

# The **STANDARD BEARER**

A REFORMED SEMI-MONTHLY MAGAZINE

. . . There is in it (in rock music) a certain intrusive appeal to the emotions which becomes almost addictive. But it is an appeal to the emotions of our old nature, of our old man of sin . . . . This is true in general of worldly music, but it is most emphatically true of rock. Never before has the wicked world succeeded so well in adapting its music to its thoughts, all of which thoughts are not of God! Beware, lest you allow yourself to become enslaved to this corruption! See "The Christian and Rock Music"

— page 173

## CONTENTS

Meditation —	
Our Yes and Our No .....	170
Editorial —	
The Christian and Rock Music (2) .....	173
Walking in the Light —	
Moral Aspects of Medical Technology (1) .....	175
Taking Heed to the Doctrine —	
The Apostles' Creed (6) .....	177
Faith of Our Fathers —	
The Baptism Form .....	180
Guided Into All Truth —	
Scripture Interprets Scripture:	
Grammatically .....	182
In His Fear —	
Understanding Church Discipline (2) .....	184
The Strength of Youth —	
Remarriage of the "Innocent Party" (2) .....	187
Guest Article —	
God's Sovereignty and the Psalms (1) .....	189
News From Our Churches .....	191

## THE STANDARD BEARER

ISSN 0362-4692

Semi-monthly, except monthly during June, July, and August.

Published by the Reformed Free Publishing Association, Inc.  
Second Class Postage Paid at Grand Rapids, Mich.

Editor-in-Chief: Prof. Homer C. Hoeksema

Department Editors: Rev. Ronald Cammenga, Rev. Arie den Hartog, Prof. Robert D. Decker, Rev. Barry Gritters, Rev. Cornelius Hanks, Prof. Herman C. Hanks, Rev. Ronald Hanks, Mr. David Harbach, Rev. John A. Heys, Rev. J. Kortering, Rev. George C. Lubbers, Rev. Thomas C. Miersma, Rev. James Slopesma, Rev. Gise J. Van Baren, Rev. Herman Veldman.

Editorial Office: Prof. H.C. Hoeksema  
4975 Ivanrest Ave., S.W.  
Grandville, Michigan 49418Church News Editor: Mr. David Harbach  
4930 Ivanrest Ave., Apt. B  
Grandville, Michigan 49418

Editorial Policy: Every editor is solely responsible for the contents of his own articles. Contributions of general interest from our readers and questions for the Question Box Department are welcome. Contributions will be limited to approximately 300 words and must be neatly written or typewritten, and must be signed. Copy deadlines are the first and the fifteenth of the month. All communications relative to the contents should be sent to the editorial office.

Reprint Policy: Permission is hereby granted for the reprinting of articles in our magazine by other publications, provided: a) that such reprinted articles are reproduced in full; b) that proper acknowledgement is made; c) that a copy of the periodical in which such reprint appears is sent to our editorial office.

Business Office: The Standard Bearer  
Mr. H. Vander Wal, Bus. Mgr. PH: (616) 243-2953  
P.O. Box 6064  
Grand Rapids, Michigan 49506New Zealand Business Office: The Standard Bearer  
c/o Protestant Reformed Fellowship  
B. Van Herk, 66 Fraser St.  
Wainuiomata, New Zealand

Subscription Policy: Subscription price, \$10.50 per year. Unless a definite request for discontinuance is received, it is assumed that the subscriber wishes the subscription to continue without the formality of a renewal order, and he will be billed for renewal. If you have a change of address, please notify the Business Office as early as possible in order to avoid the inconvenience of delayed delivery. Include your Zip Code.

Advertising Policy: The Standard Bearer does not accept commercial advertising of any kind. Announcements of church and school events, anniversaries, obituaries, and sympathy resolutions will be placed for a \$3.00 fee. These should be sent to the Business Office and should be accompanied by the \$3.00 fee. Deadline for announcements is the 1st and the 15th of the month, previous to publication on the 15th or the 1st respectively.

Bound Volumes: The Business Office will accept standing orders for bound copies of the current volume; such orders are filled as soon as possible after completion of a volume. A limited number of past volumes may be obtained through the Business Office.

## MEDITATION

Cornelius Hanks

## Our Yes and Our No

*Ques. 101. May we then swear religiously by the name of God?**Ans. Yes; when the magistrate demands it of the subjects; or when necessity requires us thereby to confirm fidelity and truth to the glory of God, and the safety of our neighbor; for such an oath is founded on God's word, and therefore was justly used by the saints, both in the Old and New Testament.**Ques. 102. May we also swear by saints or by any other creatures?**Ans. No; for a lawful oath is calling upon God, as the only one who knows the heart, that he will bear witness to the truth, and punish me if I swear falsely; which honor is due to no creature. Heid. Catechism. Lord's Day 37.*



God consciousness . . . .

The sweet singer of old sang as he plucked on his harp, "I have set the Lord always before me; he is at my right hand, I shall not be moved."

He also sang, "When thou saidst, seek ye my face; my heart said unto thee, Thy face, Lord, will I seek."

It was Asaph who had gone into the sanctuary to pray, and there learned to confess, "Nevertheless, I am continually with thee; thou hast holden me by my right hand. Thou shalt guide me with thy counsel, and afterward receive me to glory."

In this new dispensation we have a far more intimate fellowship with God through His indwelling Spirit in our hearts, for we dwell in His house as sons and daughters, members of the family of God, heirs of the glory soon to be revealed.

While the Bridegroom tarries the bride-to-be adorns herself for her Husband. She is always conscious of Him in all that she does, chooses her clothing according to His wishes, and tries to model her life according to His desires, as she awaits His coming in eager anticipation.

God consciousness is an essential part of our lives.

For our Lord instructs us, "Be holy, for I am holy!" Again, "be perfect, for your heavenly Father is perfect!"

"Honor, glorify Me in your lives!"

Thus He commands us, "Thou shalt not take the Name of the Lord thy God in vain; for the Lord will not hold him guiltless that taketh his name in vain."

We must remember that also in our oaths.

The oath is always a holy undertaking for the child of God.

There is repeated reference to the oath in Scripture. God swears an oath to assure us of the certainty of His promise that He will be our God and the God of our seed after us. Since He can swear by no one greater than Himself, "He sware by Himself, saying, Surely, blessing I will bless thee, and multiplying I will multiply thee" (Heb. 6:13-18). Abraham also had occasion to use the oath. The spies who promised Rahab her life and her safety appealed to the oath to seal their promise. Many other examples could be cited. Jesus essentially used the oath when He confirmed His testimony with an emphatic, "Verily, verily, I say unto you." Paul used the oath more than once, as, for example,

in Romans 9:1: "I say the truth in Christ, I lie not, my conscience also bearing me witness in the Holy Ghost."

No oath may ever be taken lightly.

What makes the oath such a holy undertaking is the fact that it places us face to face with God. It reminds me that there are three persons involved in what I say: I myself, the other party, and God. Declaring that God is my witness I place my words in the mouth of God as if He speaks them!

Moreover, the oath reminds us that God is Truth. He knows the truth, lives the truth, speaks only the truth, and maintains Himself as the only true and living God. He always discerns accurately and justly between honesty and dishonesty, between the truth and the lie, for He knows the heart, and judges accordingly.

Besides that, we consciously place ourselves under the righteous judgment of the living God, as we express when we declare, "God do so to me and more also, if that which I say is not the truth, the whole truth, and nothing but the truth." God is our court of appeal. We confess that when we speak the truth He will approve and bless, but if we speak the lie He will punish us accordingly.

