light with darkness? and what concord hath Christ with Belial? or what part hath he that believeth with an infidel?" (II Cor. 6:14-15).

This means that also in our marrying we may not marry those not one in faith with us. And because our dating ought to be a servant of marriage, it also should be very antithetically conducted. Especially is this true because of the fact that dating is to engage in fellowship and communion. Doing this as God gives us strength we shall surely be blessed. And in this light he who finds a wife (or husband) finds a good thing.

This also means that in our dating we have the calling of Christ to discern the spirit. "Beloved, believe not every spirit, but try the spirits whether they are of God," says our Lord through the apostle (Cf. I Jn. 4:1ff.). The confession spoken of in this passage of Scripture is not general, but very particular. The confession of the believer is the confession of the Christ of the Scripture, and in the sovereign God of our salvation in every sense. When united by true confession, most blessed shall be our dating and marriages. For our God promises us that in Christ we shall enjoy the covenant fellowship of our God and have true joy together until death us do part.

Practically these principles mean, in the first



place, that we should seek our dates from the midst of God's children. This means we should look first to our own congregation, and secondly to our denomination where the truth is by the grace of God maintained and upheld from the pulpits and in the congregations. This is one distinct advantage of our Young People's Conventions each year. In the second place, when the Lord leads you into an encounter with one outside of our churches, immediately you must begin the establishment of a spiritual basis for the dating. If this is impossible, then we cease to carry such a relationship even a step further. In other words we ought with much care to entertain activity of dating outside of the sphere of our own faith, which we know to be the Scriptural faith. However, we do know from the Scripture there are occasions when the Lord may lead one from unbelief to the faith who has been raised outside of the covenant line. Ruth is an example from Scripture. She became a mother of Christ. However, Boaz knew and was assured by the knowledge that Ruth had been led by God to the truth faith, that she was one in the faith with him. He then, after being made aware of her faith, was able seriously to consider Ruth a proper prospect for marriage. The whole history as recorded in the book of Ruth makes this plain. The Lord certainly also blessed this union.

The question may be at this point, how do we know that the one we are dating has that faith? Or that he or she is a child of God. In the first place, it is evident from the Word of God which we have quoted in this article, that if there is no evidence of faith, then we have no right to continue dating such a one. In the second place, then, it is evident that we must work at determining whether we are able to be one in faith. This means, covenant youth, that your first dates are given over to a large extent to making this determination. The way to do this is to talk much of the meaning of the faith God has given

to you, to speak of its absolute importance in your life, and why it is necessary even in your dating that faith in the Scriptures be the foundation of your relationship. Further, that in order to continue dating there must be evidence that this be important to the one that you date. Practically, this means you invite him to church, you go to catechism together, or to Bible Study Society together. Further, if the one you are dating comes from outside your denomination, encourage the one you are dating to visit your pastor with you for instruction, etc.

Do the above before you get involved emotionally. This means that these things of the kingdom of your God are placed strictly first. I can hear you say to me, but Rev. Moore, if I do this I will never have a steady boy or girlfriend. Even if that were the case, I can answer, then so be it. Jesus says, "continue ye in My love." Furthermore Jesus even says: "He that loveth father or mother more than Me is not worthy of Me: and he that loveth son or daughter more than Me is not worthy of Me" (Matt. 10:37). However, while it is true that many of your dates, when confronted by your faith, may beat a hasty retreat, nevertheless God does not forsake His covenant children. He will lead you to a God-fearing mate. And He will richly bless you as you are united in the Lord. It is a blessing beyond our greatest expectation, to be so married in the Lord.

And while we are weak, and have not the strength in ourselves so to live as covenant youth in our dating, God will give to His own grace abundant so to seek a godly mate. He will sustain you and will guide you and bless you. For God knows you in Christ, and in Fatherly care He will keep you as His covenant child as you continue in the love of Christ, seeking first and only His kingdom and its righteousness. Beloved youth, by the grace of God so live as God's covenant seed.

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## **BIBLE STUDY GUIDE**

# **Ephesians — The Church, One in Christ (1)**

*Rev. J. Kortering*

The Epistle to the Ephesians sets forth the grand theme of the church's unity in Christ. Being one of Paul's writings during his confinement in Rome, it reflects the maturity and spiritual insight of one whom the Holy Spirit had prepared for such a task.

## **THE EPHESIANS**

Paul addresses this Epistle to the "saints that are at Ephesus" (1:1). There has been extensive debate as to whether this is correct. Some hold the opinion that this letter was not intended for the church at



Ephesus, but for many churches in Asia Minor. William Hendriksen summarizes the arguments in his *Bible Survey*. We briefly present them here.

1. The words, "in Ephesus" (1:1) are omitted in the best and most ancient manuscripts. Counter-argument is: in all the ancient manuscripts (except one corruption by the heretic Marcion) the Epistle has the title, "To the Ephesians." All the ancient versions have "in Ephesus" in verse one. Could it be possible that someone tampered with some of the most ancient manuscripts as Marcion did with the title?

2. In Ephesians 1:15 we read, "For this cause, having heard of the faith in the Lord Jesus which is among you." This would indicate that Paul did not know them personally, something which could not be said of the Ephesians, among whom Paul labored for more than two years. Counter-argument: Paul simply refers to the fact that he heard about their faith. He hadn't been there for over five years; now he gladly affirms once again that he heard good things about their faith in Christ Jesus.

3. In every Epistle addressed by Paul to a congregation with whom he was acquainted, there is reference to the fact that he was their spiritual father and that he had labored in their midst. This is lacking in this Epistle. In fact, there are no intimate touches, nor is any personal information given. Counter-argument: true, there is no such information, yet it can be explained if we consider two things. First, in all likelihood there were no pressing problems in the Ephesian church which necessitated Paul's making such references. Besides, he included in the letter a reference to Tychicus, the bearer of the letter, who would bring them up to date concerning his own personal affairs (Paul's condition) and comfort their hearts (6:21, 22).

