

The **STANDARD BEARER**

A REFORMED SEMI-MONTHLY MAGAZINE

. . . as we begin another year, we naturally look to the future. We wonder what the new year holds in store for us. Will great evil befall us? Will we and our children be able to stand . . . ?

How reassuring is the Word of God. Blessed is the nation whose God is the LORD!

See "The Nation Whose God Is the Lord"

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MEDITATION

James D. Slopesma

The Nation Whose God Is the Lord

"Blessed is the nation whose God is the LORD; and the people he hath chosen for his own inheritance." Psalm 33:12

Everyone has a God.

Who is your God?

There is a people whose God is the LORD. Are you numbered among that people?

If the LORD is your God, then are you truly blessed. For that means, first of all, that the LORD has chosen you for His inheritance. And therefore, secondly, it means that He will protect you from all harm so that He may enjoy you forever and that

you may enjoy Him forever.

How important this all is, especially as we face again a new year! There are many evils that threaten us and our children. Sickness, poverty, war, loss of loved ones, death, persecution are only some of the many evils that could so easily befall us in the near future. Besides all these there are the host of temptations that we and our children face every day. The powers of darkness are unrelenting as they seek to lead us astray into sin and destruction. And so, as we begin another year, we naturally look to the future. We wonder what the new year holds in store for us. Will great evil befall us? Will we and our children be able to stand in the face of the onslaughts of the powers of darkness? These are all very legitimate concerns of God's people.

How reassuring is the Word of God. Blessed is the nation whose God is the LORD!

* * * * *

Everyone has a God.

Your God is that in which you place your trust. Your God is that which you rely upon to provide you with safety and security as well as happiness in life.

In that light, virtually anything or anyone can be your god. Money can be your god. How many people rely upon money for security and happiness? They have made money their god. In like manner you can make insurance, entertainment, the esteem of men, earthly power, a home, a circle of friends your god.

All of these, of course, are only idol gods. They are not really Gods. For none of them can truly provide safety and security. Neither can they afford true happiness. The security and happiness they give are a mere illusion.

Over against all the idol gods of man there is the LORD. He alone is truly God. He alone is able to provide true safety and security. He alone is able to afford true joy to man. That joy is the bliss of His own covenant companionship and friendship. With the LORD there is true peace and safety!

Is the LORD your God? If He is your God, then you will put all your trust in Him. You will trust Him and Him alone to keep and preserve you. You will rely upon Him to supply all your needs. You will look to His fellowship to give you true joy and peace. In blind trust you will obey His every commandment, expecting that in the way of obedience the LORD will care for you.

* * * * *

There is a nation whose God is the LORD.

James D. Slopsema is pastor of the Protestant Reformed Church of Randolph, Wisconsin.

In the old dispensation that people was the nation of Israel. All other nations had other gods. They made gods of stone and wood and precious metals. To these gods they bowed the knee. In these gods they placed their trust. But the LORD was Israel's God. It was upon the LORD that Israel relied. It was to the LORD that Israel looked for help in the time of need. It was in the LORD that Israel sought all her joys. This, of course, was not true of the whole nation. Many in Israel served the idol gods of the heathen. Nevertheless, those who formed the heart of the nation, those who were true Israel, had the LORD as their God.

In the new dispensation that nation whose God is the LORD is the church of Jesus Christ.

The church is indeed a nation. No, the church is not a nation among the nations of the world as was Israel of old. The church, for example, can not be identified with a particular country in the world; nor is it limited to one people. The church of Jesus Christ is found today in every tribe, tongue, and nation under heaven. Yet, for all that, the church is a distinct nation. She is a spiritual nation which has her own kingdom — the kingdom of heaven. She has her own King Whom she serves — Jesus Christ. She has her own laws that govern her life — the law of God. She has her own language, customs, goals, values — all determined by the Scriptures.

The church has been formed into such a nation through Jesus Christ Who redeemed her out of sin and called her out of darkness into the marvelous light of God. The fruit of this great work of Jesus Christ is that the church also owns the LORD as her God. Her trust is in the LORD. In Him she finds her joy.

Are you numbered among that people?

* * * * *

Blessed is the nation whose God is the LORD!

She is blessed because the LORD will protect and preserve her in His covenant fellowship.

This is the emphasis of the whole Psalm.

Israel is viewed as a little flock among the mighty nations of the world. Militarily the heathen nations were far superior to Israel. And these nations sought to destroy Israel. The reason was that Israel's God was the LORD. How the ungodly hate the LORD! They not only refuse to acknowledge Him as God; they bitterly oppose Him and all His works. Hence, the heathen nations also hated Israel. Israel was the people the LORD had redeemed out of Egypt. She was the people with whom the LORD had established His covenant at Mt. Sinai. She was the people who served the LORD. Indeed, the heathen had no room for Israel. She must be destroyed. And by destroying Israel a

deadly blow would be brought against the LORD Himself.

But the LORD assured Israel in this Psalm that He would protect and preserve her.

It was the LORD Who made the heavens and the earth. "By the word of the LORD were the heavens made: and all the host of them by the breath of his mouth" (vs. 6). As the Creator, the LORD is the almighty God, infinitely greater than all the hosts of the heathen. Hence, the counsels of the heathen shall be brought to naught (vs. 10); whereas the counsel of the LORD shall stand forever (vs. 11). Surely the people of Israel whose God is the LORD are safe and secure! The LORD will protect them from all their enemies and preserve them in His covenant fellowship where they shall find joys unspeakable.

Blessed is the nation whose God is the LORD!

The same is true also today for the church.

The powers of darkness also assail the church. The enemies of the church are the Devil and his hosts along with the world of ungodly men. These evil forces have no more use for the church than the heathen nations did for Israel in times past. And again the reason is that the church is the nation whose God is the LORD.

Without ceasing, the powers of darkness bring their attacks against the church. Repeatedly the powers of darkness have tried to destroy the church through persecution. How many of God's saints down through history have lost their life at the hands of the powers of darkness for Christ's sake! When persecution fails to destroy the church, the powers of darkness seek to destroy the church spiritually. Through false doctrine and the pleasures of sin the forces of evil seek to lead the church away into sin so that she repudiates the LORD as her God and seeks other gods.

And how powerful the forces of darkness are! Theirs is the wealth and the power of the world. To them belong great numbers. Numbered among their ranks are the men of great intellect and cunning. From every human point of view the church can not possibly stand before the powers of darkness.

However, the LORD is still God almighty. His counsel still stands. And He still brings the counsels of the heathen to nought. The LORD therefore will surely preserve His church. He will keep them in the hour of temptation. With every temptation the LORD will provide a way of escape. The power of darkness may rise up in terrible persecution against the church; but the LORD will never allow the church to be overcome. No matter what scheme the Devil may concoct in his sly old head, the LORD

will bring it to naught and preserve His people so that they may enjoy forevermore the bliss of His companionship and fellowship.

Blessed is the nation whose God is the LORD!

* * * * *

The nation whose God is the LORD is blessed exactly because the LORD has chosen her for His own inheritance.

An inheritance can refer to the material wealth a father leaves to his children at death. It can also refer to one's possessions, as it does here.

In a sense, all things are the inheritance or possession of the LORD. He is the Creator and thus also the Owner of all things and all peoples.

However, there is a people whom the LORD has chosen for His special possession. Even as a king who owns all things in his kingdom will have his own personal possessions in which he takes special delight, so too the LORD has eternally chosen out of all peoples of the world a people to be His special possession and treasure. With this people God will establish His eternal covenant. In this people He will find His delight. This is the great truth of eternal and sovereign election.

This divine choosing explains, first of all, why as a nation this people acknowledge the LORD as their God. The LORD desires a people in whom He can delight. To delight in them requires that they acknowledge and serve Him as God. Certainly the LORD can find no delight in a people who have other gods and do not own Him as God. Hence, having chosen them for His own inheritance He redeemed them in Jesus His Son and transforms them spiritually so that they own Him as God and serve Him willingly as their God.

However, this divine choosing also explains why the LORD so zealously preserves and protects this nation. He has chosen them for His own possession in whom He will take infinite and eternal delight. They are the apple of His eye! There is nothing more precious to Him than this people whom He has chosen. Certainly He will keep and preserve them. He will give to them the bliss of His fellowship. He will allow nothing to harm them. He will cause all things to work for their welfare.

Blessed is the nation whose God is the LORD!

Is the LORD your God? Then you are blessed indeed. For you are safe and secure in God's protection and fellowship.

With the LORD as our God let us face the new year with courage and confidence!

Give the gift of the Standard Bearer!

Editor's Notes

Although the actual occasion of New Year's Day will be past when most of our readers receive this issue, we take this opportunity to wish you, our readers, a blessed new year. May you take to yourselves the word of Psalm 57:1a, ". . . yea, in the shadow of thy wings will I make my refuge, until these calamities be overpast."

* * * * *

The Presbyterian. My colleague, Prof. Hanks, asked me to pass on to you a word about this little magazine. It is published by Mr. Tony Horne in Bristol, England. He is one of the saints whom the emissaries met while in Ireland and England in late 1984. He publishes this magazine in an effort to revive Presbyterianism in the U.K. The publication of this magazine is a personal venture of Mr. Horne. In order for the paper to survive, he needs subscriptions and support. The magazine can be obtained by writing to: "The Presbyterian," 9 Church Rd., Thornbury, Bristol, BS12 1EJ, England. The cost for one year (six issues) is 3.72 pounds, surface mail, or 6.50 pounds, airmail. [For the exchange rate of dollars to pounds, see your bank; currently the pound is around \$1.45.] A subscription to this magazine will both serve to help those interested in

learning more of Presbyterianism and help support a worthwhile cause and foster the overseas contacts of our churches.