Jesus warns us in the sermon on the mount, "Ye have heard that it hath been said by them of old time, thou shalt not forswear thyself, but shalt perform unto the Lord thine oath. But I say unto you, Swear not at all, neither by heaven, for it is God's throne; nor by the earth, for it is God's footstool; neither by Jerusalem, for it is the city of the great King; neither shalt thou swear by thy head, because thou canst not make one hair white or black. But let your communication be, Yea, yea; Nay, nay; for whatsoever is more than these cometh from evil" (Matt. 5:33-37). James repeats this in his epistle (5:12), and adds, "Lest ye fall into condemnation."

Jesus points out to us that the law of Moses condemns the false oath, or perjury. It makes one shudder when he hears a witness take the oath in the court of law, and then deliberately twist the facts, expecting God to confirm the lie.

Jesus also condemns the careless use of the oath. The Jews of Jesus' day used the oath rather freely in their conversations; but, avoiding the name of God, they swore by the temple, by Jerusalem, or some other object. That to their minds was not as serious as using God's name. But Jesus points out to them and to us that this is exactly the same and just as serious as if they used the name of God. Even in our day appeal is sometimes made to God's attributes, such as "Goodness knows"; or reference is made to God's dwelling place, as "Heaven knows." Jesus warns, why not use the name of



God? This is the same thing! And this becomes the more serious when God is called upon to confirm the lie, defend some half truth or "white" lie, or even some insignificant matter.

All this Scripture brands as sin against the third commandment.

"Swear not at all!"

Jesus lays down the principle of the kingdom of heaven, that our lives should be in such intimate communion with God that there is no need for an oath among us.

Left to ourselves, we have a dishonest, deceitful, lying nature, of which we are reminded in Romans 3:13-18. But our hearts and lips have been touched by cleansing coals of the altar of Jesus' cross, so that according to the new man in Christ we love the Lord our God with our whole being. Thus we love the truth and speak the truth in love. We trust one another as saints in Christ Jesus. It is the renewed child of God, and he only, who can make proper use of the oath when this is demanded of him. Since his life is a vow he is never reluctant or unwilling to submit to the oath, nor careless about this, but always deeply aware that God condemns the untruth, and blesses us when we speak the truth according to the conviction of our hearts.

From this follows that our yes and our no are as much an oath as if they were confirmed by God with the calling upon His name. When we make public confession of our faith before the congregation we are asked to answer sincerely to certain prescribed questions. That yes is our oath. When marriage vows are spoken our "I do" or our yes is written in the records of God as a permanent promise "until death us do part." When parents present their children for baptism their yes is their oath that they will bring up their children in the doctrine taught in their church, and that they will do so to the utmost of their power. When ministers, elders, and deacons are ordained in their respective offices their response to the questions put to them is as binding as if they were to add, "So help me God," or "God is my witness," or any other oath.

"Let your communication be Yea yea, and Nay nay!"

In the awareness that "Thou, Lord seest me," we should always say yes to God, yes to His Christ, and yes to His Word, but always say no to the devil, to the world, and to our own sinful flesh. That yes should always be a definite, unequivocal yes, and that no should always be a very positive no, always bearing in mind the words of Jesus, "If any man will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow me."

Yet we so often fail to live in a proper God con-

sciousness. Shame on us!

There are sometimes people within the church institute whose yes is inspired by a false enthusiasm. They are the fair weather christians, who for a time are most enthusiastic about their place in the church, that is, as long as everything runs smoothly. Evidently a scribe such as that came to Jesus with the enthusiastic assurance, "Lord, I will follow thee wherever thou goest." Jesus responds by warning him that, "Foxes have holes, and birds of the air have nests; but the Son of man hath not where to lay his head." Our zeal for God must be rooted in a holy faith, inspired by the Holy Spirit, able to endure even unto the end.

There are also those who confess a half-hearted yes-but, which is virtually a no. They were in the majority in the kingdom of Israel at the time of Elijah. They served Baal, yet they also wanted to maintain a bit of Jehovah worship. Just in case. They halted between two opinions. There were many of those also in Jesus' day. They were the self-righteous Pharisees, who boasted that they were the true people of the Lord, basing their boast on their outward piety. Their number increases as the end of the ages draws still closer. Let us beware!

Then there are also the neither-nor christians. Jesus describes them in the Book of Revelation as being lukewarm, neither hot nor cold. These are members of the church, who attend the services more or less regularly, partake of the sacraments, but show little interest, much less enthusiasm, concerning the things of the kingdom. They either labor for the bread that perishes, or they find their pleasure in the sports and entertainments of the world. If present at all, their spiritual life is at a very low ebb.

Let your Yea be yea and your Nay nay, lest ye fall into condemnation!

But who is capable of these things! Daily we need to flee to the cross with the publican's prayer upon our lips!

At the same time our plea must be, "Search me, O God, and know my heart; try me, and know my thoughts; and see if there be any wicked way in me, and lead me in the way everlasting!"

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



## EDITORIAL

# The Christian and Rock Music (2)

What then should be our approach with respect to the attitude of the child of God toward rock music?

It is my position, in the first place, that our fundamental approach should not be what I would call a kind of empirical approach, according to which we base our judgment on experience and garner all kinds of evidence and supposedly weigh the wrongs and the rights, the *pros* and *cons*, and come to a conclusion. Practically speaking, such an approach might lead to a ringing condemnation; but with some it might also lead to a partial approval. That approach has also sometimes been taken with respect to the movie question, for example; and only too often it has ended in the fatal distinction between "good" and "bad" movies and the inevitable trend to find some justification for a large number of movies being classified as "good."

In the second place, I do not believe our approach should be one of mere negative legislation. This is not to say at all that parents should abdicate their position of authority in the home and in relation to their teenagers. But a mere flat prohibition of rock by parental fiat will only provoke violation, and that, too, probably on the sneak. But worse, it does not teach our young people freely and voluntarily to reject this tempting perversion which the world offers them, and it does not teach them to see for themselves that it is contrary to their Christian calling. A mere negative "Thou shalt not" only provokes sin.

In the third place, and positively, our fundamental approach should be that of the antithetical position and calling of God's people in the midst of the world. It should be that of the *thesis* and *antithesis*. As I stated in our December 1, 1985 issue, "The thesis, therefore, is that which God's people hear of God, and confess and affirm of Him, namely, that He is God in relation to all things — our per-

son, our body, our soul, our heart, our mind, our will, our home, our man-and-wife relationship, our parent-children relationship, society, business, industry, property, education, state, church; and that it is good to do His will." And our thetical calling is to will and to know this thesis from the heart and to develop its implications with respect to all of life, and thus to confess in word and deed that God, our God, is GOD and that He alone is good. The thesis is the *Yes* of God's covenant people to their covenant God. And the antithesis is the *No* of that *Yes*. It is the *No* of righteousness over against unrighteousness, of godliness over against ungodliness, of the truth over against the lie, the *No* of the love of the Father over against all that is not of the Father, but of the world, over against the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and the vainglory of life. And according as we firmly and clearly say *Yes* to God, we will say *No* to the world and all that is of it. Such is our calling.

Now consider rock music in the light of this antithetical position and calling of the people of God. The matter is very simple, is it not? It is not even a question. It does not constitute a problem. It is not a debatable issue. That is, not if our antithetical position and calling is not merely a matter of the intellect and of lip service, but a matter of the *heart* and of *grace*. It is only when we forget and abandon the former that the whole matter becomes debatable, becomes problematic. It is only when we deny and forsake our antithetical position and calling that we begin to argue the matter, begin to find excuses, begin to try to justify our indulgence in rock and somehow convince ourselves that it is all right to participate at least just a little, that there is not so much evil in it, that perhaps there is even some good in it and some genuine enjoyment. And, of course, once we have forsaken that antithetical stance, no amount of argument will convince us that rock is evil. The old saying will hold true, "A



man convinced against his will is of the same opinion still."

But let us be specific, and let us apply this principle to the various aspects of rock music.