4. The Epistle has no personal greetings. If it was intended for the Ephesians, whom Paul knew so well, would he not have included these? Counter-argument: II Corinthians, Galatians, I and II Thessalonians are letters for churches which do not have such personal greetings either.

We view this letter as having been intended for the Ephesian congregation. The evidence warrants this conclusion. Besides this, the content of this letter is appropriate for such a congregation as the Ephesians, for they too had matured in the faith under the ministry of Paul. This is not to say that the letter was not intended to be read by others, for the writings of Paul were regularly used in the churches. It was addressed to the Ephesian church.

The Scriptural account of Paul's labors in Ephesus tells us something about the church there.

Paul made his first contact with the church during his second missionary journey (Acts 18:19). At that time he made a hasty visit to the Jewish synagogue and they expressed interest in learning more of the gospel. But Paul had to leave for Jerusalem. Soon afterward Apollos visited Ephesus and preached the baptism of John the Baptist (Acts 19:1-3). After Paul arrived during his third missionary journey, he made Ephesus the center for his entire Asian ministry. According to Acts 19:8-10, he visited the synagogue and taught there for three months. Opposition forced him to leave and he turned to the philosophical school of one named Tyrannus. He labored among the Ephesians for two years, so all who dwelt in Asia heard the word of the Lord Jesus. The people of Ephesus thereby heard more teaching from Paul than did any other people. We read his own summary in I Corinthians 16:8, 9: "But I will tarry at Ephesus until Pentecost. For a great door and effectual is opened unto me, and there are many adversaries." Of this opposition we read in Acts 19:23-41, where we have the details of the uprising over Demetrius, the silversmith who made shrines to Diana and caused the people to rise up in anger because he saw his trade threatened. Finally, we recall the touching farewell given by the elders of Ephesus at Miletus when Paul bade farewell for the last time, Acts 20:17-38.

The members of the church at Ephesus had to contend with that miserable temple of Diana. It was one of the seven wonders of the ancient world. It was not only a temple for worship, but a museum as well. We can appreciate the tremendous business that image-making generated. Interestingly, none might be arrested for any crime who resided within bowshot of its walls. Hence, a village of criminals and even murderers sprang up there within the shadow of this temple.

In the midst of such heathendom, God brought forth a church. This church had a special calling to testify of Christ and His love overagainst the heathen rites of Diana. God blessed these efforts, for soon the worship of Diana fell off, and in A.D. 262 the temple was consumed by fire and never rebuilt. By A.D. 341 an important council of the Christian church was held in this city. Eventually the Turks destroyed the city and it fell into oblivion.

Almost all Bible scholars accept Paul as the author of the Epistle. This includes the early church fathers Ignatius, Polycarp, Clement of Alexandria, Tertullian, and Clement of Rome. Paul's name appears in the Epistle twice (1:1 and 3:1), and there is a personal reference to his conversion (3:2-8). The only question of Paul's authorship is raised by more modern schools of interpretation in which they point out things such as



vocabulary (Ephesians has 38 words not found elsewhere in the New Testament and 44 more words which Paul uses only here in Ephesians); he expressed himself in a way that he doesn't anywhere else in his writing; and even the author expresses thoughts regarding the headship of Christ and unity of the church which Paul did not acknowledge in his other writings. All these seeming problems, however, can be answered by careful comparison and taking into consideration that Paul matured in the faith and wrote this to a congregation that had also matured with him.

Of more interest is the question of date and circumstances under which Paul wrote this Epistle. This Epistle to the Ephesians is considered one of the "Prison Epistles" written by the apostle when he was in bonds. The other three are Philippians, Colossians, and Philemon. All four Epistles make reference to Paul's bonds. This is true in Ephesians in chapters 3:1; 4:1; and 6:20. Similarly in Philippians 1:7, 13, and 14; Colossians 4:18; and Philemon 1 and 9. From Colossians 4:7 and Ephesians 6:21 we learn that Tychicus was the person who carried those two Epistles to their recipients. In addition, we learn from Colossians 4:9 that Tychicus was a companion of Onesimus, the run-away-slave who carried Paul's letter back to his master, Philemon. Epaphroditus carried the letter to the Philippian church, Philippians 4:18.

The question that becomes rather involved is this, which imprisonment is implied here? There are three possibilities, each considered at length in Harrison's *New Testament Introduction*. The one we choose will determine the approximate date of the writing as well.

Did Paul write this letter from Ephesus itself? This idea is derived from references by Paul in his letter to the church of Corinth. In II Corinthians 11:23 Paul speaks of being in prison more frequently than others, in I Corinthians 15:32 he mentions how he fought with wild beasts at Ephesus, a figurative description, no doubt, of his opponents. In II Corinthians 1:8-10 Paul speaks of the sentence of death that he had on himself while at Ephesus. Priscilla and Aquila endangered themselves for Paul's sake, possibly at Ephesus (Romans 16:4). In evaluating this, however, we conclude that these are general references, hardly linking it with Ephesus, especially not that Paul was actually imprisoned for such a long time that he would write letters to the churches from that prison.

What about Paul's imprisonment in Caesarea? We know that he was in prison there for about two years and that he could receive some friends while there, Acts 24:23. However, there is no indication that Paul could preach except to the rulers as re-

corded in Acts 24-26, to Felix, Festus, and Agrippa. In the Ephesian letter (6:19, 20) and in the letter to the Colossians (4:3, 4), Paul requests prayer that he may be able to witness though he was in bonds. There is no proof that he could do this in Caesarea. Finally, in Philemon verse 22 he wrote, "But withal prepare me also a lodging for I trust that through your prayers, I shall be given unto you." He obviously expected to be released. This could not apply to his imprisonment in Caesarea, for at that time he never expected release. He appealed to Caesar and was bound for Rome.