* * * * *

Price Increase, RFP Publications. Here is the bad news. For various reasons, chief among which is the increased costs of publication, most of our RFP books will go up in price as of January 1. Elsewhere in this issue you will find a complete price list. There are three exceptions to the price increase. *Behold, He Cometh!* will hereafter be available only in paperback, but at the same price of \$12.95; right now there is a very small supply of hardcover copies left. *Come, Ye Children*, the Bible story book, and *Hyper-Calvinism and the Call of the Gospel* will not go up in price. We call special attention to the fact that *God's Covenant Faithfulness* is being sold out at \$2.95; after the current supply is exhausted this book will not be reprinted. Now comes the good news. RFP Book Club members will receive a 30% discount from now on instead of the former 20%. You cannot take advantage of your Book Club discount at Reformed Book Outlet in Hudsonville, MI; only by writing to RFP Publications, P.O. Box 2006, Grand Rapids, MI 49501.

EDITORIAL

The Christian and Rock Music

What should be the attitude of the child of God toward what is called "rock music"? More specifically stated, what should be the attitude of the child of God of *Reformed persuasion* toward "rock music"? And more specifically still, what should be the attitude of the child of God of *Reformed persuasion who holds both in principle and practice to the*

truth of the antithesis toward "rock music"?

Perhaps you are asking, "Why make that the subject of an editorial in *The Standard Bearer*? Is that really a question among us? Is it a debatable subject? Is it necessary to discuss this and to point out the reasons why 'rock' is wrong, contraband, for the child of God?"

Obviously, my answer to these questions is affirmative. Perhaps I could put it this way: it *should* not be necessary to discuss this, but it *is* necessary. And I believe this answer is realistic. No, I have not taken a survey or a poll to determine to what extent "rock" is indulged in by Protestant Reformed people of various age groups. However, in the first place, I know by experience, both as one who was once a young man himself and as a former parent of covenant youth, the carnal appeal and the temptation which the world's music holds and which it seems to hold especially for young people; and I have no reason to believe that is any different today than in yesteryear. The only difference is in the particular *kind* of worldly music and in the *degree* of the temptation. In my day the world's music went by different names than it does today. And in my day, perhaps it could be said, the world's songs, both with respect to their lyrics and their music, were not always as blatantly worldly and as crassly carnal and perverted as they are today. That, however, only points us to the fact that there is *development* in sin; it does not point to a principal difference. And, in fact, this only means that the temptation of today's music is greater and that its carnal and sensual and lewd appeal is stronger. If you don't believe it, or if you don't allow rock music openly in your home, then I suggest that you unexpectedly ask to listen in upon occasion to what is coming through the headphones of your son's or daughter's portable cassette player or radio, or that you turn on the car radio sometime after your young people have been out with the car. You might be in for a shock.

Add to this, in the second place, the tremendous advances in the media in our day. The daily newspaper in many instances promotes rock music and even publishes a separate section of news concerning rock stars and rock groups and reviews the latest gold platter winners, etc. Many a magazine does the same thing, and there are even magazines readily available in any supermarket which are devoted in their entirety to rock stars, rock groups, and their music. Radio stations abound with it, and there are stations devoted solely to the broadcasting of rock music. Records and cassette tapes are readily available on the market, and the equipment to play them is highly refined and easily available. More recently, rock has had a larger place in television shows and in network productions. And if you happen to have a video cassette player, you can readily obtain cassettes which enable you to watch the perverted musicians with their perverted attire and makeup and their lewd actions while you listen to their carnal music. The temptation, from the viewpoint of sheer availability, is great.

In the third place, I am told that the inroads

which rock music has made among our families is probably greater than I imagine. As I said, I have not taken a poll. Besides, in my non-pastoral ministry I am not in a position which affords me much direct contact with our people or opportunity to observe their lifestyle. Moreover, I am not making a blanket indictment of our people on this score. In fact, far be it from me to make any indictment at all; I only wish to sound an earnest warning and to furnish pertinent grounds for that warning. But I am told by some who are in a better position to know and to observe than I am that addiction to "rock" is not uncommon among our young people. I am also told that there are homes where it is not guarded against, or is even allowed and endorsed. I am told that there are even homes in which parents themselves freely indulge in listening to rock music.

This, I think, offers sufficient justification for my addressing the subject editorially. Hence, with some apology to the older generation (who, if they are like me, cringe when they come across some blaring rock while they are tuning the radio for some news), I shall proceed. As I do so, I make a special appeal to our readers to urge their young people also to read this editorial.

There is more than one way to approach this subject.

Frequently the subject is approached from the point of view of the question: what is wrong about rock music?

Now I am not saying that it is altogether wrong to ask this question. In fact, I intend to face this question in the course of this discussion and to comment on some of the evils of rock, as well as to comment on the fundamental evil of it. It is another question altogether, however, whether this question as to the wrong, or evil, of rock should constitute our fundamental approach.

For one thing, it is quite possible to focus upon a good many aspects of rock music which are wrong, unquestionably wrong, morally corrupt, and yet not to touch upon the fundamental evil of rock. For another, in many instances the very form of the question is defensive and already puts the questioner by implication in the position of defending rock, implying at the same time that unless someone is able to tear down his position and point out conclusively the evils of rock, the questioner will feel free to go on listening. Strange, is it not, that the questioner never seems to ask the question: what is *right* about rock; that is, right in the sight of God, right as far as my calling as a Christian is concerned, right as far as my calling to walk in the light is concerned?

In recent weeks I have made it my business to

pay attention to what is said about this subject in both the secular and the religious press. I even made it a point to listen to some of the cassettes on this subject by Bob Larson Ministries; in fact, I have on my desk at the moment a cassette entitled "Rock Update III," dated August, 1985.

The secular press has recently been full of the controversy about what is called "sexually explicit" rock music — in distinction, of course, from "sexually implicit" rock. And it was supposed to be some sort of victory when a certain group of influential persons succeeded in getting concessions from producers of records and cassettes so that they would put warnings on the labels stating that a recording contains "sexually explicit material." The words "sexually explicit" are, of course, a euphemism, a so-called buzz word. What they mean (but do not state) is explicit fornication, filthiness, and perversion that cannot even be mentioned among God's people. Now no Christian can be in favor of such "sexually explicit" material, to be sure. But the implication is, of course, that as long as such corrupt and filthy material is only *implicit*, even brazenly implicit, it need not bear a label, and, of course, is fit to be heard. Meanwhile, the fundamental evil of rock is not attacked.

In a way, the same kind of approach is adopted by the religious press frequently. There can be a lengthy recital of the evils of rock and of "heavy metal" without much reference to principle. And then, of course, the next subject becomes that of so-called Christian rock or gospel rock — the implication being that rock is possibly all right, provided it has some kind of Christian sugar-coating and gospel flavor.

The Bob Larson cassettes take the approach of reciting the evils of rock by quoting the lyrics of many rock hits or by quoting the language of various rock stars, by telling about their perverted dress and makeup and lifestyle. And make no mistake about it: Bob Larson pulls no punches in this regard. What he quotes is frequently so explicit that he leaves blanks where the language is so evil and filthy that he will not repeat it. What he tells in documented form concerning the filthy and perverted lifestyle, the blatant profanity, the Satanism, the perversion in the lyrics — all this is horrifying. In fact, it becomes so nauseating that one is moved to turn off the cassette player. Yet, while there is some value in materials of this kind in the line of concrete evidence, it seems to me that it does not address the basic question.

About this next time.

HCH

WALKING IN THE LIGHT

Herman Hanko

Gambling (2)

In our last article, when we introduced the subject of gambling, we ended the article by calling attention to the principle of Christian stewardship, within which principle the whole question of gambling must be decided. We noticed that the idea of stewardship was very common in Scripture, but that it is also to be applied to the relationship in which the believer lives to God.

Christian stewardship rests upon the fundamental principle that God is the Creator and Sovereign Owner of the entire creation and of all that is in it. As the Owner of all things, He alone has the

prerogative to give of the things of the creation to each man as seems good to Him. We have and possess nothing which we have not received. All is given as a gift.

But the fact that God distributes His good gifts to men according to His own wisdom and purpose does not mean that He relinquishes His own prior claim to all these things. He retains sole ownership of everything, and gives what is His to man in his capacity of steward. Just as a steward in Scripture was placed over all his master's possessions, while his master retained the right of ownership, so does

God distribute the treasures of this creation to men while He remains Owner of all.

This includes everything which we possess: our material possessions, our money, our homes and cars, our bodies even and the health of them, our children. Nothing is exempt. All belongs to God.

Now, just as a steward was called to use his master's possessions to advance the well-being of his master, so we are called to use everything which God gives us to the glory of God. *Soli Deo Gloria* is not only a fact, but it is also a calling which stands at the heart of all the responsibility of the child of God in the world.

More specifically and concretely that means that every child of God is called to use everything he has to seek the kingdom of God. When Jesus in the Sermon on the Mount admonishes His people to seek first the kingdom of God and God's righteousness, Jesus does not mean that such things as the budget of the church and tuition in the Christian schools should stand at the top of the list, so that when we have laid aside money for these things, we have the right to use what is left for our own purposes. The little word "first" does not mean, "first in a long list of things including things which we desire"; it means, "first as a fundamental principle of all our seeking." With everything that we have as given to us of God, we are called to seek His kingdom. That kingdom is concretely and specifically revealed in this earth in all the work of the church and the cause of the Christian faith. It includes all that belongs to God's covenant in the world; it includes all that centers in the life of the child of God as He is called to live out of the principle of regeneration by faith.

With everything he possesses, therefore, he is to seek that kingdom. He may not spend a dime of his money or use one single gift which God gives without asking himself whether this is the best way in which he can seek the kingdom of God, and in this way God's glory.

This is a fundamental and controlling principle of the Christian's life, in his use of all the things of this creation which God has given him.

But there is another principle in the context of which the whole question of gambling must be considered, a principle which stands closely connected to what we have said about Christian stewardship. That is the principle of the tenth commandment: "Thou shalt not covet."

Negatively, covetousness refers to the sin of

wanting something which God has not given to us. We are dissatisfied with the amount of things which we have received of the Lord and we want more or other things. We are discontent with our possessions and think that we should have more than we have, and we set our hearts upon other things and seek to get them into our control.