Consider the *source*. Does anyone doubt that rock originates in the evil world of the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and the vainglory of life? Consider the *performers*. Consider their rebellious dress and appearance (Think of this in connection with punk rock, for example.); consider their lewd, profane language and professed lifestyle; consider their on-stage behavior, their lewd, provocative pelvic gyrations. Consider the *lyrics* of their songs, whether "sexually explicit" or "sexually implicit."

And especially, consider the *music* itself. For, do not forget, lyrics and music go together. We all know this instinctively. In our sacred music, for example, a certain kind of music is appropriate for a certain kind of lyrics. A bouncing, joyous tune does not befit sad and mournful lyrics. The music of a march does not fit the words of a prayer. And the more successfully a composer can match lyrics and music as to mood and emotion and thought, the more successful his composition will be in achieving its goal and design. But let an expert speak on this point. *Christian News* (Nov. 25, 1985) carried an extensive treatment of the subject of rock music, particularly so-called Christian rock. An article entitled "The Prosecution," by David Noebel, quotes the late Dr. Howard Hansen, of Eastman School of Music, as follows: "Music is a curiously subtle art with innumerable, varying emotional connotations. It is made up of many ingredients and, according to the proportions of those components, it can be soothing or invigorating, ennobling or vulgarizing, philosophical or orgiastic. It has powers for evil as well as for good."

This is worthy of special attention. Rock music (even apart from the lyrics) is not amoral. It is not in itself not evil. It has a corrupting influence. One does not have to listen long to the insidious, intrusive, insistent beat of the voodoo drums, to the clashing and crashing disharmonies of rock to recognize this. And especially here there is a grave danger in rock. There is in it a certain intrusive appeal to the emotions which becomes almost addictive. But it is an appeal to the emotions of our old nature, of our old man of sin. To indulge in rock is a very dangerous thing, therefore. For just as music can be a powerful influence for good, moving men in the very depths of their being, so it can also be a tremendously powerful influence for evil, stirring up the base emotions of our old man of sin. This is true in general of worldly music, but it is most emphatically true of rock. Never before has the wicked world succeeded so well in adapting its music to

its thoughts, all of which thoughts are not of God! Beware, lest you allow yourself to become enslaved to this corruption!

\* \* \*

But what about so-called Christian rock or gospel rock?

One could write another two editorials on this subject without any difficulty. In my opinion, the subject is not worth extensive attention, for the simple reason that this is not basically a different matter from ordinary, worldly rock.

However, let me briefly call attention to the following:

1) To say the least, the Christian character or the gospel content of "Christian rock" is very scant in many instances and highly suspect in others.

2) The lyrics of "Christian rock" are not infrequently guilty of double-entendre. What does that mean? Double-entendre is "a word or phrase of double meaning, the less obvious one often of doubtful propriety." An article in *Newsweek* of August 19, 1985 quoted by *Christian News*, Nov. 25, 1985, refers to this: "In Grant's (Amy Grant, an alleged evangelical entertainer) pop psalm called 'Open Arms,' for example, she croons, 'Your love has taken hold/And I can't fight it' — keeping it unclear whether or not the lover is Jesus." In its December 2, 1985 issue *Christian News* quotes from *Eternity* magazine, which refers to a song by this same Amy Grant entitled, 'Love Will Find A Way' in which it is not clear whether she is singing about her lover or about Jesus.

3) Finally, granting for the moment that the lyrics are soundly and unambiguously Christian, the mixing of Christian lyrics and rock music is like mixing fire and water. Or let me quote, with approval, the following from an article by David Noebel (*Christian News*, Nov. 25, 1985, p. 8):

Rock is music of a decadent, pagan culture. Malcolm Muggeridge addresses this subject in his work *The End of Christendom*. Why, then, do Christian musicians adopt a musical form that glorifies man's lascivious nature? Why don't Christian musicians provide music that is higher and purer than that of their secular counterparts?

Even many secular artists admit to rock's evil influences. Rock star David Bowie commented that rock music has always been the devil's music, and the late John Lennon referred to rock music's beat in the same manner.

David Wilkerson, in his new work *Set the Trumpet to Thy Mouth*, asks, "Is God's house now a place where even demonic expressions find a place with music borrowed from the altars of Baal?" Since rock music reinforces rock lyrics, and many rock lyrics



glorify degenerate lifestyles, why do Christian musicians bother using such a debauched musical form?

Christian rock is breaking down the barriers that once surrounded the secular rock world. And as a result, many Christian young people are "rushing in where angels fear to tread." Christian bands today oc-

asionally share the stage with secular groups, and they've convinced Christian youth that rock music is "sugar, spice, and everything nice." It is, in fact, cultural hemlock.

We agree.

HCH

## WALKING IN THE LIGHT

Herman Hanko

# Moral Aspects of Medical Technology (1)

John Jefferson Davis, in his book, *Evangelical Ethics*, begins Chapter 1 with a story, which goes this way:

"In some of this research," noted Dr. Robert Foote of Cornell, "I am reminded of a story where the pilot came on and said, 'This is your captain speaking. We are flying at an altitude of 35,000 feet and the speed of 700 miles an hour. We have some good news and some bad news. The bad news is that we are lost. The good news is that we are making excellent time.'"

To this story Dr. Davis adds:

This story, told by Professor Foote in testimony on in vitro fertilization before the federal Ethics Advisory Board in October of 1978, expresses in a humorous way the very serious dilemmas facing modern man in the closing decades of the twentieth century. Technologically we are making "excellent time;" morally we at times appear to be lost.

It is our intention in a series of articles to examine the moral and ethical questions which confront the child of God because of the rapid and astounding advances in the fields of medicine, biology, and the combination of both in biomedicine. Before we enter into specific problem areas however, we do well to give an overall picture of the problem and discuss in a general way some of the questions which these advances have raised.

That the advances have been rapid and sometimes astounding hardly needs saying in a time

when almost every day the media speak of new discoveries, new methods of treatment, new ideas for increasing the quality of life and new techniques to enable man to do things in his life which only a few decades ago were unheard of.

We are, e.g., all acquainted with the newest techniques in the area of contraception which, when used according to instructions, can guarantee with almost complete certainty that no conception will follow intercourse. We are also aware of the fact that abortion has become, through the development of "safe" medical procedures, a means to terminate an unwanted pregnancy at any stage of the development of a child; and that because of these new techniques, abortion has been legalized in this country and abroad and has resulted in the grim murder of thousands and thousands of unborn infants.

Paradoxically, not only do many women who become pregnant not want their unborn child, but many women who would like to have children cannot for one reason or another have them. Medical science has also come to their rescue. Fertility drugs, *in vitro* conception, artificial insemination, surrogate mothers, and other means have been invented to give women who want to become mothers their hearts' desires.

It is interesting in this connection to observe how the opinion of scientists changes almost from year to year. Just a short time ago scientists were speaking in terms of gloom and doom of a population explosion which would not only deplete the natural

Herman Hanko is professor in the Church History and New Testament departments at the Protestant Reformed Seminary.



resources of our planet, but would also lower the quality of life as more and more people struggled to get into their possession the limited natural resources which were available. One could hear the prophets of doom speaking of mass starvation and bitter social struggle as these problems were faced and attempts made to resolve them. Now, suddenly, apparently the thinking is quite different. In the December 16, 1985 issue of *U.S. News and World Report* an article appears which speaks of all the horrendous things which are going to happen in the near future because of the sharp decline in birth rates in this country and Europe. With the decline in babies born the work force will grow smaller so that an insufficient number of people will be available to operate industry and provide services. The U.S., now a major world power, will become a second-rate power because the available man-pool for the armed forces will be too small to maintain a standing army, navy, and air force. The ratio between those working and those depending upon social security could go as low as one in three so that three workers are supporting one person retired. The medical cost of supporting an aging population will be staggering. And so, on and on. The government is said to be seriously considering various ways to provide incentives for people to have more babies.