The imprisonment that is best suited for the bonds mentioned in the four Prison Letters is that at Rome. Here he could receive guests and preach, and eventually he gained temporary freedom. This imprisonment also fits the historical record of Acts 28 and following chapters. The travelling companions mentioned in these Epistles correspond also with those who travelled with him to Rome. Thus Luke is mentioned in Philemon 24 and Colossians 4:14 and Aristarchus is mentioned in Philemon 24 and Colossians 4:10.

We can place the writing of these Prison Epistles during Paul's first imprisonment at Rome when he was confined to a house under guard. He was taken to Rome in A.D. 61 and remained in prison for two years. So we can date this letter to the Ephesians as written about A.D. 62.

### THE MESSAGE

In the quiet and yet threatening environment of this imprisonment, Paul reflected on the truth as it is in Jesus and wrote this letter to a church that had come to love him. The Holy Spirit led him to write on the great theme of unity in Christ.

What comfort this must have been for Paul, who from an earthly point of view was imprisoned for the sake of the gospel and unable to travel and preach. Was that not a hindrance to the work of Christ? The Holy Spirit led Paul to see that the victory of the church is not in men, but in Christ, in Whom the whole church is gathered together in a spiritual unity that man cannot destroy. God is working through Jesus Christ Who is the head of the church, the very fulness of God Who is all in all. Through Christ God unites His own unto Himself. This message is good news for the church of all ages.

*The Standard Bearer  
makes a thoughtful gift  
for many occasions.*



## THE DAY OF SHADOWS

# Father and Exalted Son Meet

Rev. John A. Heys

When today you go to visit some dignitary or prominent figure you drive up to the door of his residence or office, park your car, or have it parked for you, and then walk to meet him. But Jacob did not drive his wagon, or have it driven by one of his sons up to Joseph's residence in Egypt. It was not all that simple. Nor was this according to Egypt's taste and decorum. Here were sixty-seven souls with all their earthly possessions packed and stacked on several wagons. But here also were several flocks of sheep of several men, and surely a very unwieldy procession. We may be sure that the Egyptians would shy away from such a band because of their "culture" and "refinement." For "every shepherd is an abomination unto the Egyptians" (Genesis 46:34).

We may therefore believe that this band of Israelites, come down from the land of Canaan with all their possessions and sheep, stayed on the back roads, and that from a distance Jacob sent Judah to inform Joseph of their arrival and to get directions to the land of Goshen. And that explains why, although he longed to see Joseph more than anything else in life, so that after he did see him he could say, "Now let me die, since I have seen thy face, because thou art yet alive" (Genesis 46:30). Jacob does not go directly to Joseph. Instead it is Joseph who goes out to see his father. It was not a lack of love and longing that dictated this sending of Judah to ask the way to Goshen rather than going personally to see Joseph as quickly as possible. It was a case of logistics and Egyptian "culture" and decorum.

Note for a moment the sharp contrast here. Jacob is riding in a wagon — an Egyptian wagon with class to it, and yet a wagon — while Joseph comes to see him riding in a chariot (Genesis 46:29). And is this not a climactic fulfillment of Joseph's dreams? No, we do not read here that his father bowed down to Joseph, as the eleven brothers (sheaves and stars in the dreams) did. But here is Joseph exalted highly above his father; and it shows. And Jacob must in the land of Egypt recognize Joseph as having authority over him in the affairs of the land. Joseph must honour his father; and he does. But Jacob must honour Joseph as Pharaoh's agent for the distribution of food.

When Joseph told his father and brethren his dreams (Genesis 37), his brothers envied him; and his father rebuked him at first, but afterward "observed the saying." Now he observes the *fact*. The word here translated observed is far more often translated as keep or kept. And the idea is that Jacob did not dismiss the dreams as nothing more than childish dreams but thought about them for days after Joseph had rehearsed them. He kept them in mind as the Word of God. And although when that blood-stained coat of Joseph was brought to him, and he thought Joseph to be dead, and all fulfillment of those words seemed just like an empty dream, now, however, he sees his son alive and in that exalted position of which God spoke in those dreams. Indeed God works in a mysterious way, His wonders to perform.

The same was true of His own Son Who, hanging on the cross after giving up the ghost, seemed so far from the fulfillment of all the promises He had given His disciples and church. And yet, for those who kept His word in their hearts, He did appear in resurrection glory and is even now exalted above all things as the One Who deals out to us the bread of life and keeps us spiritually alive in this famine of the Word which is with us today, and whose end is not in sight for us. It will end when He returns, but we have no word of how many years this spiritual famine will continue. We have God's word for it that the situation will get worse than it is today and that greater apostasy and further departures from the truth will come.

This can only be the result when men begin to question the inerrancy and authority of the Word itself. Deny the infallibility of the Scriptures, deny that they have the same force for us as they did for the Church in the days when these Scriptures were written, and you have given the death blow to every doctrine of Scripture. There are, in what calls itself the church today, more members than there are verses in the Bible. Let each one pick a different verse and say that it is time-conditioned, and all the truths of Scripture are denied. And if this one may call this passage time-conditioned, that one must give the others the right to call their passage or verse time-conditioned. If the one may say this verse is not infallibly given and is untrue, that one



must let others pick verses and passages which they may claim not to be infallibly given and to be untrue. And as the churches today more and more fail to keep the things which God has said in His Word, the antichristian forces grow in power and influence; and churches will fail to see this Christ in His heavenly glory. If one statement in Scripture is not true, how can we be sure of the resurrection and exaltation of Christ at God's right hand? If one statement is untrue, we will have to question all the others.

Let us, by all means, keep all the sayings of God in the Scriptures. Let us not try to exalt ourselves above Him by questioning His Word. What He declares therein will be fulfilled whether we like it or not.