Now, it ought to be evident that the covetous man is not a good steward. He cannot be. He is covetous only because he wants things for himself. If he were fully conscious of his calling to use all that he has for God's glory and the advancement of the kingdom of Christ, he would not covet what he does not have. He is covetous only because he sinfully thinks that what he possesses is really his and that he has the right to do with them whatever he wants. He wants more because he wants more for himself, for his pleasure, for the satisfaction of his lusts, for his personal enjoyment, for the power wealth gives, for the greater control he can exercise over his life with greater possessions. If he is truly a good steward, he is not covetous.

Positively, the tenth commandment requires of us contentment. That is, when we truly keep the tenth commandment we are completely satisfied with whatever the Lord has given to us. We want nothing more than God has given us, nor do we want things to be any different from what they are. Our wills are completely in harmony with the will of God for us. We are able to say, with Paul, "I have learned in whatever state I am, therewith to be content" (Phil. 4:11). Or, we heed the admonition of Paul to Timothy: "And having good and raiment let us be therewith content" (I Tim. 6:8).

There is perhaps one more point which we could mention. In his letter to the Thessalonians, the apostle Paul tells the church there, "For even when we were with you, this we commanded you, that if any would not work, neither should he eat" (II Thess. 3:10). Very clearly, God has ordained that we receive what we need in this life by means of working. A man must earn his daily bread. He must expend labor in order to be provided with his daily needs. Never may a man expect "something for nothing." It is not hard to see how this principle is flaunted today in the market place where countless people expect something for nothing, and live as if the world owes them their living. But this is totally opposed to Scripture's injunctions.

If we take all these things into account, we can readily see the terrible wrong in any forms of gambling.

There are those forms of gambling where we risk our own money or possessions with the purpose of earning more. Included in this are all forms of betting, all forms of casino gambling, all games played

for money where the winner takes the "pot," all lotteries and raffles which are used by the government, by schools or by churches to raise money. They violate the basic principles of stewardship and make one unfaithful in God's house. They are what our communion form includes under "gaming," which sins make one unworthy of the table of the Lord and, unless they are repented of, make one worthy of hell. It is spiritually impossible for a person to ask in humility before God, "Lord, what would you have me do with these possessions you have given me?" and give out these same possessions to try to get more. Such conduct brings down upon the one who does these things the great wrath of Almighty God Who seeks in all things the glory of His own name.

This same kind of gambling can also be present when one "plays" the stock market. In our day when the economy operates on interest, what the Bible calls "usury," it is not in itself wrong to put one's money to work so that one's money earns money in various types of savings accounts. It is not wrong to invest one's money in various purchases of stocks and bonds. But when one "plays" the market for purposes of hoping to earn money while greatly risking the loss of his investment, this becomes only another form of gambling which Scripture forbids.

But the same may be said of all kinds of sweepstakes. It is true that one does not risk one's own money to acquire more money. And, while the Scriptural principle of stewardship does not as such apply, it is true that at the bottom of all this is covetousness. Who can say that he engages in drawings or sweepstakes for any other reason than to get something which he does not possess? Who can honestly before God claim to participate in these things in good conscience when he knows that Scripture frowns on the whole idea of "getting something for nothing?" and that Scripture insists that we must work for what we receive?

I just received in the mail a document which reads, "Important: the enclosed Four Sweepstakes Entry Tickets give you a chance to win the TWO MILLION DOLLAR Grand Prize or any of 21,264 other cash prizes in the Reader's Digest \$2,500,000.00 Sweepstakes. Beat the November 26

Grand Prize deadline, and you could win up to \$150,000.00 in BONUS Award cash if you win the Grand Prize. You and your family are also invited to see ABC's OF NATURE, the family answer book from Reader's Digest" The blatant appeal to covetousness and the impossibility of getting involved in such things while escaping the sin of covetousness is obvious.

The same truth holds for all the Radio and TV game shows which give away fabulous prizes. One need not watch these programs very often to witness the disgusting spectacle of covetousness at its worst as reflected in the faces and conduct of those who win and those who lose.

The wrath of God rests upon those who flaunt these principles of Scripture. *Christianity Today* a short time ago had an editorial in its pages entitled, "Unlucky Lotto." The first paragraph reads, "In 1976, Erika Earnhart's number came up. Her lottery number, that is. And with it came \$1 million, providing an annual income of \$50,000 after taxes. Her heart-breaking story since then includes two divorces, a child-custody dispute, alimony payments, and debts piled on debts. She often borrows from the bank in anticipation of her next lottery check. Had she known the future, she says, 'I'd have torn up that ticket, or put it in someone else's name.' She still plays the lottery, hoping to win and catch up financially." The same editorial concludes, "More irony. Gambling addiction has mounted in states with legalized gambling while the government is often called on to treat victims. The New Jersey State Lottery Commission has made a \$75,000 grant to research the nature of compulsive gambling."

It is easy to say, "Well, if I would win, I would not be such a fool." But we forget that the wrath of God rests on those who break His precepts. Paul gives a pertinent word of warning: "But they that will be rich fall into temptation and a snare, and into many foolish and hurtful lusts, which drown men in destruction and perdition. For the love of money is the root of all evil: which while some coveted after, they have erred from the faith, and pierced themselves through with many sorrows" (I Tim. 6:9, 10). Let us remember Scripture's words: "And having food and raiment let us be therewith content."

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THE DAY OF SHADOWS

John A. Heys

A Much Needed Lesson

Surely when in Psalm 14:1 we read, "The fool hath said in his heart, there is no God," we have a judgment of God that those who deny Him in their actions, as well as those who do so in words, behave in utter folly. For the psalmist speaks of those who say in their *hearts* that there is no God. And out of the heart are all the issues of life. That heart determines what every part of the body will do. It says that there is no God, before the lips express it in human language. The heart moves the mouth to say what is in it. This is very plain from what the psalmist says further in the verse. He states, "They are corrupt, they have done abominable works, there is none that doeth good." It is by these corrupt deeds, these abominable works, that the heart reveals that its opinion is that there is no God.

Likewise is it true that the child of God, the believer, says that there is no God when he sins. Sin is always an act of folly, for it always denies that there is a God Who must be obeyed, and Whose will must be done. The reborn child of God has a life that cannot and does not sin. Thus we read in I John 3:9: "Whosoever is born of God doth not commit sin; for His seed remaineth in him; and he cannot sin, because he is born of God." But it is also true that, until he dies, he retains his old man of sin, his depraved nature. And with that nature he sins every day of his life; and in all these sins he says that there is no God.

In the life of Jonah, which on these pages we are considering, all this becomes so very plain. He was a child of God with a new spiritual life in him. But he had weaknesses, and he displayed so clearly his folly in the sins recorded of him in this book. No, with his mouth he never said that there is no God.

In his prophetic office he spoke boldly and clearly of the one true God; and he even called men to walk in the ways of Jehovah. Although he lived many centuries before the apostle Paul, he agreed one hundred percent with Paul, who wrote in Romans 7:21, "I find then a law, that, when I would do good, evil is present with me." We must then be careful, as we study this book, that we do not in any way excuse Jonah's sins; but we should also be careful that we do not accuse him of being an unbeliever, as for example the prophet Baalim. He, Jonah, sinned when he fled from the land of Canaan to try to escape his calling. But he was not a man who did not at all want to serve God, and to confess Him before others.

According to his flesh Jonah acted like a fool. And we do also every time we commit a sin. We act like fools also when we deny this truth. Then we have no room to say anything about Jonah's folly. But note that folly of Jonah. What folly for the prophet, who a bit later confesses on the ship in the midst of the storm that his God is "the Lord, the God of heaven, which hath made the sea and the dry land." What folly for Jonah to think that he could outwit and frustrate such a God!

Understand well that Jonah did not think that he could go where God's eye would not see him. God's presence here does not mean that there are places where He is not present. But God dwelt symbolically in the promised land. He called men in that land to be His prophets, priests, and kings for their work. Jonah's folly was that he thought that if he left the promised land, God would not — it was not a case of God could not — follow him to repeat the call.

But could he not see that his wickedness would rise up before God as well as the wickedness of Nineveh did? Could he not see that if Nineveh is to be destroyed in forty days, he could be visited in

forty minutes or less? In his folly he also overlooks the fact that it was only one sin of Adam that brought the curse and death to the whole human race. He acts like a fool, for in his actions he says that there is no God Whom he must obey.

If Jonah can outwit God and frustrate Him, then he has shown that there is no God. Is it not simply an undeniable fact that anyone who can outwit or frustrate God has replaced Him and become God? Of course, no one can outwit or frustrate Him; and such only try to be God. Jonah tried and failed miserably; and all who try will fail as miserably as Jonah did. But what a sinful, abominable, and foolish work that is, to try to outwit and frustrate the almighty God! Yet, that is what every sin, no matter what the shape, form, or size of it is, tries to do. It tries to get away with sin, and keep God's will from being done on earth as it is in heaven. It is rebellion against God, an attempt to push Him aside, so that there is no God any more.

There is something deeper that we ought to consider. In his folly Jonah thought that God had done foolishly. O yes, he did! Jonah considered himself to be wiser than God. God had said, "Arise go to Nineveh, that great city, and cry against it" Jonah in his heart said, "How foolish. This ought not to be done. Let hell fire fall upon this wicked city and destroy it. This is not a wise thing God wants me to do. I know better than He does what is good and ought to be done."

We must not try to polish the sins of believers. They are as abominable as those of unbelievers. David's murder was as wicked as unbelieving Cain's was. Make no mistake about that. Jesus did not come to die for lesser sins. In sin we always raise ourselves up above God. And here Jonah repeats the sin of Adam and Eve. His flesh made him flee from his duty, because he thought that he knew what was good and evil, and that God had made a mistake. Satan made Adam and Eve believe that. And that is our conceit and folly as well. We sin because we think that we are doing ourselves some good. Never mind what God says. We want to be like God and do our thing, and decide for ourselves what is good and what is evil.