Perhaps the most startling advance in the area of medical science has been the invention of genetic engineering, which can alter the genetic structure of living organisms. While for the present this biomedical technique has been limited in its practical application to the prevention of various diseases, scientists speak of the time when its use will be applied to the area of conception and birth. Not only will parents be able to have a child of whatever sex they prefer, but through genetic engineering combined with other techniques the IQ of a child will be able to be increased, hereditary diseases will be prevented, various bodily characteristics such as color of the eyes, pigmentation of the skin, etc. will be able to be controlled according to the wishes of parents.

Combine all this with sperm banks and surrogate mothers and you have complexities in procreation which seem almost to be endless.

At the same time that thousands of babies are murdered every day, scientists are putting forth their best efforts to prolong life so that the average age people can expect to live is constantly extended. Not only through sophisticated methods of testing, but through new treatment of diseases, life is prolonged beyond what could be expected but a few decades ago. But this in its own way creates medical problems not only, such as those which

face the many people filling nursing homes, but also ethical questions. When is a person really dead? Is it the calling of believers to make use of life-support equipment? If so, when? and for what length of time? Is it right to withhold life-support equipment? Or, after making use of it, is it right to discontinue its use? These problems face God's people every day, and they are not always easy problems to answer.

Speaking of disease, the November 11, 1985 issue of *U.S. News and World Report* quoted a professor in a School of Medicine as saying; "We should eventually be able to develop safe, effective tools to combat any organism that causes disease." And the magazine itself, speaking of genetic engineering, says this:

Now, a second revolution in treating disease is beginning — due in large part to cracking the human genetic code that controls the function of cells in the body. Although the science of genes is in its infancy, it has the potential for unraveling the origins of disease. Doctors may one day treat patients by administering a normal gene to overcome a defective one — thus turning gene therapy into tomorrow's penicillin for inherited defects such as hemophilia and for illnesses ranging from depression to Alzheimer's disease.

Notice in this quote the reference to physical diseases not only, but also to depression, a mental state or state of the soul, which, scientists claim, will soon be amenable to medical treatment.

In the June 24, 1985 issue of *Christian News*, in a rather lengthy article on the moral aspects of modern medical technology, reference was made to some of the boasts of today's scientists who speak of conquering all evil with the tools of their trade, but also of the problems which are involved.

Nobel Prize-winning scientists claim they will be able to produce live, carbon-copy clones of you in less than ten years. Corporations will have the legal right to own and sell all new forms of life they create in their laboratories. Leading scientists are proposing that only people with certain "superior" genotypes be licensed to have babies. Normal sexual reproduction might be totally replaced by artificial procedures. Genetic engineers are talking about doubling the size of the human brain in order to produce a new super species of human beings. A major American company has experimented with changing the human digestive system so that people could eat and digest hay, like cows. One scientist says there is no reason why humans and plants could not be genetically crossed so that skin, like leaves, would perform photosynthesis . . . .

Evolutionary scientist, George G. Simpson, concluded one of his books by saying that man is "his own master. He can and must decide and manage his own destiny."



*U.S. News and World Report* itself recognizes the moral and ethical questions which all these advances bring up. The article quoted above says,

Yet despite these advances, many wonder treatments are raising difficult ethical questions about how lifesaving tools should be used — and who should pay. Living longer does not automatically mean living better. Across the country, doctors and lawyers are pondering what to do with the patient whose body is alive but whose brain no longer functions.

All these things add greatly to the complexity of life and make decisions difficult to reach. While the world, itself recognizing that ethical issues are involved, does not appreciate the true moral implications of many of the things which it does, the child of God who seeks to live a life in obedience to God's Word finds the way difficult to follow and the decisions hard to make.

D. Gareth Jones, in his book, *Brave New People*, (a book, by the way, which has stirred up considerable controversy in fundamentalist circles) writes of this.

Underlying all these developments is the promise and the spectre of technology. They would not be serious issues for ordinary people were it not for our enormous technological capabilities in the areas of biology and medicine. It is tempting to compare the sort of genetic engineering scientists are currently engaged in, or the in vitro fertilization which is currently being employed in a number of countries, with the ideas of a science-fiction writer such as Aldous Huxley. How does our brave new world compare with his? How far have we gone along the road to a biologically-controlled and biologically-replicated

state? Interesting as such comparisons may be, we dare not overlook one radical difference — his world was a brilliant and perceptive vision, ours is reality. His vision can be either read as entertainment, analyzed as literature, or it can be ignored. Our reality cannot be ignored. No longer is it the province of academics or dilettantes; it is rapidly becoming the everyday experience of us all. We are the characters in the brave new world; we ceased being the audience long ago. It is we who are being changed and who are having to make unpalatable and unrehearsed decisions; it is we, not some interesting figment of the collective imagination, who are having to sort out the priorities.

There is no escape from the ramifications of biomedical technology. Somehow we shall have to learn to live with and to cope with it. Unfortunately we appear to be particularly ill-prepared to do this. For so long have we welcomed every new advance of technology, that it now seems tantamount to heresy to question any aspect of it. In the biomedical realm it has prolonged our life-span, eradicated most serious infectious diseases, ushered in brilliant reconstructive surgery and given us the opportunity to live life to the full. Technology is our ally and we are in its debt.

Unfortunately, this dependence upon technology has a price-tag. Continual improvement in the quality of our physical lives is bought at a cost. Sometimes this is a financial one, because sophisticated technology is now very expensive; on other occasions it is a human cost, as values come into conflict and one life has to be staked against another life. (pp. 4, 5).

What does God's Word have to say to us in all these difficult problems? That is the question we face as we discuss these matters.

---

## TAKING HEED TO THE DOCTRINE

Herman Veldman

# The Apostles' Creed (6)

We concluded our preceding article with the observation that we must believe in God, the Father, Almighty, Creator of heaven and earth. No sinner can or will or can will to accept a general, well-meaning offer of salvation (almost universally

proclaimed and taught today). God must speak as He alone can speak and as He spoke when He created the heavens and the earth. Indeed, I believe, I *must* believe in God, the Father, Almighty, the Maker of heaven and of earth.



Then I believe, I must believe in Jesus Christ, God's only begotten Son, my Lord. This too is absolutely necessary. As my almighty Father, He must reveal Himself unto me through Jesus Christ, in the way of the incarnation, suffering and death and the cross, hell, resurrection, and ascension at the right hand of God. There is no salvation except in the way of the full and perfect satisfaction of God's righteousness and justice. That justice of God must be satisfied. God is holy and just and cannot deny Himself. And this full and perfect satisfaction cannot be accomplished except by our Lord Jesus Christ, as God's only begotten Son. God alone can accomplish it. Indeed, I believe in Jesus Christ, God's only begotten Son, my Lord.

And this must be climaxed by the fact that this almighty Father must sanctify me in and by the Holy Spirit. He must dwell within me, operate within me almightily. Only then can I, will I, believe, trust in Him, love that alone living, triune God, the alone praise-worthy and adorable God, now and for evermore. God is one and He is three, the covenant God of my eternal salvation. He is the Object of my faith.

We now conclude our articles on Our Faith in the Triune God by calling attention to the significance of this doctrine.

God is the living God. As far as the idea of life is concerned, life is not only action, but it is related action. This is true of all life around us. There is no life in solitude, in loneliness. In the plant world, life is the adaptation of each plant, not only to be active, but to be active in connection with other plants, as the late Rev. Hoeksema explains in his commentary of the Heidelberg Catechism. Plants affect each other. This is also true in the world of animals. We know that animals mate and associate with each other. And the same applies, of course, to the world of men. Man is essentially a social being. Men (and women) must exercise fellowship with one another.