Jacob, who did observe what God revealed until the "death" of Joseph, undoubtedly now remembered those dreams and kept his proper distance from Joseph as the ruler in Egypt. He longed to run to him and see his face again. His respect for him as an Egyptian ruler, as the ruler in the land to which he had come, made him keep his distance until Joseph came to see him. This was, in accordance with Joseph's dream, a case of sun (Jacob) bowing down before Joseph. Jacob was even taking orders from Joseph. Joseph had picked Goshen. Jacob asks his son the way to Goshen and lets his son determine the place of their sojourn. He bowed before Joseph's decision and accepted it as God's decision, which it certainly was.

The reunion between Jacob and his son was a tearful and touching one. Openly both wept on each others neck. Nothing is recorded of the reaction of Joseph's brothers, but we may be sure of two things: their guilt for the deed that separated father and son all these years came forcefully to their consciousness again; and yet because they were converted men they rejoiced to see father's and brother's joy. They rejoiced with their father and brother. They feared Joseph now whereas before they sold him into Egypt they had envied him and had no fear to kill, or sell him as a slave into the land of the Midianites. But they also rejoiced at the reunion of the whole family, and were happy for Jacob's sake and also for Joseph's. Salvation does that. It makes enemies to be friends. It makes those who hate and plot to kill seek the well-being of the sincere concern for those whom they formerly envied and hated. The Apostle Paul is a clear example of that. And Jesus Himself, Whose life is given to us in our salvation, showed that in His many prayers for those who nailed Him to the tree and denied and rejected Him.

Not many days after the arrival of Jacob and his family into Egypt Joseph presented him to Pharaoh.

There was no doubt a time of adjustment and settlement in Goshen which occupied their time. And men were not so time-driven as we are today. It was a more relaxed atmosphere and a life far less tense. But Joseph did not let many days go by before he brought five of his brothers and then his father to Pharaoh. Which five brothers they were is not mentioned. One might expect that he would take the sons of Leah since she was Jacob's first wife, while the other brothers were, with the exception of Benjamin, from the maids of Leah and Rachel. But Leah bore six sons. The maids together bore four sons, but Joseph would hardly pass by Leah's sons, and one would expect him to bring Benjamin, his own full brother. What his criterion was for selecting five out of eleven brothers is not told us; nor need we know which five brothers he chose. Were it essential for the account we would have been told.

Here again an interesting element appears: Joseph brings his brothers before he brings his father. Why? Certainly he was not ashamed of his father. He would have had far more reason for being ashamed of his brothers. And the fact that he chose five out of eleven indicates that he had a reason for taking only some to meet Pharaoh.

Children who have come to years of discretion sometimes are ashamed of their parents before their peers. They may be ashamed of their brothers or sisters, but most of the time it is their father and mother who are for them a cause of embarrassment, and whom they consider too uneducated (though this is becoming less a reason than in the past because of greater opportunities for college and university education), too old-fashioned (meaning too strict and concerned with what is right before God), or too spiritual, being sure that their parents would not approve of the dress, speech, habits, and conduct of their friends. When it can be held off, the meeting with parents is delayed. Only when it becomes necessary will they bring their friends home to meet father and mother; and they will do it very reluctantly. Needless to say this ought not to be found in the church. But it is. Especially when a young man goes out and gets a young woman of the world for his wife and the engagement has to be made known, or the young woman in the church is keeping company with an unbelieving young man, and has been meeting him here or there and has not let him come to the home to pick her up, there is fear of bringing the friend to meet the parents. And that very reluctance ought to speak loudly to the young man or woman in the church. And it ought to tell them that they are ashamed of their friend rather than of their parents, whose counsel and spiritual advice they do not want. Actually they ought to realize that they ought



to be ashamed of themselves.

Now none of this was true with Joseph. What had his father done in comparison with what his brothers had done to him? No, in the good sense, Joseph was proud of his father, was eager to bring him before Pharaoh, and was not at all afraid that Pharaoh would think less of him after meeting his father.

No, the instructions that Joseph gives his five brothers before he brings them in the presence of Pharaoh will explain why he brings them there before bringing his father. To be sure that Pharaoh gave them the land of Goshen, and that Israel could dwell alone and not mix with the Egyptians, who otherwise would have liked to associate with Joseph's family, Joseph instructs them to stress their occupation as shepherds. They may as

shepherds stink in the nostrils of the super "clean" and "cultured" Egyptians; but they must stink spiritually and be left alone by those who delight to smell idolatry and sin before God.

When the land is promised them by Pharaoh, and it is settled that they will grow up as a peculiar (but not odd) people in Goshen, Joseph brings his father before Pharaoh. On the one hand it was business before pleasure. But more than that it was love towards his father to spare him what could be done by his sons, namely, plead for the land of Goshen before Pharaoh. And God moved Pharaoh to concur and give them the best part of the land for their sheep. God made them shepherds, and God in His counsel made the Egyptians to be the fastidious people that they were so that Israel could dwell alone in safety and preserve the true religion although in an idolatrous nation.

## IN HIS FEAR

# Christian Attitude Towards Sex

*Rev. Arie den Hartog*

The substance of these articles was first given as a speech for the Adult Fellowship, or A.F. as it is called here, of the Evangelical Reformed Church of Singapore. The subject was chosen by the A.F. themselves. Since most of the members of the A.F. are unmarried young people we concentrate especially on this subject as it relates to them. We decided to reproduce this speech in two installments in the *Standard Bearer* in the hope and prayer that it may be of some benefit also to the youth of our churches in the U.S.A.

When we were first asked to speak on this subject we experienced some fear and anxiety. This subject is surely one that is very sensitive and personal in nature and it requires a lot of discretion and wisdom to speak on it. Nevertheless there are several compelling reasons why this subject is both necessary and proper for us to speak on and it is good that you as young people should desire to hear the Word of God on this subject.

God has created us with a sexual nature. It is necessary for us as Christians to have a proper understanding of this. It is urgent that we know how to use this part of our nature in a God-glorifying way.