Truly Jonah has a lesson to learn. There is a much needed lesson that God must teach him. And in His mercy God does teach him in a way that brings him to repentance, and not into the destruction that falls upon the unbelievers. The question therefore is, Just what lesson must Jonah learn? And at once it may be stated that surely he must learn anew that there is a God from Whom he cannot flee, and so outwit and frustrate. But that is by no means the whole lesson. Nor does all this explain why Jonah fled and tried to outwit and frustrate

God; or why he thought that he knew better than God; and what ought to happen in Nineveh. No, the lesson he stands in desperate need of learning is to know God's sovereign love, and his own calling to love that sovereign God and his neighbor as himself.

Not only was Jonah not walking in love toward God when he rebelled against His command to go to Nineveh and cry against that wicked city; but he did not know God's love for all His people in Christ, even though he thought that he did know that love. He rejoiced in all that which God had done for and unto Israel. He could not speak loudly enough or often enough about God's grace and mercy upon Israel, as is plain from Jonah 4:2, to which we referred last time. And do not forget that grace and mercy are aspects of love. God's grace is His love as it goes out to the elect sinner in his guilt and sends him the free gift of blessedness which he does not deserve, in fact is the opposite of what he deserves. God's mercy is that same love as it goes out to that same sinner from the point of view of his misery and afflictions which he suffers under the curse that came upon the world because of Adam's sin; it pities him in his woes, and seeks to deliver him from all of it as soon as His sovereign, eternal counsel makes it possible. Jonah saw all this love of God resting upon the fleshly seed of Abraham. That is why he speaks of it and even declares that he knew that God was gracious and merciful. It would seem as though Jonah knew God's love and that he did not need to be taught a lesson in regard to it.

But what Jonah must learn about God's sovereign love is that it also rests upon a host of elect Gentiles, whose names were eternally written in the Lamb's book of life. It is of extreme importance that we see Jonah as living in the day of shadows, and in the measure of revelation which was given to the church in that day. Jonah loved the Old Testament church. We make a serious mistake if we take the position that Jonah fled to Tarshish in a certain nationalism, or patriotism that attached itself to all the Jews whether they were believers or unbelievers, as long as they were of the fleshly seed of Abraham. That is not true. We may not explain the events in the book of Jonah as though all this took place after the day of Pentecost. We must try to go back in our thoughts to the situation as it was in Jonah's day. And do not forget that after the Son of God did come in our flesh, did die for our sins, arose again the third day, appeared as risen over a period of forty days, and was ready in a few minutes to ascend up into heaven, that the disciples asked Him whether he would at this time restore the kingdom of Israel. (See Acts 1:6.)

Then too we must not overlook what God Him-

self declares through the apostle Paul in Romans 16:25, Ephesians 1:9, 10, and Colossians 1:25, 26. We took note last time that God moves in a mysterious way His wonders to perform. And in the passages above God speaks of the mystery which was "kept secret since the world began." This mystery was "that in the dispensation of the fulness of times He might gather together in one all things in Christ." Do not judge Jonah without taking all this into consideration. In the light of all of God's dealing in the Old Testament dispensation, and up to his own day, Jonah could not understand that God would have a goodly number of Gentiles converted in Nineveh, resulting in sparing the city of the destruction concerning which Jonah was to preach. Surely the very fact that Jonah was sent to warn Nineveh meant that God was calling the Ninevites to repentance and an escape from the punishment they deserved. There just was no reason for sending him there and for warning the people that in forty days destruction would come, if God was not seeking their repentance and salvation. This seemed all wrong to Jonah. He was perplexed. The mysterious way in which God worked he could not understand. And it was love for God's church that figured in causing him to be so confused. He wanted nothing to happen to that church; and it was because he did not understand God's

love as sovereignly also including many, many Gentiles in a city far removed from the borders of the promised land, that he took things in his own hands. That is where he erred. He saw an earthly kingdom of Christ, Whom he expected would one day come; and even as the disciples in the day when Christ came still looked for an earthly kingdom over which a son of David would rule, Jonah could not fit this command of God in with the Old Testament revelation of that kingdom of Christ. Here is a nation separate from the nation in which God has been gathering His church. Here is a kingdom opposed to the kingdom over which God set David, to whom he promised that his son would sit on the throne forever. Must it be saved from destruction?

Jonah may have known Isaiah 55:8, 9, "For my thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways my ways, saith the Lord. For as the heavens are higher than the earth, so are my ways higher than your ways, and my thoughts than your thoughts." But he could not see that a time would come when the Gentile believers would be *more numerous* upon the face of this earth than the Jewish believers. This does not excuse him; but it does reveal that there was a lesson he must learn and learn well. Of this we will have more to say in the next installment.

FROM HOLY WRIT

Believing All the Prophetic Scriptures

Chapter XXIV The Mystery Of The Seventy Weeks In Daniel 9 THE HOLY OF HOLIES ANOINTED (Daniel 9:24b)

The anointed Messiah came to anoint the "Most Holy"!

There can be little doubt that the term for "Most Holy" in the Hebrew text should be better translated "holy of holies." In Old Testament language this refers to the part of the tabernacle which was behind the second veil (Heb. 9:3). The writer to the

Hebrews explains this as follows: "For there was a tabernacle prepared, the first, wherein were the candlestick, and the table, and the showbread, which is called the Holy place. And after the second veil, the tabernacle which is called the Holy of holies, having the golden altar of incense, and the ark of the covenant overlaid round about with gold, wherein was the golden pot holding the manna, Aaron's rod that budded, and the tables of the covenant; and above it cherubim of glory overshadowing the mercy-seat . . ." (Heb. 9:3-5). The Holy Spirit says in Hebrews 9:3 that this was called

"holy of holies." Surely this meant to express that here was a place of separation, which was even less accessible than was the holy place!

We ought to notice the following particulars concerning this holy of holies. The common priest could and must enter daily (continually) into the holy place each morning and evening in their courses (Luke 1:8, 9). They stood at the altar of incense offering symbolically the prayers of all the saints. However, they might never enter into the "holy of holies." Only the high priest might enter here once a year on the great day of atonement in the seventh month and on the fifteenth day! On that day he entered into the Holy of Holies "... alone, once in the year, not without blood, which he offered for himself and for the errors (sins committed in ignorance and weakness: *agnoematoon*) of the people" (congregation = *laos*) (Heb. 9:7).

In a parabolical, symbolical manner the people were thus *anointed*, consecrated into the service and presence of God — represented by the high priest bringing the sacrifice! Once a year the Most Holy Place was anointed from the pollution of our sins which had defiled the holy place. Even the prayers of the "people" as represented in the incense upon the altar were polluted. The best works were all imperfect and polluted with sin! The very high priest who bore the breastplate, representing the twelve tribes, upon his heart, needed to be purified. And, what is more, the very nature of this sacrifice, performed yearly, proclaimed loudly in the heart and consciences of Israel that there was not a sacrifice offered on this day of atonement which could cleanse the conscience from sin; these sacrifices, offered continually, could not "make perfect them that drew nigh"! The sacrifices would not bring about the very perfection, the fulfilment of the law, removal of guilt and pollution, which they portrayed in a symbolical-parabolic way. They could not realize the perfection, the perfect consecration, of the place where God dwells with His people as the Holy One of Israel.

Daniel really confesses this tremendous lack in the sacrifices of the Old Testament temple. Fact is that in Jeremiah 31:31-34 God Himself finds fault with the "old covenant" of the shadows and types, does He not? When Israel is carried away into Babylon, and when the temple is burnt, and the holy city and the walls are broken down, then God promises another "covenant"; yes, it will be a *new* covenant. And the noteworthy element here is that the term (adjective "new") in the Greek text in Hebrews 9:8 is not the common term *kainos*,

neither *naos*, but that it is the translation from the Greek verb *suntelesoo*. This verb really means "to bring to an end, to finish, to complete." All that was incomplete in the Old Testament "first covenant" will then be completed, will be realized. No more shall it be ours as in a parabolic act, but it will be very really "God with us, Immanuel" (Ezekiel 48:35).

It will be the realization of the seventy sevens, in the last seventieth "seven" (week).

Yes, as in one mighty chorus we hear Isaiah, Jeremiah, Ezekiel, and Daniel all sing of this perfection of the covenant: God dwelling in His holy place with the lowly of heart. They all speak of that mystery of godliness which is great, as expressed by God Himself in Isaiah 57:15: "For thus saith the high and lofty One that inhabiteth eternity, whose name is Holy: I dwell in the high and holy place, with him also that is of a contrite and humble spirit, to revive the spirit of the humble, and to revive the heart of the contrite"! Isaiah has the ever-pervading theme, "comfort ye, comfort ye, my people and cry unto her that her warfare is accomplished, that her iniquity is pardoned, that she hath received of the LORD'S (Jehovah's) hand double for all her sins." Jeremiah speaks of the better covenant, the consummation of the works of God in bringing about eternal righteousness, even calling "Jehovah (Himself) our righteousness" (Jer. 23:6; 33:16). And Ezekiel portrays to us a better city and temple where the glory of the Lord shall forever abide in his temple: "and, behold, the glory of Jehovah (LORD) filled the house" (Ezekiel 43:1-5).

It is a rewarding experience to study those Old Testament prophecies and to believe them! In all of these we see portrayed the "anointing of the Holy of Holies."

How does Gabriel show this anointing step by step to Daniel here in Daniel 9:24? As we have attempted to show in this entire study, it is by the way of the blood of the Messiah, the Anointed One of God. He is destined in the Counsel of God to realize that which was "decreed upon thy (Daniel's) people and upon thy holy city." And what was decreed by God? It was to finish transgression, to make an end of sins, to make reconciliation for iniquity, to bring in everlasting righteousness, and to seal up vision and prophecy — *and to anoint the most holy place!*

Thus the covenant is brought to its perfect completion. God will cause his face to shine upon His people and His holy city, Amen. God will then have cut the pieces of the sacrificial animals, parting them in halves, and He will have passed between the pieces, as we read in Genesis 15:17, "And it came to pass, that, when the sun went down, and it

was dark, behold, a smoking furnace, and a flaming torch that passed between these pieces"! In that day the LORD (Jehovah) made a covenant with Abram, unto thy seed have I given this land! And Abram believed God and was justified in the blood of the covenant (Gen. 15:6; Rom. 4:1-4). Here David, the contrite sinner, can sing his song of redemption concerning the man who is blessed in having his iniquities forgiven and his sins covered; he can stand before God in the wholly consecrated perfection of His holy place!