How true this is of the Lord! God is not only the God of purest action, of power and wisdom and love and holiness and goodness and truth. But He is the Triune God, the Tri-Personal God, the Father-Son-Holy Spirit in the sphere of infinite and eternal perfection, Who, as the Triune God, lives and enjoys forever and ever the relationship of perfect love and harmony. Hence, God is a covenant God. He therefore truly lives within Himself. And as the living God He is surely Self-sufficient. He is in need of none or anything beside Himself. In Himself He knows and is known, He loves and is loved, He

adores and is adored, He glorifies and is glorified — He is indeed the living God.

And what is the significance of this? It is the basis for all true religion. God Himself is a covenant God. A covenant as concluded among men may be an alliance or a pact or an agreement. Among men nations voluntarily enter with one another into a covenant relationship, a pact in which both parties bind themselves to certain promises and stipulations. This is also true of a marriage relationship. But here we are dealing with the living God. God's covenant, either in God Himself or with man, is of course no contract or alliance or pact or agreement. A covenant, according to Scripture, is a relationship — this is surely true of the living God. And this certainly determines God's relation with us. Because God is a covenant God He willed a covenant relationship with us. The Lord is not a cold, frigid, one-person god. In such a god, the god of the unitarians, there is no fellowship, no friendship. The Lord exercises friendship within Himself. He is Himself a covenant God. Hence, He is also a covenant God with us for His own Name's sake. The one is basic to the other. Would God, if He Himself were not a covenant God, will a life of covenant fellowship between Himself and a creature, man? But this is not all. Our covenant relationship of friendship with the Lord must be like His. It is upon this truth that the theory of Common Grace immediately suffers shipwreck. This theory suggests that God has fellowship with the sinner, as sinner, loves the sinner, gives that sinner all kinds of natural gifts, such as health and sunshine and rain in His favor, is good to him in that universal sense of the word. In fact, the late Dr. A. Kuyper declares that the Lord has entered into an alliance with man to thwart the designs and purpose of the devil. How impossible this is! God's own covenant life is a life of holiness and perfection. And this, of course, also determines God's covenant with man. To commune with God, to have fellowship with Him, is possible, not in darkness, but only in the light. This is what we read in I John 1:15-17: "This then is the message which we have heard of him, and declare unto you, that God is light, and in him is no darkness at all. If we say that we have fellowship with him, and walk in darkness, we lie, and do not the truth: but if we walk in the light, as he is in the light, we have fellowship one with another, and the blood of Jesus Christ cleanseth us from all sin." Can a repudiation of this theory of Common Grace, of a relation of friendship between God and the sinner, as sinner, be stated any more clearly than in this passage of I John? The Lord, the living God, establishes His covenant of friendship only with His people in Christ Jesus. Nothing else is possible. Of course, this is true only in principle as long as we are in this



earthly house of our tabernacle. But presently, however, this will be culminated in heavenly and immortal perfection, in the new heavens and upon the new earth when Christ will make all things new.

### Our Faith In Our Almighty Father (1)

The first article of the Apostles' Creed reads, "I believe in God the Father, Almighty, Maker of heaven and earth."

Our Heidelberg Catechism explains this first article in Lord's Day 9, Answer 26 as follows:

That the eternal Father of our Lord Jesus Christ (who of nothing made heaven and earth with all that is in them; who likewise upholds and governs the same, by his eternal counsel and providence) is for the sake of Christ his Son my God and my Father; on whom I rely so entirely, that I have no doubt, but he will provide me with all things necessary for soul and body: and further, that he will make whatever evils he sends upon me, in this valley of tears, turn out to my advantage; for he is able to do it, being Almighty God, and willing, being a faithful Father.

What a tremendous answer this is, Answer 26 of our Heidelberg Catechism! To be sure, there are other wonderful answers in this book of instruction. Answer 1 is a very beautiful answer: our only comfort in life and in death. Another beautiful and wonderful answer is the answer to Question 54 of Lord's Day 21, concerning the holy catholic church. And then there is Answer 60 in Lord's Day 23, to the question which reads, "How art thou righteous before God?" And, of course, there are other beautiful Lord's Days. Fact is, this entire book is a wonderful book of instruction; one can only stand amazed that these young authors (Zacharias Ursinus and Casper Olevianus) were able to produce such a wonderful book as this Heidelberg Catechism. Lord's Day 9, however, is also very wonderful. This is the Catechism's explanation of the first article of the Apostles' Creed. It is amazing how much our fathers can say in such few words. What tremendous ability on the part of our fathers! The same thing is true as far as our other confessions are concerned, the Canons of Dordt and our Confession of Faith. This entire answer, Answer 26, we must understand, is just one sentence. And let us consider all the truths which are set forth here in this twenty-sixth answer. This answer speaks of the eternal Fatherhood of God as in relation to God's eternal Son. Then, it speaks of the eternal Fatherhood of God with relation to our Lord Jesus Christ. Besides this, we also read here of the divine creation of the heavens and the earth out of nothing. Then, we also read here of God's providence, although this subject is also treated in Lord's Day 10. Our fathers

here also call attention to God's eternal counsel. And we also read of God's Fatherhood in relation to the believers for Jesus' sake. And finally we read of His omnipotence, and also of His power and willingness to cause all things to work together for our good. Indeed, what an amazing Lord's Day we have here! And all this, we must understand, is treated by the Catechism as the object of the faith of the child of God. It is the child of God who believes in this almighty Father, for Jesus' sake, and who therefore may know and believe that he is completely safe in the midst of the world, who says, "I believe in God, the Father, Almighty, Maker of heaven and earth."

When treating this first article of our Apostles' Creed, one can dwell upon and discuss so many things. One, for example, can ask very difficult questions in regard to the doctrine of creation and the counsel of God. Did God, when He created the world, become something He was not prior to this work of creation, namely a Creator? When the Lord created the world, did not something begin to exist which previously had not existed? Was God, therefore, richer after He made the world than He was before He made the world? Is not God with the world richer than God without the world? Did God become a Father when He begat a people in Christ Jesus? However, does not this answer speak of the "eternal Father of our Lord Jesus Christ"? And, do we not read here that God is the Father of Christ, His Son? Indeed, how wonderful is this first article of our Apostles' Creed, and what an amazing answer is this twenty-sixth answer!

Our Heidelberg Catechism, in this twenty-sixth answer, mentions God's eternal counsel and providence. That God's eternal counsel should be implied in this first article of the Apostles' Creed lies in the very nature of the case. We believe in God, the Father, Almighty, Maker of heaven and earth. We read in Acts 15:18, "Known unto God are all his works from the beginning of the world." And in Isaiah 46:10 we read, "Declaring the end from the beginning, and from ancient times the things that are not yet done, saying, my counsel shall stand, and I will do all my pleasure." A builder erects a building according to a plan designed by an architect. God is the heavenly Builder and Maker and Architect. He does all things according to His eternal counsel and plan, having willed all things from before the foundations of the world.

*Read and Study  
The Standard Bearer!*



## FAITH OF OUR FATHERS

*James D. Slopsema*

# The Baptism Form

### Our Part in the Covenant

According to the Baptism Form the third principal part of the doctrine of baptism is as follows:

Whereas in all covenants, there are contained two parts: therefore are we by God through baptism, admonished of, and obliged unto new obedience, namely, that we cleave to this one God, Father, Son, and Holy Ghost; that we trust in him, and love him with all our hearts, with all our souls, with all our mind, and with all our strength; that we forsake the world, crucify our old nature, and walk in a new and holy life.

And if we sometimes through weakness fall into sin, we must not therefore despair of God's mercy, nor continue in sin, since baptism is a seal and undoubted testimony, that we have an eternal covenant of grace with God.

Quite obviously the third principal part of the doctrine of baptism deals with our part in the covenant of grace. We have already seen that baptism is a sign and seal of God's covenant of grace. According to the Baptism Form, "when we are baptized in the name of the Father, God the Father witnesseth and sealeth unto us, that he doth make an eternal covenant of grace with us." Now the form will speak of our part in that covenant.