That this subject is proper and necessary for us to address is also born out by the fact that Scripture

speaks of it very often. It is indeed striking how much God's Word has to say about this subject; and we must know and receive this Word of God. This subject is dealt with very often in the law of the Old Testament. Solomon has many things to say about this subject in Proverbs, in Ecclesiastes, and in The Song of Solomon. In the New Testament we find our Lord addressing the subject in the Sermon on the Mount. The apostle Paul deals with it extensively in I Corinthians 6 and 7 and in I Thessalonians 4:1-8, as well as more briefly in Ephesians 5:3-5 and Colossians 3:5, 6. You are encouraged as young people to read these passages of Scripture carefully. The Word of God often warns against the great sins of the misuse of our sexual nature. On the other hand, the Word of God also tells us positively much about the proper use of sex. Though the Bible is not to be used as some modern day sex manual, we can find in the Bible all of the principles that ought to govern this area of our lives.

As young people you are seriously thinking about marriage. It is a God-given desire in you that you should be looking for a young man or a young woman to be your life's partner in that intimate and blessed relationship of marriage. Some of you are already seriously dating. It is natural that you should be attracted by the opposite sex. This attrac-



tion is in large measure a sexual attraction. You long for sexual fulfillment and happiness in your life. You are faced also with many questions concerning what are the proper activities to be engaged in as young people when courting and dating. It is urgent for you to know the limits and restraints that you ought to observe as wise Christian young people when you are together on dates.

You as young people are filled with sexual energies. You long for sexual pleasure, excitement, and fulfillment. This is particularly strong in young people in harmony with all of the strength and vigor and vitality of youth. There are also in you, in your sinful nature, strong lusts and passions. There is within you a great temptation to experiment with sex, to prove yourselves as men and women, to feel something of the great excitement that sex brings. There is in this area of your lives such a tremendous power in you to sin that you need to resist with all the strength of God's grace in you.

It is really urgent that we have proper Christian attitudes about sex, especially in the world in which we live. It hardly need be said that the world in which we live is one filled with the great abomination of sexual sin. Practically every area of our life in the world is saturated with it. It is seen in the world's movie houses and on television; it is seen in the vast majority of the world's books; it is seen in the advertisements of the world and in the world's dress. The most powerful instrument to draw the attention of the world is that of sexual display. Never before in the history of the world has this sin been so blatant and brazen. It can surely be said that you as young people have greater temptations to face in this area than any generation before you. There is in the world a total permissive attitude towards sexual sins, an "anything goes" philosophy. Many today are advocating that it is perfectly innocent for young people to be engaged in premarital relationships. Modern day psychologists go so far as to suggest that it is entirely wrong to seek to limit the sexual activities of young people. They must be allowed to find release for pent-up sexual frustrations. They must be allowed to experiment with sexual relationships of all sorts in order to prepare themselves for a well adjusted sex life in marriage. Statistics are available to show that by far the vast majority of young people are what is euphemistically called "sexually active" before marriage. It is very rare for young people to be virgins when they marry. To take a strong moral stand about fornication and adultery will gain you the reputation of being ridiculously out of touch with the modern world. It is possible to claim oneself to be a committed Christian and yet to be openly and unashamedly living in fornication.

There is today very much emphasis on sex. The glorious young woman or young man in the world today is the one who is sexually exciting. Successful marriage is said to be almost entirely dependent upon one's ability to perform well sexually.

Many books have therefore been written about how to attain to sexual happiness and fulfillment in life. It is especially striking how many of these kinds of books have been written by authors claiming to be Christians. You will find more books on the subject of sex in most modern Christian book stores than in any other book stores. Sad to say a great many of these books are not very good, and Christian young people must be strongly warned about reading them. Many under the subtle guise of being Christian present views that are as immoral as those of the world, and certainly more dangerous, because they pretend to come with Christian perspectives.

For all of these reasons then it is both necessary and proper that we consider this subject of Christian attitudes towards sex.

We believe, first of all, according to the Word of God, that the sexual aspect of our nature is a part of the good creation of God. God created man male and female. God created all of the mysterious and wonderful differences that are involved in this distinction among men, including all of the physical differences of our bodies. God created the woman in her great beauty and the man with his masculine features. God made our bodies such that they are sexually attractive to the opposite sex. God created in man the strong desire for sexual fulfillment. The deep joy and excitement and fulfillment of the sexual union are all part of God's good creation. Sex in itself is not something evil or base or animalistic. The Christian understands that this aspect of his nature is a beautiful creation of God intended by God for the great joy, happiness, and pleasure of man when properly used. The Christian young person may surely look forward to sexual happiness and fulfillment in marriage. It is good for the sake of a good and happy marriage that he learn the proper use of his sexual nature.

That all of this is true can easily be proven from the Scriptures. We can learn this from the beautiful story of creation. When God made man, the most glorious of all His creatures whom He fashioned after His own image and likeness, He created man with a sexual nature. He did not stop His wonderful work of creation after He had made man, but He went on also to create a beautiful woman. And when He had made the woman in all her beauty He brought her unto the man. Before the fall they were brought together in shameless nakedness. We can be sure that soon after the Lord had brought Eve to



Adam they were united together in sexual love. In the holiness and purity of their unfallen state they enjoyed the pleasure and fulfillment of the sexual union. The Lord was pleased as the man and his wife enjoyed the gift which He Himself had given to them.

There are other places in Scripture that teach us the goodness of sex when properly used. In Proverbs 5:18, 19 Solomon, filled with the wisdom of God, exhorts the young man: "Let thy fountain be blessed: and rejoice with the wife of thy youth. Let her be as the loving hind and pleasant roe; let her breasts satisfy thee at all times; and be thou ravished always with her love." It is plain that Solomon is speaking here especially about the joy and pleasure of sexual love. This love within marriage is good and something so intense that it is said to be ravishing.

In the Song of Solomon we have a beautiful picture of the love of Christ for His bride the Church. This we believe is the proper understanding of this book of the Bible. Solomon speaks unashamedly of the sexual aspects of this love as part of this picture.