HE SHALL MAKE A FIRM COVENANT (Daniel 9:27)

There are those who would interpret the "covenant" here to refer to some human covenant, agreement made by some "prince who shall come to destroy the city and the sanctuary" and that after he has wrought his destruction and havoc he will make a binding covenant with Israel, stipulating the mutual terms of agreement. It will be somewhat like the laws of the Medes and Persians which cannot be broken.

However, this interpretation does violence to the sublimity of the term "covenant" in Scripture, as we have shown in our exposition of the work of Christ in "anointing the Most Holy." It should be borne in mind that we are here dealing with a *prophetic* word, and that the chronological details are not here spelled out by Gabriel. Rather we have here some historical, future details connected with the coming of the Messiah and the works which He came to perform. There is a close connection between the Cross of Christ and the destruction of the temple in earthly Jerusalem. Christ's Cross and His sacrificial work at Calvary are closely connected with the final destruction of Jerusalem and the temple. The zeal of the Lord of hosts will perform this (John 2:17)! The LORD in His zeal will perform the breaking down of the temple of Christ's body by wicked hands (Acts 2:23). However, these wicked hands cannot break down the temple of Christ's body without the earthly temple becoming a final and perpetual "desolation"¹ (Matt. 23:38, 39). Then God leaves this earthly temple forever, and He leaves this earthly temple at the very moment when Christ gives up His spirit and dies at Calvary (Matt. 27:50-53).

(1) *footnote*: The terms "abomination" and "desolation" are not to be equated with the biblical concept of "tribulation" as is erroneously taught by dispensationalism. These errorists teach that in Daniel 9:27 (a) the seventieth "seven" refers to the time immediately after the secret "rapture" and before the "revelation" which then, according to dispensationalism, ushers in the Millennium. During this so-called seven year period the "great Tribulation" takes place, and all that is prophesied in the chapters 6-16 of Revelation. (b)

However, the "desolations" of Daniel 9:27 refer to the ultimate and complete destruction and end of the Old Testament temple and of the Old Testament theocracy.

Never before in the history of the temple did God make a complete end, so that His glory was really, radically, and finally departed. Yes, God made an end of the tabernacle at Shiloh when the wife of Phinehas dies in child-birth and names her son Ichabod, saying, the glory is departed. That was when the Ark of God was taken, the place where the Lord dwells in Israel between the Cherubim in the Most Holy. God Himself reminds Israel through Jeremiah of the import of this terrible judgment at Shiloh (Jer. 7:12; 26:6, 9; Ps. 78:60). And we do well to take notice here of the Scriptural prophetic implications.

However, this was not a *full* end!

Even later, at the destruction of the temple by Nebuchadnezzar, God did not make a "full end" of Israel. There was even the remnant according to election on the one hand; on the other hand there was ever a future and more glorious revelation of eternal presence of God with His people. With this remnant according to election God wills to dwell forever. This we read explicitly in Psalm 68:16: "why leap ye, ye high hills? This is the hill which God hath desired to dwell in; yea, the LORD will dwell in it forever" (See Deut. 12:5; I Kings 9:3; Heb. 12:18-29). God will make a full end of all the nations which imagine a vain thing against the Lord and His anointed Son, but He will not make a full end of the remnant of Judah and Israel (Jer. 46:26). God will never forsake His people whom He foreknew in elective love. For God's elective love is the heart of the church, both in the Old and New Testaments. Our fathers called it the *Cor Ecclesia*. This elective love is the sole reason for Israel's coming into being (Deut. 4:37; 10:17); it is the great and only sovereign motif for Israel's continued existence as God's church in the darkest hours of her history (I Kings 19:18; Rom. 11:1-5); and it is the only reason for the salvation of the Gentiles as they are grafted as wild branches into the tame olive tree of God's Old Testament planting!

*Take the time to
read and study the
Standard Bearer!*

ALL AROUND US

Robert D. Decker

Casualness and Worship Rock Music and Our Children Teens and the Pill

Casualness and Worship

Casualness and Worship. Such is the title of the editorial of the November 18, 1985 issue of *Clarion*, the magazine of the Canadian Reformed Churches. Editor S. Geertsema comments:

A congregation comes together for worship on a Sunday morning. It is summer. The weather is warm. Those attending are dressed casually. Brothers of the church council enter, the organ is silenced, the minister walks to the pulpit. Casually he greets the people with a "Good morning, congregation." The congregation responds with a "Good morning, sir." There is singing and praying. The sermon follows, but is interrupted when a few latecomers arrive. In a nice and casual way they are welcomed.

Is there not something attractive in this casualness? Does it not bring the service "down to earth"? Does it not make people feel welcome and comfortable? Is it not true that through these little things they will feel "at home" in the church? And is that not exactly what we want? People should be comfortable and at home in the church, shouldn't they? Then they will come back.

Our modern times bring along many changes. There is also a change in the manner in which people worship. Worship services are less solemn and rigid in form. They are becoming more open, more easy-going, more casual. In general, people are much more casual than they were a few decades ago. I think that this word "casual" defines quite well the new direction.

What is the meaning of casualness? My dictionary gives, among others, the following definitions: "happening by chance, not planned or expected;" "without plan or method: careless;" "indifferent;" "informal in manner." When a minister enters the auditorium and greets his congregation with a "Good morning," or when he speaks a word of welcome it gives the service a much more informal character.

Further when men do not wear a suit and a tie, but instead a loosely fitting sweater, or women do not wear a dress but instead a pair of pants, in which they feel much more comfortable, going to church is made so much more pleasant for them. However, the question must be asked: is this direction toward casualness the right direction? In my opinion, it is not. I shall deal with the two points mentioned above as illustrations of casualness.

"Good morning congregation." As I said, it sounds so nice, so welcoming, so down to earth, when a minister greets the congregation with these friendly words. But what does the casualness mean? It means that the two acting parties are the minister and the congregation. The minister speaks and the congregation reacts. Hereby the minister asks attention for himself as a nice friendly man and leader.

And when latecomers are welcomed during the service, or when members are invited to propose a favourite song, or speak a prayer, or ask the minister to pray for something or someone, all the emphasis is placed on the individual members. The worship service becomes a human, social event of friendly and religious people.

What do we lose in this approach? We lose sight of the main aspect of the worship service, namely, that it is a meeting between the Lord and His people Therefore, attention should not be asked for the greeting minister. He has to go to the pulpit and pro-

nounce, not his own salutation, but the salutation of the Lord . . . In this same line the service continues. God speaks His Word in the Ten Words of the covenant. In the Scripture reading and in the sermon. The congregation responds with listening, praying and singing in obedient faith . . . Casualness in the manner in which we have our services often goes along with casualness in the way we dress for church. We start wearing clothes to church that are comfortable and informal . . . Casualness in the worship service and in our appearance at the service shows a certain attitude. It can show that we think that in our relationship with the Lord we can be casual, and that we do not have to be precise and punctual. It can show that we think the manner in which we serve the Lord does not matter too much, that everybody can serve and worship Him in his or her own manner, in the way he or she thinks is acceptable and right. Everything becomes just a "thing between you and the Lord." . . . It should be clear to everyone that when we let casualness take over in our serving of the Lord, we are on the way to losing sight of God's holy majesty . . .

Geertsema is right! When we enter the sanctuary on the Lord's Day, God in Jesus Christ is there and He speaks to us by means of the preaching of the Word. We had better remember that "our feet are standing there on holy ground." When we come to church we "come to hear what God will say" to His people. We must worship God in spirit and in truth. Our attitude must be one of humility. From the heart we must praise and thank the Almighty Who is thrice holy! This ought to be reflected in our order of worship as well as in the way we dress when we come into God's presence.

Rock Music and Our Children

Rock Music and our Children: Christianity Today (Nov. 22, 1985 issue) reports that:

It used to be the thumping rock beat coming from their kids' bedrooms that worried parents. But a group of mothers in Washington, D.C., claim there is more to fear these days from rock music's increasingly explicit lyrics.

"The stuff we were dancing to 15 years ago was nothing like this," says Susan Baker, cofounder of the Parents' Music Resource Center (PMRC). The organization has launched a national campaign to pressure the recording industry to inform consumers about the messages conveyed in rock music.

"A lot of songs today encourage alcohol and drug abuse," says Baker. "There's a lot of incest, sadomasochism, homosexuality, and Satan worship. And the lyrics are getting bolder and bolder."

An evangelical Christian, Baker is the wife of U.S. treasury secretary James A. Baker. She started combating explicit rock lyrics after talking with a friend

who purchased the album *Purple Rain* for her daughter. One song on the album refers to a girl masturbating.

"She (the friend) was horrified and so was I," says Baker, who discovered that lyrics to other songs on the album were even more explicit. "The average teenager listens to this stuff four to six hours a day. They wake up to it, study to it, dance to it, sleep to it. They plug in their earphones and jog to it."

We certainly hope that Protestant Reformed teenagers are not "the average teenager" of whom Mrs. Baker speaks. We also hope and pray that Protestant Reformed parents forbid their children to listen to rock. And fervently we pray that our youth do not avail themselves of this tool of Satan.

Teens and the Pill

Teens and the Pill: The same issue of Christianity Today reports:

Britain's highest court has ruled that doctors can prescribe contraceptives to girls younger than 16 without parental consent.

In a 3-to-2 vote the House of Lords' law lords overturned a lower court decision issued last year. The Law Lords said parents do not have absolute authority over their children, and that laws must keep pace with changing social attitudes.

The court's ruling was praised by the British Medical Society, the Labor party, and various family planning associations. They said the decision would help control abortion and unwanted teenage pregnancies. But, critics, including members of the Conservative party, denounced the ruling as an affront to family values and traditional morality.