In the covenant of grace there are two parts: there is God's part and there is our part. We must be careful to understand the relation between the two.

Certainly the relation between these two parts of the covenant is not such that God's part is dependent on us doing our part. To put it differently, our part in the covenant is not a condition that we must

first meet before God can or will do His part. This would be rank Arminianism and is to be rejected.

Neither is it the case that God's part and our part in the covenant is a matter of cooperation. In that case the covenant would depend on us doing our part and God doing His part. Should we fail in doing our part, the covenant itself would fail regardless of God's efforts to establish and maintain the covenant. This too is to be rejected as being totally contrary to Scripture.

Rather is the relation such that our part in the covenant is totally dependent on God's part. God's part in the covenant is always first and primary. Our part in the covenant is merely the fruit of God doing His part.

To understand all this we must remember that God's covenant is a living relation of friendship and fellowship between God and His elect people. The elect, we have seen, are to be identified by their faith in Jesus Christ.

Due to the very nature of the covenant, God's part in the covenant is to draw near to His people in His love and fellowship. What specifically God does in His love is briefly set forth in the second principal part of the doctrine of baptism, which we considered in our last article. In His love God, first of all, adopts His chosen people as His own children and heirs to His glorious inheritance. In His love He also provides them with every good thing, and averts all evil or turns it to their profit.

At this point we may begin speaking of our part in the covenant. Our part in the covenant is to return God's love so that we serve Him in loving gratitude. This follows from the very nature of the covenant. The covenant is a relation of friendship



and fellowship with God, a relation of love and companionship. For such a relation to exist it is not only necessary for God to show His love to us, it is also necessary that we love God in return and show that love in our capacity as creatures by serving God.

However, by nature we cannot keep our part in the covenant. As the Baptism Form has already instructed us, we with our children are conceived and born in sin. We are corrupt and depraved, so much so that we will not and can not serve God in love. God in His love can adopt us as His children and heirs. In His tender love He can provide us with all sorts of good gifts. But the fact remains that we are conceived and born in sin so that we can not return His love. All we can do and all we will do is to hate Him and walk in rebellion against Him. We will spurn His fellowship. We will refuse Him as a Companion and Friend. And, of course, that means that a covenant relation of friendship and fellowship is impossible, made impossible by our inability to do our part in the covenant.

For this reason the Baptism Form, in describing the second principal part of the doctrine of baptism, goes on to describe the work of God to wash away our sins. Not only does God adopt us, His people, to be His children and heirs, providing us with every good thing, but He also washes away our sins in the blood of His Son Jesus Christ. And through the Spirit of Christ God also dwells in us His people, sanctifying us to be members of Christ, applying to us that which we have in Christ, namely, the washing away of our sins and the daily renewing of our lives.

This work of God in Christ to wash away our sins also belongs to God's part in the covenant. And what an important work it is. For it is only through this washing away of sins in Christ that we can and will do our part in the covenant. The fruit of the washing away of our sins is that we do respond to God's love. We love Him, even as He has loved us. In love we delight to serve Him. We also desire His fellowship and companionship.

Such, then, is our part in the covenant in relation to God's part. God's part is first and primary. Our part is merely the fruit, the necessary fruit, of God's part.

Quite in harmony with this the Baptism Form instructs us that by baptism we are by God admonished of and obliged unto new obedience. Baptism is a sign and seal of the washing away of our sins in the blood of Christ, a sign, therefore, of the very work of God that enables us to do our part in the covenant. Consequently, through the sacrament of baptism itself God admonishes and obligates us to do our part in the covenant, namely,

to walk in new obedience.

The Baptism Form goes on to describe this new obedience.

Of all that the form has to say about this new obedience the chief and central idea is that we love God with all our hearts, with all our souls, with all our mind, and with all our strength. This means that we are to love God with all that we are and in all that we do. We are to love God every minute of every day and in every part of our life. Our whole life must be one expression of love to God. This, according to our Lord Jesus Christ, is the great commandment of the law (cf. Matt. 22:37-40). And this obligation of ours, we have already seen, is fully in harmony with the whole idea of the covenant as a living relation of friendship and fellowship. In the power of the washing away of our sins, we are obligated by God to love Him as our part of the covenant of grace.

The Baptism Form goes on to show us how we are to manifest this love. We are to forsake the world, crucify our old nature, and walk in a new and holy life.

Negatively, we are to forsake the world. The world here is the world of sin and darkness in which we live. Our love for the triune God must come to expression in such a way that we forsake this world. The love of God must turn us away from this world so that we refuse to be a part of its corruption and evil. We are to be in the world, but not of the world.

To do this requires that we crucify our old nature. Through the washing away of our sins in the blood of Jesus Christ we have been principally renewed. However, there is still remaining in each one of us a sinful nature full of evil lusts and passions. If, therefore, we will renounce and forsake the world of sin, it is necessary to crucify our old nature. That means that in the power of Christ's crucifixion we put to death the evil cravings of our sinful nature so that they no more reign over us and lead us into the corruption of this world.

Positively, the love that baptism obligates us to have for God is to manifest itself in that we walk in a new and holy life. Our whole life must be new and different from the life of this world. It must be a holy life, a life consecrated exclusively to the service of the living God.

To attain all this it is necessary that we cleave to this one God, Father, Son, and Holy Ghost. This is an expression of faith. Faith is a clinging to God and to His Son, Jesus Christ. By that faith we receive God's grace and Holy Spirit to love the Lord our God day by day, to forsake the world and to walk in a new and holy life.



This is our part in the covenant of grace. To this we are admonished and obligated by baptism.

The Baptism Form concludes this section with a word of comfort and encouragement. The form recognizes that because of the weakness of our flesh we often fail to do our part in the covenant of grace. We do not always love God with that zeal as we are bound. We often fall into sin. These sins are often horrible sins. The Scriptures are filled with many examples of shocking sins that the saints in the past have committed. We today are no different.

The Baptism Form warns us that when we do fall into such sins, we are not to despair of God's mercy. And certainly we must not in the state of despair continue in sin, thinking that all is lost. For according to the Form, baptism is God's seal and undoubted testimony to us as believers that we have an eternal covenant of grace with God. The emphasis falls on the word "eternal." The covenant

God seals to us in baptism is an *eternal* covenant. That implies that this covenant can never be broken. It can be violated; and we violate it every time we sin. But the covenant can never be broken in the sense that it is disannulled or destroyed because of our sins. This is because God is a merciful God and, therefore, a forgiving God. When we come to God with our sins and confess our sins with grieving hearts, God in mercy will forgive us for Christ's sake and receive us again into His blessed love and fellowship. What is more, when we stumble and fall into sin, God in His great mercy will even lead us to Himself in repentance and confession so that we may be reconciled to Him and be received into His favor.

Certainly then we are not to despair when we fall into sin and fail to do our part in the covenant. Nor are we to continue in sin. But in the power of God's great love and mercy, sealed to us in baptism itself, we are to repent and turn again to our God to do our part in the covenant as forgiven sinners.

---

## GUIDED INTO ALL TRUTH

Thomas C. Miersma

# Scripture Interprets Scripture: Grammatically

### (Reformed Bible Study - 2)

We began in the last article in this column to consider the application of the principle, Scripture interprets Scripture, from the viewpoint of the text of Scripture. We raised the question, where do you begin the study of a text or passage of Scripture? We did so moreover with the qualification that we would seek to answer this question from the viewpoint of someone who does not have access to the original languages but only to the English Bible.