In I Corinthians 7 the apostle exhorts those who are married to render to one another "due benevolence." In this he is referring to the gift of sexual love. Those who are married are obligated to give to each other continually the gift of sexual love. The married are to give their bodies to one another. This is not evil but good. It is an essential and good part of holy marital love.

Finally Paul exhorts in I Thessalonians 4:3, 4, "For this is the will of God, even your sanctification, that ye should abstain from fornication: that every one of you should know how to possess his vessel in sanctification and honor." Again it is clear that Paul is speaking here of the proper use of our sexual nature. It is possible by the grace of God to use this sexual nature in sanctification and honor.

God has created the sexual aspect of our nature exclusively for marriage. That is very clear in the Word of God and that is absolute. There are no exceptions to this. To engage in premarital sex is not a matter of innocent sexual activity; it is according to the Word of God the great sin of fornication. The very nature and character of the sex act as created by God is such that it is good only in the sphere of marriage. It is the means whereby a married man and woman express their intimate and fervent love for each other. It is especially through the sexual union according to the created nature of man that a man and a woman become one flesh. God has ordained that sex should be used in the sphere of the intimate, personal, loving relationship of marriage. The proper and good use of sex pre-

supposes that a man and a woman are totally committed to each other in the life-long unbreakable bond of love and trust of marriage. According to the ordinance of God, sex is a gift of love which a man and woman must give to each other in marriage. Sex is not something that must be used merely for self gratification and for the exploitation of another. Sex is a gift that a married man and married woman are to give to their partners whereby they express their love and joy in one another.

Today, especially among young people, we find often that marriage is discounted. It is said that marriage is not absolutely necessary. It is said that you can engage in sexual intercourse before marriage as long as there is a measure of love and commitment to each other. It is emphasized that marriage is not made by a legal contract or ceremony of the church or the state. Marriage according to them is really made when two people love each other. All of this is nothing but a ruse. It is an attempt to justify the great abomination of which we hear so often today where couples live together in an open-ended relationship and engage in sexual intercourse without committing themselves to each other in marriage. It gives to them the "freedom" to commit fornication with one partner and when they get sick of this partner to have another. There is no amount of fancy reasoning that is going to change the fact that such relationships are nothing less than abominable fornication and adultery. God is pleased to marry us through the means of the legal contract and ceremony of the state. Though committed love and trust certainly are absolutely necessary for marriage, the legal institution of the God-ordained state is also absolutely essential. Until we have by God been united together in marriage, sexual intercourse is always without exception a great sin in the sight of God and against our partner.

As Christians we must know that sex in itself is a good creation of God, but the perversion of sex is condemned by God. Sex is perverted when it is engaged in outside of the God-ordained sphere of marriage. Sex is perverted when it is used merely for self and for the satisfaction of one's own lusts and passions and not for the giving of marital love.

Man through sin has horribly corrupted and perverted every human relationship. Man in his totally depraved nature hates God and he hates his neighbor. He does all things in rebellion against all of the holy ordinances of God. He seeks himself and the satisfaction of his own lusts and that at the expense and exploitation of his neighbor. There is perhaps no area of life in which the horrible depravity of man's nature is more evident than in his misuse of sex. He will go to any end to satisfy his own



passions. The young man will force the young girl in the darkness of the night, he will rob her of her honor, use and abuse her, and that only to satisfy his own wicked passion. Yet hypocritically he will speak of this as love. In the extreme, man will commit even rape and murder in this great wickedness. To have proper Christian attitudes towards sex we must be aware of the awful depravity of man's sinful nature. And then also we must understand that we have that same old sinful nature within us. We have the same sinful and wicked passions in our flesh. We must be on our guard against them. We must fight against them and reign over them through the grace and Spirit of Christ Jesus our Lord. We must flee these lusts, never playing with them, keeping far distant from them. We must always know how wicked is the world in which we live and how great the power of our sinful nature.

Sexual sin is a horrible sin. It is first of all a great abomination in the sight of God. Those who walk in this sin surely incur the terrible wrath and judgment of God. We as Christians must always be aware of how God hates this sin. There are today many who seek to minimize the seriousness of this sin. They dismiss it with a smile. The very prevalence of this sin can easily make us forget how horrible it is in the sight of God. In holy fear before God we must never forget how our holy and righteous God hates all adultery and fornication.

The misuse of our sexual nature is also a very great evil against our fellow man. No amount of talk of love will remove this great evil. It always causes great psychological and spiritual harm to those with whom you sin. No amount of "liberation" of our modern day world is going to change this. Fornication will cause deep anguish for those who commit it. It involves the destroying of one's honor; it involves cheating and defrauding one another and debasing one another. Those who commit this sin will always be left with deep feelings of guilt and shame. They will be left with the anguish of feeling cheated and shamed, of having been used for great evil and having been made worthless. Virginity is a very great and precious possession. To give that away, or to have someone in the throws of sexual passion take it from you, will cause bitter anguish. Any pastor who has counselled those who have been involved in this sin will know something of the great anguish it brings.

Young people, the Word of God strongly warns against the sin of fornication. Take heed to this warning. Flee fornication. Fall not into the condemnation of God and the misery and anguish of this great sin. Let no man tempt you into thinking that this can be avoided. Let no man tempt you by saying there is true love and good pleasure in the sin of fornication. There is not.

## Book Reviews

**CHRISTIAN FAITH (AN INTRODUCTION TO THE STUDY OF THE FAITH)**, Hendrikus Berkhof (translated from the Dutch edition by Sierd Woudstra); Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., Grand Rapids, Mich. 568 pp. (cloth) \$20.95 [Reviewed by Prof. H.C. Hoeksema]

This large volume is not a book for a relaxing evening of light reading. Whoever reads it must put on his thinking-cap. Although it does not go by that title, it is a dogmatics. It can also be called a Reformed dogmatics, but only if the term "Reformed" is understood in the broadest possible sense. About this later.