Christian parents in England will have to obey God rather than men on this issue. We think too that this is just another instance of one of the signs of our Lord's return: abounding lawlessness. Lest anyone think things are better in the U.S., the *Presbyterian Journal* (Nov. 20, 1985) informs us that: "Nearly seven out of ten adults say schools should work with family-planning clinics so teenagers can have ready access to contraceptives and birth control information. They would also like to see birth control messages broadcast on television . . . By an overwhelming 2-1 majority, 67% of Americans favor laws requiring public schools to establish links with family planning clinics so that teenagers can learn about contraceptives and obtain them . . ." No doubt such laws will come in time. Parents and their covenant children need much grace these days to "stand against the wiles of the devil" (Ephesians 6:11).

“Good Morning, Alice” (5)

Gise J. Van Baren

There was but a single step from Alice's garage apartment into the kitchen. Brother John attached handles on the door frame so Alice could hold to them while pulling herself carefully up the step. Another handle was attached to the door frame of her bedroom so that she had something on which to hold when walking into that room. Though she was still able to walk by herself, it was ever more slowly. The challenge was to find new ways of helping her help herself with steadily decreasing strength.

The virtual loss of the use of her hands became a source of frustration and disappointment to Alice. One thing she always enjoyed was painting ceramic objects. Another pastime was paging through the many magazines to which she subscribed. For a time she had been able to continue doing this, increasingly with the help of others — but soon she was forced to give this up entirely.

Good Morning Alice:

I'm not one to have "coffee's" very often, but this morning I'm going to our annual aunts' and cousins' coffee. Do I enjoy these things? Yes and no — it all depends on the conversation. If it's about food and figures — No! But sometimes we have a worthwhile discussion.

All through the scripture we read about prayer in many different ways. Here the command to always pray comes right after the explanation of how to fight our battle of faith. It necessarily follows from that battle that we must always pray.

I suppose it's different with different people, but for me, it's much easier to defend what I feel is right or study God's Word and truly believe, than it is to pray.

I don't mean prayer with the children or even the pleading one-sentence prayer when in deep need. I mean my private talk with God. I always, no matter how hard I try, end up praying mostly for myself — and here the verse says, "with all perseverance and supplication for all saints." I am aware of my lack and I do try and this is an excellent verse to keep in mind.

You have a wonderful opportunity to follow the command of this verse too, Alice.

We know prayer doesn't change things or God's will,

but that command is still there! Do you know Alice, that healthy, wealthy, people are almost more in need of prayer than those who are ill? A man dying of cancer once told us that he experienced that illness and suffering brought him close to God and it was the people without trials who he prayed would become close to God. I know this is not always the way, but do remember us in prayer (as we do you) and please use some of your God-given time to pray always with all prayer and supplication in the Spirit and watch thereunto with all perseverance and supplication for all saints.

Love, Your friend

Please read II Cor. 9:15

Little things, tasks which most take for granted, can gradually become great hurdles. Getting to the bathroom by herself during the night was becoming increasingly difficult. Even with the use of a cane and handles on which to hold, the struggle was becoming too great. John had another solution. The camper "porta-potty" was conveniently placed next to Alice's bed. She had but to sit up, then carefully move herself from the bed and back again. That worked for a time. It was but one more reminder of growing weakness for Alice. Each restricted activity would add to her disappointment.

Good Morning Alice:

It's mild outside again this morning, a disappointment to the kids, but appreciated by my husband!

My coffee yesterday went okay. With eleven women you can't really get into a good discussion. I did talk to my aunt about her daughter who has gone from Christian Reformed to Methodist to Moravian to Pentecostal. It is a burden to my aunt.

You and I were talking about prayer yesterday, Alice; will you join me in often bringing our young people and their needs to our heavenly Father? The temptations to them are so many.

When you read II Cor. 9:15 alone, you immediately see the text is speaking of our Savior. "Thanks be to God for His unspeakable gift." It's true, isn't it, that words can not express how our hearts feel toward God that He has sent His only begotten Son to earth to redeem us from all our sins. But then when you go back and read the chapter first, you begin to think you might not be reading verse 15 right. Paul is talking about giv-

ing — not salvation; about ministering to the saints — not Jesus. And yet Paul could not have ended this chapter better. I guess I should have said God caused Paul to close this way because it is His gift that makes all giving possible.

Thanks be to God for His unspeakable Gift. None of us could give anything if Jesus had not come as man to save us from our sins.

We must show our thanks for His Gift by giving to others, and this does not mean necessarily actual "gifts."

You may wonder how you can give, Alice. This may be hard for you to understand, but you are giving by sharing your faith. By a content smile or a joyful tear you are giving to others the knowledge that God gives sufficient grace to all His children. As difficult as it may be, you are giving by making it possible for others to obey God's commands for them.

Can you understand what I mean when I say that you are giving me something — the opportunity to serve God by loving you and sharing His word with you? And for your loved ones too, you are not a burden, but a joy, you are giving them the way in which they are drawn closer to God.

May you understand your gifts, and your abilities to give, and give with a joyful and content heart.

Thanks be to God for His unspeakable gift.

God bless you in your giving, Alice.

Your friend in Him

Please read Job 19:25

Almost weekly one could notice Alice's back and leg muscles weaken. Though she could sit quite well to the end, it was becoming increasingly difficult for her to get into a sitting position by herself when she was in bed. John had another idea for helping her. The garage door had earlier been disconnected from its automatic opener. But the door opener remained on the ceiling. Now, with a series of pulleys, and with a rope attached to a hand grip, Alice could push the remote control button, and slowly, slowly the door opener would move — pulling Alice to a sitting position. From there she could still move herself from the bed. She had many a laugh about this novel approach!

Good Morning Alice:

It's not very "early" morning — I overslept! It's a good thing the kids had vacation so it really didn't matter.

For I know that my Redeemer liveth. What a beautiful confession, when you really think about it, that Job in the middle of all his suffering could cry out . . . "I know . . . (he did not doubt) . . . that my Redeemer . . . (he didn't have the New Testament and

yet he believed his redemption by his Savior) . . . liveth (Job knew because of the testimony of God in his heart that his salvation was assured because his Savior lives)."

Can we say this morning, Alice, with our hearts: I know . . . I have no doubts . . . that my Redeemer . . . Christ who died for me . . . liveth . . . lives in heaven and with His Spirit in my heart?

As I began . . . what a beautiful confession! If we could bring that to mind even once a day — say it to ourselves: I know that my Redeemer liveth, it would make our lives more joyous. With love, Your friend

Please read I Cor. 15:19 and Job 19:26

Alice had driven her car that fall until the weather became bad. She would take her car to visit with each of the brothers and sisters in turn. She could slowly enter and exit from the car and, with her cane and some assistance from others, could get into the various homes. The biggest difficulty was the steps. She could barely lift her legs that high. After the first snowfall, Alice did no more driving. From that time on, she would be picked up and later returned to John's home after her visit.

Good Morning Alice:

It's very early morning (as it always has to be when you have a family to get ready for church).

Today is the day we remember the birth of Jesus. A joyous day — a difficult day. Maybe if we could stay in church all day we might be able to accomplish what we really intend to do with this day — but how do you rejoice in the birth of the Savior with 20 to 30 family members together talking about absolutely everything, and the children busy having fun with new toys . . .

I'm convinced only a spiritually strong child of God can properly use one day to celebrate Jesus' birth and I'm afraid I'm not strong enough.

That wonderful confession we talked about yesterday doesn't end there. It's a confession with a wonderful promise.

I Cor. 15:19 tells us if it is only in this life that we have hope — we must be most miserable (pitiable) but this is a confession with hope, that expected certainty — and Job 19:26 explains what that certainty is — that after my skin and body are destroyed — then without, or out of this flesh (as our ministers have explained the proper wording) I SHALL SEE GOD.

That's what makes my daily struggle worthwhile, that is why I desire to examine my life and all that I do and say and, hard as it may be, learn that God is first in my life before anyone else, because that is the goal of my life . . . I SHALL SEE GOD.

In Him for Whom we wait, Your friend

Please read Psalm 119:73

THE STRENGTH OF YOUTH

Ronald L. Cammenga

Remarriage of the "Innocent Party"

Our Protestant Reformed Churches teach a distinctive doctrine concerning marriage and divorce. By maintaining the Biblical truth that marriage is for life, and by opposing divorce except on the ground of unrepented of adultery, we separate ourselves from most churches today. Not only is there an increasing corruption of the truth of marriage by the churches, but there is a corresponding disregard for the Bible's clear teaching on the subject of divorce and remarriage.

One particularly distinctive position of our Protestant Reformed Churches as regards marriage is our stand against the remarriage of the "innocent party." By the "innocent party" we refer to the marriage partner who is "innocent" as far as the leading cause of the divorce is concerned. Since unrepented of adultery is the only Biblical ground for divorce, the "innocent party" is the marriage partner who is not guilty of the adultery. As far as he (or she) is concerned, he (or she) has been faithful to his (or her) mate. It is our position that not only does the Bible generally prohibit the remarriage of divorced people, but that the Bible prohibits even the remarriage of the "innocent party." The teaching of Scripture is opposed to the remarriage of ALL divorced people, even those divorced on the one legitimate ground of unrepented of adultery.

This position of our churches was expressed several years ago by the late Rev. Herman Hoeksema in a pamphlet entitled "The Unbreakable Bond Of Marriage." In that pamphlet Hoeksema wrote:

But it is nevertheless true that sometimes that covenant relation is so thoroughly spoiled and marred and violated that one cannot live the full covenant relation of marriage any more. In that case (i.e., the case of

repeated adultery, R.C.), as well as in the case of unrepented of adultery, the innocent party may leave the guilty party and obtain a divorce.

However, I maintain that even then the marriage relation is not broken. No more than the marriage relation with God is broken when we sin, and sinning, commit adultery a hundred and a thousand times, no more is the marriage relation between man and woman broken, even though they separate, even though they obtain a legal divorce, and even though it may be impossible for the innocent party to continue sexual relationships with the guilty party. The innocent woman is still the legal wife of her husband, and remains such until the husband dies. The same is true of the innocent husband in relation to his guilty wife. I maintain, therefore, that even though separation, even legal divorce, is allowable because of adultery, according to the Bible, the marriage relation is never broken and can never be broken until death. (p. 12).