Last time we made a few observations about our King James Version by way of preliminary remarks. There are a few other preliminary

remarks which it is necessary to make. The place to begin is by reading Scripture, the passage or text in its place and context in the Word of God. This involves the application of the principle, Scripture interprets Scripture historically, which was discussed in an earlier article. We will assume for the sake of our discussion that the reader has a certain passage before him which he wishes to study. And that following the historical principle he has also some idea of the place of that passage in the book of the Bible he is considering and the theme of the book. The reader is referred to the "Bible Study Guides" published in the *Standard Bearer* as being helpful tools in this connection.

The second observation is that while we will discuss various approaches and techniques to be used in Bible study, these must not be approached



mechanically or as a mere step-by-step method. The intention is neither to present such a method nor to be exhaustive. A word of caution is also in order. It is possible to become so caught up in the mechanics of Bible study and the intellectual enjoyment of it that you lose sight of the object being studied, which is God's Word. The fundamental principle of all Bible study is that we are taught of God, and that requires prayerful and reverent study, spiritual reflection on the meaning of God's Word, and the appropriation of it by faith.

The third remark has to do with various tools for Bible study. This question invariably comes up. While these do not take the place of Scripture itself, they are a means to assist us in our study and to locate Scripture's meaning and its own commentary. There are many such topics available; four of them are perhaps the most basic and useful. The first is a Bible atlas which goes beyond the few maps found in most Bibles. Atlases are useful tools for the study of historical passages and are for the most part reliable. The second tool is a Bible dictionary which provides background information on the plants and animals of the Bible, the meaning of names, places, descriptions of the tabernacle or the temple, and the high priest's vestments, etc. There are a large number of Bible dictionaries or encyclopedias, some excellent ones which are no longer available and a host of modern ones. If the reader desires a specific suggestion, probably the best one-volume Bible dictionary currently available is the *Davis Dictionary of the Bible*. J.D. Davis was a conservative Presbyterian and a co-laborer with B.B. Warfield. Warfield and other conservative Presbyterians have contributed articles to it, and while it does not have the colorful photographs of more recent works it has more substance. It also has complete Scriptural references which allow one to go directly to the Scriptures and to locate what is being discussed.

The third and fourth tools have a more direct bearing upon the matter we are discussing. The third is a good English dictionary, something more than a pocket dictionary or the glossary located in the back of some Bibles. While the English dictionary is not based directly on Scripture nor drawn from it, as for the most part the Greek and Hebrew dictionaries or lexicons are, nevertheless it is an important tool. Our KJV Bible has over the course of years, because of its importance, served to shape and mold the English language and the meaning of words, and this should be reflected in a good dictionary. The fourth tool is a concordance. This is the most useful and essential tool for Bible study as it is the instrument to locate Scripture's own commentary. With it one can trace the various words of Scripture or ideas, and locate parallel passages so as

to bring Scripture to bear upon itself. A good concordance will give you every occurrence of a word in the Bible, give you help in a variety of different ways if you take the time to learn how to use it, and even to some extent allow you to distinguish between words and meanings in the original languages without knowing them. The center references in many Bibles are, for all practical purposes, a sort of selected mini-concordance, but are of limited usefulness exactly because they are incomplete. There are also some incomplete concordances available which have limited usefulness as well. For serious Bible study there are only two worth considering: the one is *Strong's Exhaustive Concordance of the Bible*, the other is *Young's Analytical Concordance to the Bible*. Each one has certain features and advantages over the other, but both will accomplish the same purpose. It is more a matter of how you use them and how they work which distinguishes them. There is a third concordance, *Cruden's Concordance*, which is popular in either its abridged or unabridged form, but it is incomplete, lacks many of the features of the other two, and is therefore less useful.

With these remarks and tools in mind, where do we begin? If we were working with the original languages we would begin with the grammar and translation of the text. It is for this reason that the reformers' approach to Scripture is sometimes called the grammatical-historical-spiritual approach. This is also the reason we have called this portion of our series the grammatical one. Working however from the English Bible with the translation already before us we will begin slightly differently, by dividing the material into three different sections, considering the words of the text first, which is perhaps the easiest to do, then the grammar, and then certain special elements which can be taken up into our study.

Having some idea of the general purpose and meaning of the passage before us and its place in the book we are studying and the Word of God, our first goal is to understand the meaning of the words of the text and their use, idea, and concept in the Scriptures both as a whole and in our particular passage. The place to begin is by looking up any words in the passage which are unclear or obscure in their meaning. English is a living language, and over the course of years the meaning of some words has shifted or changed, narrowed or in some instances dropped out of use. In Psalm 5:6 for example, the text reads "thou shalt destroy them that speak leasing." This is not our present use of the word "leasing." The first thing to do in studying Psalm 5 therefore is to look this word up in either the glossary of your Bible or your dictionary. This applies also to words whose meaning has shifted.



The word "conversation" in our KJV has a broader meaning than a mere dialogue between two persons. It often refers to one's whole course of life and walk.

This process should be carried further however, by looking up in the dictionary all the major words, terms, and expressions in the passage, even the ones you think you know well. Part of the difficulty with the way we so often read is that we have only a vague and fuzzy idea of the meaning of words, and we skim over a Bible passage when we read it without understanding it clearly. The purpose of careful Bible study is exactly to overcome this weakness and hear what God is saying to us, sharply and clearly. Look at the various meanings or shades of meaning the dictionary gives for the word. Which ones are used in Scripture? Which one seems to fit most closely to the passage you are studying in its context? What light does this shed

upon the passage you are studying? What does it say about its meaning? It is by learning to ask questions of the text and seeking answers to them, by reflecting upon its meaning each step of the way, that we learn to hear what the passage is saying. It is amazing how much can be learned from a passage and how much more clearly its meaning can be grasped by this simple use of an English dictionary.

It may well be however that none of the material found in the dictionary answers our questions well or in a satisfactory way. The dictionary is a starting point for our study, not an end point. If the passage includes names or places, look them up in the Bible dictionary as well. In either case we have yet to go to our concordance and to pursue Scripture directly itself. This we will have to take up more fully in our next article, D.V.

---

## ***IN HIS FEAR***

*Barrett L. Gritters*

---

# **Understanding Church Discipline (2)**

Our children need to be disciplined when they sin. As children of God and members of the church, we need in our life the discipline of Christ directly with His chastening rod and heavy hand, making us repent from our deviant ways and return to the right relation with Him and our fellow believers. But He also gives the church the responsibility to discipline its members. That is, Christ uses at least two methods to bring us to our senses when we are pursuing an unhindered course of destruction — His convicting Spirit and the officers in His church. There are others, but these are what we are concerned with in church discipline.

The church which compasses land and sea to make converts, but fails to discipline its members, is a church that will self-destruct. The strength of a

church is not determined by the number of people that it can retain within its walls, but rather by her ability to enforce the spiritual discipline of Christ, and to cast out of her fellowship those who refuse to walk according to the plain declaration and ordinances of God (see the Belgic Confession, Articles 29, 30).

That this is work humanly impossible to perform, none would deny. That it is sometimes unpleasant for all involved is certain. But I would rather have a surgeon cut me open and make me know pain, so that I could be healed, than that he mislead me into thinking that all is well by giving me a pain killer. The difference here is that our Surgeon is divine, and the sometimes painful and unpleasant remedy brings eternal life for those under His knife. Pray God that the church may use the tools of the divine Surgeon in love for the sinner, always with the desire that our brothers and sisters be healed.



*Motives.* Discipline must always be motivated by love for the sinner (an unrepentant sinner goes to hell and the repentant to heaven), love for the church (a little leaven leavens the whole lump: I Cor. 5:6), and love for Christ's name (untouched sin in the *body* of Christ dishonors the *Head* as well). There are no carnal motives, nothing to gain for disciplining an erring member, no ulterior motives. This may even be an admonition to officebearers (and all of us) who might desire to "get rid of" a member who is one they would like "out of" the church. Discipline must be motivated by obedience to Christ and love for the church.