As far as the format of the book is concerned, it is divided into large-type sections and small-type sections in each chapter. The author himself explains that in the large-type sections he tries to put into

words how he understands the truth of God. He goes on to say, "In the small-type sections I give readers the opportunity to see how I arrived at my formulations, and in particular I nudge them to move beyond what I have said with the use of the informal direction provided there." It is possible, therefore, to confine one's reading to the large-type sections and from these to understand the author's position. Nevertheless, one cannot fully understand the author's thought without reading the small-type sections as well.

Anyone who expects a rather traditional Reformed dogmatics from this book will be bitterly disappointed. At very few points does the author's position resemble that of classical Reformed dogmatics. At many points the author deliberately departs from and expresses disagreement with the



classical Reformed position. Three examples of this are his views of predestination, of original sin, and of the deity of Christ. But in this reviewer's opinion the basic error of Berkhof, the error which explains all the others, is his view of revelation and of Scripture. In the course of this review we cannot enter into a detailed explanation and refutation of Berkhof's Prolegomena. But here is a sample, page 87: "After all, Scripture cannot be identified with revelation. It is the human reaction to it. Here we meet revelation indirectly, in the mirror of the human witness. And when this witness is itself the product of the history of interpretation, we have to speak of a double indirectness. In general this indirectness is presupposed and respected in the language of the church. One who has a Bible in his pocket will not say that he has the Word of God in his pocket." Along with Berkhof's view of Scripture goes his acceptance of modern hermeneutics, page 89: "Modern hermeneutics teaches us to make a threefold distinction in the Bible: (a) between what is said and what is intended with it; (b) between the different authors, books, and witnesses; and (c) between then and now. Once we are aware of this distinction, an indiscriminate appeal to a text is no longer possible; instead we have to restate what the authors intended to say, in its agreement with as well as deviation from other biblical writers, in such a way that we today can hear it as the Word of God. Theological hermeneutics thus serves to facilitate the double process of making the connection with the past and of interpretively passing this on to the present. In this study of the faith we shall keep this threefold distinction in mind, and it will determine whether or not and the manner in which appeal is made to the authority of Scripture."

Nevertheless, while I cannot recommend this book for its Reformed contents and its sound development of the Reformed faith, I do recommend that our ministers and theological students add this book to their libraries. Our students can consult this work when they study dogmatics at the seminary, and perhaps at least some of our pastors will use some of their leisure time during the summer to read through this work. I make this recommendation for two reasons: 1) Hendrikus Berkhof is a force to be reckoned with in the field of Reformed dogmatics, and our men should be acquainted with his positions and be able to refute them. 2) There is no question about it that Berkhof's writing is rather fresh and stimulating of one's thinking. Every now and then one comes across a suggestion or a fresh way of stating something which, if followed and developed in a proper Reformed manner — something which Berkhof rarely, if ever, does — could be fruitful. Hence, while I cannot recommend this book for its good

content, I do recommend it for either one of the reasons stated above.

**UNCONDITIONAL GOOD NEWS** (Toward an Understanding of Biblical Universalism), Neal Punt; Wm. B. Eerdmans Publ. Co., Grand Rapids, Mich. 169 pp. (paper) \$6.95. [Reviewed by Prof. H.C. Hoeksema]

Neal Punt is a Christian Reformed minister. He is another in a growing number of such ministers who try to solve the dilemma posed by the double-track theology introduced by the First Point of 1924 by choosing and following — almost, but not quite — the universalist track of that theology.

His book is supposedly dedicated to the proposition that "all persons are elect in Christ except those expressly declared by the Bible to be lost." This is supposed to be the "unconditional good news."

One could write an entire book in refutation of the numerous doctrinal and exegetical errors found in this strangely self-contradictory little book. Suffice it to say that it stands completely in the line of the teachings of Professor Harold Dekker, who in the 1960's taught that God loves all men with a redemptive love, and that Christ died for all men; and of Dr. Harry Boer and Dr. James Daane who have openly repudiated the Reformed doctrine of reprobation, and thus of predestination.

In the first place, Punt's own statement of the main proposition of this book, quoted above, is not an accurate statement. In the course of the book it becomes: "All persons are elect in Christ except those who refuse to have God in their knowledge — this is the good news Scripture declares in the universalistic texts." Or again: "Biblical universalism impels us to declare to others the grace which comes to them — and to us — in Jesus Christ. The assumption with which we work is that all persons are elect in Christ. On the basis of this assumption we must tell all people what God has done for them in His Son! The awesome truth about God's wrath is to be reserved for those who remain indifferent to or reject this good news which the church has been commissioned to proclaim to *all people*." (p. 132) In other words, Punt's "unconditional good news" becomes *conditional* bad news. Because of this, his unconditional good news is not really unconditional at all, but conditional. It inevitably becomes: all persons are elect in Christ if they do not refuse to have God in their knowledge, or if they do not remain indifferent to or reject this good news. Now put this together with the doctrine of total depravity, and Punt's alleged unconditional good news surely will become universal bad news. I realize, of course, that the author will not accept the consequence just described. This is what



happens when he tries to draw back from the brink of absolute universalism.

In the second place, in addition to what is stated above, it becomes plain in the book that "unconditional" is for the Rev. Punt conditional after all. He merely changes the term condition to "redemption imperatives," (p. 88).

In the third place, the basic error of Punt's book is his denial of sovereign reprobation. This is not an inference drawn by this reviewer, but it is plainly

### RESOLUTION OF SYMPATHY

The Senior Mr. & Mrs. Society of the Southeast Protestant Reformed Church expresses its sincere sympathy to one of our members, Mrs. Donald Hauck, in the passing of her sister, ALICE VAN BAREN.

"Precious in the sight of the Lord is the death of His saints." (Psalm 116:15)

John Flikkema, Jr. Pres.  
Clarice Newhof, Sec'y.