There are many who do not agree with our position that the one Biblical ground for divorce is unrepented of adultery. But even among those who do agree with us on this score, there are those who do not agree with our stand against the remarriage of the "innocent party."

This is true generally among the Presbyterians. The teaching to which most Presbyterians subscribe is the teaching embodied in *The Westminster Confession of Faith*, chapter 24, "Of Marriage and Divorce." In this chapter, *The Westminster Confession* teaches:

V. Adultery, or fornication committed after a contract, being detected before marriage, giveth just occasion to the innocent party to dissolve that contract. In the case of adultery after marriage, it is lawful for the innocent party to sue out a divorce: and after the divorce, to marry another, as if the offending party were dead.

VI. Although the corruption of man be such as is apt to study arguments, unduely to put asunder those whom God hath joined together in marriage: yet,

nothing but adultery, or such wilfull desertion as can no way be remedied, by the Church, or Civil Magistrate, is cause sufficient of dissolving the bond of marriage: wherein, a public and orderly course of proceeding is to be observed: and the persons concerned in it, not left to their own wills and discretion, in their own case.

In these two paragraphs from *The Westminster Confession*, two facts stand out which are pertinent to our present discussion. First, *The Westminster Confession* teaches the permissibility of divorce not only on the ground of unrepented of adultery, but also on the ground of "wilfull desertion." Secondly, *The Westminster Confession* teaches the permissibility of the remarriage of someone who has obtained a divorce either on the ground of the unrepented of adultery of their mate, or the wilfull desertion of their mate. Remarriage of divorced people is permitted — certainly the remarriage of the "innocent party."

The Presbyterian theologian, John Murray, also defends the right of remarriage in his book *Divorce* (Presbyterian and Reformed Publishing Co., Phillipsburg, New Jersey, 1961). Murray states:

The considerations preponderate rather in favour of the conclusion that when a man puts away his wife for the cause of fornication this putting away has the effect of dissolving the bond of marriage with the result that he is free to remarry without thereby incurring the guilt of adultery. In simple terms it means that divorce in such a case dissolves the marriage and that the parties are no longer man and wife. (p. 43).

Again, Murray writes:

We have taken the position, on what we believe to be proper grounds, that the man who puts away his wife for adultery may remarry without committing an offence . . . The innocent spouse is free to marry again. (p. 98).

Murray even goes so far as to justify the remarriage of the guilty, adulterous party after the divorce has taken place.

But if the marriage has been dissolved, it is difficult to see on what ground the contracting of another marriage on the part of the guilty divorcee could be considered adultery. What constituted the prior act of infidelity and act of adultery was the fact that the marriage was still inviolate. But once the marriage has been dissolved there is a very different relationship. And we must remember that in the case of divorce for adultery it is by divine warrant that the marriage is dissolved. The parties are no longer man and wife. If so, it is difficult to discover any biblical ground on the basis of which to conclude that the remarriage of the guilty divorcee is to be considered in itself an act of adultery and as constituting an adulterous relation. (p. 100).

This same position in favor of the remarriage of certain divorced people, especially the remarriage

of the "innocent party," is taken by Jay E. Adams in his book *Marriage, Divorce, and Remarriage in the Bible* (Baker Book House, Grand Rapids, Michigan, 1980). He states his general position that "It is assumed in the Bible that wherever Scripture allows divorce, remarriage also is allowed," (p. 85). "Who may remarry after divorce and under what conditions?" Adams asks. "The answer to those questions is at once both simple and complex. What is simple is the first general principle: All persons properly divorced may be remarried," (p. 86). Later, Adams writes:

Let us ask the question, then, Is marriage to formerly adulterous or sinfully divorced persons prohibited? Ask another: Is marriage to former murderers or liars or slanderers prohibited? There is no more biblical reason to believe that the first is prohibited than there is to believe that the second is. (p. 94).

Adams concludes:

So, we have seen that remarriage after divorce is allowed in the Bible and (even) that the guilty party — after forgiveness — is free to remarry. (p. 95).

Murray and Adams are representative of those who teach that the Scriptures permit the remarriage of divorced people, particularly the remarriage of the "innocent party." Their position is accepted today in most Reformed and Presbyterian circles.

There are at least three Scripture passages that are commonly appealed to in order to prove the permissibility of the remarriage of divorced people.

First, appeal is often made to Deuteronomy 24:1, 2: "When a man hath taken a wife, and married her, and it come to pass that she find no favour in his eyes, because he hath found some uncleanness in her: then let him write her a bill of divorcement, and give it in her hand, and send her out of his house. And when she is departed out of his house, she may go and be another man's wife." Support is found for remarriage in this teaching of Moses concerning divorce, in which Moses "suffers" divorce among the Israelites (Matt. 19:8). Does not Moses say about the woman in whom "some uncleanness" has been found and who has been given "a bill of divorcement" that she "may" remarry, she "may go and be another man's wife," that this is permitted?

The second passage often quoted in support of the remarriage of the "innocent party" is Matthew 19:9: "And I say unto you, Whosoever, shall put away his wife, except it be for fornication, and shall marry another, committeth adultery: and whoso marrieth her which is put away doth commit adultery." This passage, it is said, establishes one ground for divorce and one ground for remarriage: "except it be for fornication." Fornication is the ground for divorce. But one who has obtained a

divorce on the ground of fornication may remarry.

A third passage appealed to by those advocating the right of divorced people to remarry is I Timothy 3:2 and 12. In this passage the Apostle Paul is listing the qualifications of elders and deacons. In connection with both the elders and the deacons the Apostle insists that they must be "the husband of one wife." The argument from this passage runs something like this. Since it is especially insisted upon that the officebearers be the husband of one wife, it may safely be concluded that there were ordinary members of the church who were not the husbands of one wife. This was true either because of

polygamy or divorce and remarriage. In either case, although these persons were not permitted to hold office in the New Testament church, they were at least permitted church membership. And this, so the argument goes, ought to be the case today.

Next time we hope to examine more closely these passages of Scripture, as well as lay down the reasons for our position against the remarriage of the "innocent party."

*I was recently somewhat surprised to discover that a group of Calvinistic (Primitive) Baptists take basically the same position that our churches do on the impermissibility of the remarriage of the "innocent party."

IN HIS FEAR

Barrett L. Gritters

Understanding Church Discipline

The following or similar events could happen in your church.

Because a man of the church falls into the sin of drunkenness, drives while intoxicated, and finally slams into a parked car, he is arrested, put in jail, and the story appears in the next day's daily paper. The elders visit the man and find that he is sincerely penitent. He even appears before the consistory out of the desire to show the elders that his repentance is sincere. But the consistory makes a public announcement to the church . . .

A young, confessing member of the church is caught by his parents in the sin of stealing. When confronted with the matter, he refuses to confess his wrong and repent. Finding all admonition fruitless, his parents decide to call the elders of the church. After much work, the young man is barred from the Lord's Supper. Then, after more work, it is announced that the congregation pray for an unrepentant sinner in the church. Later, when he consistently refuses to repent of his sin, his name is announced and the congregation exhorted to pray for him and work with him. Finally, when no repentance comes, he is excommunicated . . .

A young woman in the church commits fornication and becomes pregnant. Because she is truly sorry for

her sin, she confesses it before God and to the consistory. Yet the consistory is adamant that a public announcement of her sin and confession be made in church . . .

"Is there something wrong with the way the church of Jesus Christ handles sin in the church?" some murmur. "Why can't the matter be left in the privacy of the consistory room? Isn't there another, more loving, sensitive way to deal with sinners? Why does sin so often have to be brought to the attention of the entire congregation? Doesn't that only make things worse?" These and more are some common, sometimes sincere, questions raised about the practice of Biblical church discipline. So that we can be clear on what the Lord commands us to do, let's look at some of these questions and try to come to some conclusions about proper, Christian church discipline.

* * * * *

Proof is hardly needed that there are objections to the methods used by the church in discipline, described in some of the situations above. That the direction of the church today is away from the Biblical doctrine of church discipline is obvious. And this movement is no less than fatal for the church. Even though most Reformed Christians often hear instruction from the Heidelberg

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Catechism and the Scriptures about this vital aspect of the church's work, there are still those who voice objections to church discipline when it is exercised in their church.

Just as obvious (and, in a way, more heartening) is the fact that when many of these objectors are confronted with the Biblical directives for discipline, they are amazed at the clarity and simplicity with which the Bible presents the Lord's instructions. These articles are written for those who desire to know and return to the Biblical doctrine of church discipline. For those who have wilfully departed from the plain directions of the Scripture, and desire to pursue expediency rather than rightness in the church, it is hoped that this will lead them back to the way in which the Lord commands His blessing.

* * * * *

Discipline is so important for the church of Christ that, to the extent the church fails to discipline, to that extent it forfeits the right to be called the true church (see Belgic Confession, Art. 29). John Calvin saw this urgency when he wrote, "Accordingly, as the saving doctrine of Christ is the *soul* of the church, so does discipline serve as its *sinews*, through which the members of the body hold together, each in its own place" (Institutes, IV, 12, 1). The church is impotent when it does not discipline its members. It is no surprise then that the Lord of the church severely warns the church that they risk destruction if they fail to exercise discipline (Rev. 2:14, 15, 16, 20).

There are those who believe that there should be no discipline at all by the church. But these are governed by what is easiest (expediency), and by what they like best (selfishness), more than by what the Bible tells us to do (Biblical propriety). It is assumed that all who read this desire to be governed by Biblical propriety. Others take the position that discipline is necessary, but should never be made public. These often ask the question, "Why make things worse than they already are?" A third party wants discipline — harsh, severe, and as stiff as possible. When a sinner is caught in his sin, he stands ready to sling the first stone, lest any get the impression that sin will go unpunished. This kind of radicalism we need to avoid at all costs.

Our (Biblical) position is that discipline — in a loving, caring, kind manner — must be practiced at all costs. It may never be neglected. The church indifferent to God's holiness and displeasure with sin is a church in the quicksand of self concern. While ignoring sin within her own ranks, the church can never stand against her enemies (read about Achan in Joshua 7). We need to have proper, careful, consistent church discipline.