### RESOLUTION OF SYMPATHY

The Hudsonville Ladies Aid wishes to express our sympathy to our President, Rev. G. Van Baren, in the death of his sister, ALICE VAN BAREN.

"Precious in the sight of the Lord is the death of His saints." (Psalm 116:15)

Mrs. George Hoekstra, Sec'y.

### NOTICE!!!

The Consistory of First Protestant Reformed in Holland invites all office bearers to a conference to be held Tuesday evening, May 11, 1982 at 8:00 P.M. in our church. Rev. Miersma will speak on the topic: "Putting on the Armor of God." We also encourage all male members to attend this instructive meeting.

The Holland Protestant Reformed Consistory

stated by the author in Chapter VII, entitled "Biblical Particularism." The author does not want what he calls a "two-camp" configuration of predestination, but a "one-camp" configuration. This is why I stated that Punt is in the camp of Dekker, Boer, and Daane.

It is a conundrum to me that the Christian Reformed Church does not depose from office men who so plainly violate the Formula of Subscription with their obvious false doctrine. Or perhaps it is not a conundrum. It is becoming increasingly evident that the Christian Reformed Church is morally and doctrinally incapable of exercising such discipline as long as they continue to cling to the First Point of 1924.

### RESOLUTION OF SYMPATHY

The council of South West Protestant Reformed Church expresses its sincere sympathy with its fellow members, Mr. Richard Van Baren and Mr. Thomas Oosterhouse in the death of their sister and sister in law, MISS ALICE VAN BAREN.

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

Rev. M. DeVries, Pres.  
Clarence Kuiper, Clerk

### RESOLUTION OF SYMPATHY

The Adult Bible Society of the Hudsonville Protestant Reformed Church wishes to express their deep sympathy to Rev. and Mrs. G. Van Baren and family in the death of his sister, ALICE VAN BAREN.

"I have fought a good fight, I have finished my course, I have kept the faith: Henceforth there is laid up for me a crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous judge, shall give me at that day: and not me only, but unto all them also that love His appearing." (II Timothy 4:7, 8)

Mr. Bernard Bruining, Pres.  
Mrs. Faye Dykstra, Sec'y.

## YOU ARE INVITED!!!

To the Annual Spring Lecture  
to be held, the Lord willing, at  
The South Christian Auditorium, Cutlerville, Michigan.

The Speaker — Prof. R. Decker.

The Theme — The believer and his Bible.

Thursday, May 6, 1982 — 8:00 P.M.

—Plan now to attend — and bring your Friends—

The Lecture Committee



## News From Our Churches

We begin this column with a word of sympathy for those of our Grand Rapids area churches who are responsible for typing up bulletins. It's the time of the year when they must squeeze in all those announcements about school activities and programs, Mr. & Mrs. Society league meetings, Men's Society and Ladies' Aid special programs, Young People's banquets and special activities, programs presented by the various choral groups in the area, etc. etc.! Consider a bulletin of our Hudsonville, Michigan congregation for example: Usually their bulletin consists of an 8½ x 11 piece of paper with a picture of their church and general church related information on one side with the weekly announcements on the other. Not only is Hudsonville's April 11 bulletin completely full of weekly announcements on the inside, also one-half of the cover side is taken up with announcements, and they even spill over to the picture of their church. Lengthy bulletins are not limited to our Grand Rapids area churches, however. It seems I recall a recent Hull, Iowa bulletin with its 8½ x 14 side full, accompanied by a half sheet as a supplement. A suggestion: when sending bulletin announcements in the spring or fall of the year, help your local bulletin typist by keeping your announcements short and sweet.

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Many of our churches are either ending or just beginning another Sunday School season. A First Church (Grand Rapids, Michigan) newsletter from the Sunday School included the following worthwhile food for thought concerning our Sunday School activities: "How about the Sunday School classes? Are they also enjoyable....and stimulating? That depends, no doubt, on whom you talk to. Some students come to Sunday School almost invariably well prepared. They know the verse (or verses) perfectly. They're able also to relate the proof-text memory work to the lesson — because they took the time to study the lesson. And, having studied (or having been taught) the lesson, they're ready to participate in, and enjoy, a discussion of the passage being considered. These students, needless to say, are a joy to have in class; and we suspect that they enjoy being there. The old

dictum, that one gets out of something what he's willing to put into it, can well be applied to Sunday School."

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The placing of a new pamphlet rack in the narthex of our South Holland, Illinois church suggests that their Evangelism Committee is concerned about pamphlet distribution; and their recent publication of the new pamphlet, "Evangelism and the Reformed Faith," by Rev. David Engelsma, is further evidence of that concern. By the way, *Standard Bearer* readers who are interested in obtaining copies of this pamphlet should send to: The Evangelism Committee, South Holland Protestant Reformed Church, 16511 South Park Avenue, South Holland, Illinois 60473.

South Holland's Evangelism Committee is also interested in radio broadcasting. This is evident from the following ad found in the Pittsburgh Post Gazette: "ANNOUNCING: A NEW RADIO BROADCAST! *THE REFORMED PULPIT*: proclaiming the historic Reformed and Presbyterian Faith...beginning a series of messages on the fundamentals of the Reformed Faith...the faith of the Reformation, whose confession was (and is), 'Scripture only.' Tune in every Sunday morning at 9:45 AM on WPIT - FM 101. This is a ministry of the Protestant Reformed Church of South Holland, Ill. The speaker is Rev. David Engelsma, Pastor of the church."

Further information from a newsletter to the South Holland congregation reveals that, "13 messages, running from March 14 through June 6," will be carried on that station. Why in Pittsburgh? The newsletter informs us that, "...these broadcasts have been made possible through the kindness of a lover of the Reformed faith who lives near Pittsburgh, who has offered to underwrite the cost of broadcasting."

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Rev. Kenneth Koole of our Randolph, Wisconsin congregation has *accepted* the call extended to him from our Redlands, California congregation. A concurrent call that Rev. Koole had from Edmonton was, therefore, necessarily declined.