There are a number of different ways that discipline is practiced. Everyone knows that God disciplines us when we sin. And He does that by putting us in difficult circumstances and by the agency of His convicting Spirit in our hearts. Who has not experienced the chastening hand of his Father in heaven when he has been pursuing an unhindered course of sin? (Read about this process in the Canons of Dort, Chapter 5, Articles 1-8). Whom the Lord loveth, He chasteneth (Hebrews 12).

There is also a discipline exercised by individual members of the church. Parents carry this out with their children (the most common and urgent discipline in this category), husbands and wives with each other, friends with friends. God calls us all to admonish and discipline each other (Col. 3:16, etc.). In fact, we might even be able to say that the backbone of church discipline is the exercise of Christian censure among members of the church. When a fellow member fails to admonish another whom he knows is walking in sin, he asks for grief in the church. But when he brings a brother or sister's sin to their attention, and the sinner is brought to repentance, he has been used as a means in God's hand to save a soul from death and hide a multitude of sins (James 5:20). The revised Church Order of the Christian Reformed Church (1965) makes a special point of this in article 78b: "The exercise of admonition and discipline by the consistory does not preclude the responsibility of the believers to watch over and to admonish one another in love." Proper church discipline cannot function unless *individual* discipline is active.

But the discipline with which most have the greatest problem, and about which the most questions are asked, is discipline performed by the ruling body of the church, either in the privacy of the consistory room and home, or the publicity of the congregation.

This discipline by the church is Biblical.

As we saw above, the Lord threatens with destruction the church that is lax in discipline (Rev. 2). The Lord told His disciples in Matthew 16 that to them was given the keys of the kingdom of heaven. As representatives of the church of all ages, they were given the authority to open and close the gates of the kingdom of heaven (discipline) *in the name of Christ Himself*. In Matthew 18 Christ gave more explicit instructions on how that discipline should be carried out. The point in this text is that Christ gave to the church the calling to deal with unrepentant sinners. (The procedure is outlined in the Church Order of the Protestant Reformed Churches in Articles 71-78; before going on, please read these articles carefully, and note how the prop-

er, Biblical method was followed in the illustrations above.) In Titus, where the apostle Paul instructs Titus how to "set in order the things that are wanting" in the churches of Crete (1:5), he told Titus that the church should reject "a man that is an heretic after the first and second admonition" (3:10). And in the book on "how to behave . . . in the house of God" (I Timothy 3:15), we are told that those who sin are to be rebuked before the entire congregation (5:20). Further texts for our instruction are I Thessalonians 5:14, II Thessalonians 3:14. the church is called to discipline its members who walk in sin.

And that we are not wrong in interpreting these texts to teach discipline *by the church* is supported by the fact that the church of all ages disciplined in basically the way that is done by faithful Reformed congregations today, as given in The Church Order mentioned above.

That is, discipline by the church is also confessional.

A careful study of the confessions of Reformed churches attests to that. There is not room here to quote from all these confessions, but a check of these references will help make the point (for those not in the *Psalter*, see Philip Schaff, *Creeds of Christendom*, Volume 3). Belgic Confession (1561) Article 29; The Heidelberg Catechism (1563) Questions and Answers 82-85; The Church Order of Dort (1618, 1619) as revised and adopted by the

Protestant Reformed Churches, Articles 71-78; The Westminster Confession (Presbyterian churches, 1647) Chapter XXX, Paragraphs 1-4; The Cambridge Platform (Congregationalists in the USA, 1648); The Savoy Declaration (1658) Chapter 27, Paragraphs 18, 19; Calvin's Institutes, Bk IV, Chapter 12; and the forms for Confession of Faith, Excommunication, and Readmittance found in the back of the *Psalter*.

The significance of these references is that the confessions are not merely men's opinions, but the fruit of the Spirit's influence in the church. Christ promised to lead the church into all truth by His Spirit (John 15, 16) and the confessions of the church are the fruit of that leading. And if anyone does not agree with the church discipline exercised in Reformed churches, he should first answer the question of history. What did the church in the past do? That is, where did the Spirit of truth lead the church of our fathers? And unless one can show clearly that they were wrong in disciplining as we do now, he ought to be very cautious in making radical changes in how and whether we discipline.

God grant us grace to be faithful in maintaining the marks of the true church, according to the commandments of His word.

(In next issue: The Steps of Discipline, The Purpose of Discipline, The Reason for Public Exposure in Discipline, and Answers to Some Common Objections.)

News From Our Churches

November 29, 1985

For most of our churches, the time for the election of office bearers has taken place. According to Article 22 of the Church Order, the elders shall be chosen by the judgment of the consistory and the deacons according to the regulations for that purpose established by the consistory. Some of our churches give the members an opportunity to direct attention to suitable persons for nomination to these offices. This is also in agreement with the same article in the Church Order, where every church shall be at liberty, according to its circumstances to do so. May God bless the elders and deacons of our churches.

In the Grand Rapids, Michigan area, Rev. Carl Haak spoke to the Mr. and Mrs. League meeting, held at Southwest Church, on the topic "Bible Study and Society Preparation." Because of the interest in this speech, Rev. Haak has agreed to have it printed in the *Beacon Lights*. So you will want to

look for this article in the January or February issue, 1986.

Do you need a valuable aid in your study of the book of Genesis? Then read on. Rev. Harbach's commentary on Genesis is completed and will soon go to the printer. A letter explaining how you can contribute to this worthy cause and obtain a copy will soon be sent to our churches from the Grandville Publishing Committee.

The Mr. and Mrs. Society of South Holland Church, in Illinois, has dropped the age restriction so that membership is open to older couples.

And now for the latest news in church and parsonage construction. The Building Committee of Covenant Church in Wyckoff, New Jersey, has been in the process of obtaining bids for the insulation and dry-wall work. Kalamazoo Church, in Michigan, held a "Bakeless Bake Sale" last month to provide money for a steeple and a baptismal font. Doon Church in Iowa, has now seen the completion of its huge parsonage built by George and

Bill Joostens. First Church, in Grand Rapids, Michigan, is considering the feasibility of completing the lower level of the building, for holding Catechism classes, Sunday School, and Societies. That involves providing equipment for the lower level, from the kitchen sink to stack cribs for the nursery. Grandville Church, in Michigan, has now put up insulation, dry-wall, lighting and plumbing fixtures on the inside of the parsonage. They hope to be completed by the end of February.

What is the "Buy-a-Hunk-a-Bus" campaign? The Adams Street Boosters Club has a unique way of purchasing two new school buses. As parts of each

bus are sold, a certificate is issued to the buyer stating the part and the \$ amount donated toward the campaign. What can you buy? How about 5,784 rivets @ .10, or two tailpipes @ 50.00, or two floors @ 300.00, or two engines @ 1000.00. There's something for everyone.

Our schools are seeing even larger expenses than anticipated for many reasons. Sometimes it is lower enrollment, or unexpected repairs to the buildings, or the cost of starting up a new school. Whatever the reason, it is for certain that our schools need our continued financial support now. As the Lord has prospered us may our schools also prosper.

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0-916206-22-x	The Voice of Our Fathers	18.95	19.95
0-916206-24-6	We and Our Children	3.95	4.95
0-916206-15-7	When I Survey	9.95	10.95
0-916206-04-1	Whosoever Will	2.95	4.95
0-916206-26-2	The Wonder of Grace	3.95	4.95
0-916206-16-5	Suffer Little Children I	8.95	9.95
0-916206-18-1	Suffer Little Children II	5.95	6.95
0-916206-17-3	Suffer Little Children II Workbook	2.00	2.95
	Suffer Little Children II Set	6.95	7.95
0-916206-20-3	Suffer Little Children III	5.95	6.95
0-916206-21-1	Suffer Little Children III	2.00	2.95
	Suffer Little Children III Set	6.95	7.95
0-926206-30-0	Suffer Little Children - Complete Set	19.95	22.95
0-916206-11-4	God's Covenant Faithfulness	2.95	sellout price

RESOLUTION OF SYMPATHY

The members of the Hudsonville Protestant Reformed Church Ladies Society would like to express their sympathy to Mrs. Greta Hoekstra in the death of her father, MR. EDWARD VANDER WERFF.

They also rejoice with her in Christ's words in John 14: "I will not leave you comfortless . . . because I live ye shall live also."

Rev. G. Van Baren, Pres.
Mrs. Phil Dykstra, Sec'y.

IN LOVING MEMORY

On November 25, 1985, it pleased our Heavenly Father to suddenly remove from our midst to take unto Himself our beloved father, grandfather, great-grandfather, MR. EDWARD VANDER WERFF. We rejoice that he is in glory with his Lord, and we pray that Jehovah, our covenant God will uphold us by His grace and give us peace that passeth all understanding.

"For I am persuaded that neither death, nor life . . . shall be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord." (Romans 8:38-39)

George and Greta Hoekstra 14 grandchildren
Albert and Marian Karsemeyer 47 great-grandchildren
William and Kathy Vander Werff

WEDDING ANNIVERSARY

On January 4, 1985, the Lord willing, our parents, MR. AND MRS. DICK VAN UFFELEN, will celebrate their 35th wedding anniversary. We, their children and grandchildren thank and praise our Heavenly Father for blessing us with God-fearing parents who instructed and guided us in the fear of His name. Our prayer is that God will continue to bless them and keep them in His Grace.

"For the Lord is good; his mercy is everlasting, and his truth endureth to all generations." (Psalm 100:5)

Lew and Donna Bruinsma Ron and Laura Van Voorthuysen
John and Linda Van Uffelen Robert Van Uffelen
Doug and JoAnn Pastoor and 14 grandchildren

ATTENTION TEACHERS!!!

Covenant Christian School of Lynden, Washington, has an opening for a teaching-administrator in the Liberal Arts subjects for the 1986-87 school year.

Please send enquires to: Covenant Christian School, 9088 Northlawn Road, Lynden, Washington 98264, or phone: Peter Adams, (206) 398-2774, or Albert De Boer, (206) 354-5825.