*The purpose.* Motive is similar to purpose. According to the Church Order of the The Protestant Reformed Churches, article 71, the purpose of discipline is both positive and negative. Positively, discipline is always to save the sinner in the way of repentance. If the sinner repents, angels and elders rejoice. Let it be our prayer that none ever forget that purpose in discipline as it is exercised upon them or others in their church. Negatively, discipline is performed so that offence is removed from the church of Christ. If that is done by the sinner leaving his sins, we shout for joy. If that must be done by excluding the sinner, it is cause for great mourning (see I Corinthians 5:2), for then he reveals that he is not a true member of the body of Christ. These two purposes as given in Article 71 will come out more clearly as we look at the individual steps of discipline.

*The ground.* That is, "Why is discipline ever exercised in the church?" There is only one ground for discipline — ever. Often it is asked why an adulterer is disciplined, but not a liar or backbiter. "Isn't the one worse?" But that question misses the point. *Impenitence is the only reason anyone is ever disciplined.* If a man murders, but is sorry for that sin, he will not be disciplined. But if a man gossips about his neighbor and does not repent, that "relatively light" sin can lead to excommunication from the church. The point is that *only unrepentant sin* — sin that is continued before God and the neighbor (no matter how seemingly slight it might be) — warrants discipline. Or, to be more specific, the only reason anyone is ever disciplined is the sin of failing to repent.

There are really two kinds of sins that could be dealt with here. Later, *sins that have become public knowledge* will be looked at. For now we will discuss *private sins* that proceed the way of Matthew 18.

Matthew 18 gives us a basic outline for the different steps in church discipline; there the Lord tells us what to do when there is sin in His church. We will assume that all are agreed that in private

sins the way of Matthew 18 must be followed. That is, when a brother sins against you, you must go to him first alone to try to "win" him (in ideal circumstances, you and the brother ought to bump into each other on the way to one another's homes. See Matt. 5:23, 24 along with Matt. 18). If no repentance comes, you take another or two with you. If the brother or sister still does not repent with these private admonitions, that compels you to "tell it unto the church" (vs. 18). By that command, Christ brings His discipline into the consistory room.

Do we understand this clearly? This means that we keep sin as private as possible. If no repentance is realized in private admonitions, we take it to the consistory — to no one else. There is probably a temptation to ask advice from others: friends, neighbors, other saints in the church. Christ forbids that. Out of love for the sinner, we must proceed immediately to the "church." The consistory has been commissioned by Christ to take over at this point.

*First Measure Taken.* When the consistory is informed of the sin, and works long with the sinner who still refuses to repent, he must first *be barred from the Lord's Supper*, lest it be desecrated and judgment fall on the entire congregation (see I Corinthians 10:21; 11:28-31, 34). This is called "silent censure" (and is not the "first step" of the three announcements made in the congregation: see box).

#### SUMMARY OF THE STEPS OF DISCIPLINE

FIRST MEASURE: Silent Censure (withheld from the Lord's Supper)

SECOND MEASURE: The three announcements to the church (usually considered *The Three Steps* of discipline)

1. Announcement of sin with name withheld.
2. Announcement of sin *and* name (w/ Classis approval)
3. Announcement that excommunication will take place if no repentance is seen.

THIRD MEASURE: Excommunication itself (the last remedy)

There are a couple of things that need to be said at this point. First, the consistory must continue to work with the unrepentant sinner until their knuckles are sore from knocking at his door. Unwearyingly they labor in love for the salvation of one of the wandering sheep. Continuously they pray that God will "afflict" the sinner so he might "learn His statutes" and confess, "It was good for



me . . . ." With singleness of mind and heart they persevere in their labors to bring him back to Christ. Because we are all human, it is almost impossible to know the heart in one or two visits. And although an end must be determined by the prayerful decision of the consistory, never may it be laid to their charge that there was not enough labor performed.

Second, those taking heed to the wandering sinner must always use God's Word. This is so critical that it cannot be gainsaid or left unsaid. No other sound will the sheep hear, but the voices of Christ through His Word. A sheep wandering can be brought back in no other way than by the voice of the Shepherd. They risk the Chief Shepherd's severe reprimand who leave one of the sheep to the wolves because they refused to use Christ's powerful Word. It alone can reach out to the hard heart, soften it, and retrieve the sinner. On the other hand, woe to any who, by using his own words, brings back into the flock a goat who might have been hardened had Christ's Words been used properly. The exclusive tool to be used throughout discipline is the Divine Surgeon's Knife.

After much labor in love and with the Word, if the fruit of that labor is not repentance, the consistory formulates a first announcement to the congregation.

*The First Announcement.* This is considered the beginning of the second measure. It is called the first step, because it is the first announcement to the congregation (see box). In this announcement, 1) the name of the sinner is not announced, "that he be somewhat spared" (Church Order, Art 77); 2) the patient care taken with the sinner is explained; 3) the congregation is notified that he has been often admonished and is now barred from the Lord's Supper; and 4) the congregation is asked to pray that the sin be removed. There is both Scriptural and practical warrant for this step.

Titus 3:10 tells us that a man that is a heretic after the first and second admonition must be rejected. This at least gives us indication that a series of admonitions must be used with the sinner. That his name is not announced is based on the principle of Galatians 6:1 (we restore the brother in the spirit of meekness) and the principle that we must always labor in love with the sinner. The church does all that it possibly can to keep the sinner's name private. That the problem is announced is to request the congregation's prayers, but also to show the erring brother or sister that sin cannot be taken lightly. Let us never take it lightly either, but pray, pray, pray.

Always the desire is that the sinner be brought to repentance. And if that happens, the matter is

always ended and announced as such to the congregation. Then is time for great rejoicing with the angels and the returned sinner. But in some cases there is still no repentance; and God's word instructs to continue with discipline.

*The Second Announcement.* After receiving the approval of the Classis so that others can determine that the consistory has done its work properly (all names are kept confidential), the consistory makes an announcement similar to the first, but now includes the name of the sinner. Here is where so much misunderstanding comes, so we will be careful to explain the reasons for this action. (See also "objections answered" in the next article.)

From the viewpoint of the sinner, this is another step to show him (or her) the gravity of excommunication. It is another means to exhibit the horrible reality of being excluded by Christ from the kingdom of heaven — from Christ Himself. Their failure to repent is leading them on the path to eternal damnation. That is utterly serious.

From the viewpoint of the congregation, *they* must be involved in the process of discipline. All Christians are responsible to a certain extent for a sinner's sins (see last article). And by making the name public, the church (consistory) is giving the congregation opportunity not only to pray for the impenitent, but also to visit, admonish, and pray with him.

Biblical support is found in II Thessalonians 3:14. This passage tells us that "if any man obey not our word by this epistle, note that man, and have no company with him, that he may be ashamed. Yet count him not as an enemy, but admonish him as a brother." Two things are apparent and especially important in this text. First, the church is to "note that man," that is, consider and mark who the impenitent one is. Second, the church does that *before the impenitent is excommunicated* (he is still considered a "brother") so that the congregation has opportunity to "admonish him as a brother." Reformed churches have determined that this is the orderly, obedient, and God glorifying way to exercise church discipline.

(Next: The Third Announcement; Excommunication; Why public announcements of repentant sinners who have committed public sins?)

*The Standard Bearer  
makes a thoughtful gift for  
the sick or shut-in.*



## THE STRENGTH OF YOUTH

Ronald L. Cammenga

# Remarriage of the "Innocent Party" (2)

Last time we cited the three Scripture passages that are often appealed to by those who teach the right of the "innocent party" to remarry: Deuteronomy 24:1, 2; I Timothy 3:2, 12; and Matthew 19:9. In this article we want to take a closer look at these passages and see that they do not in fact support this position.

First of all, this is true of Deuteronomy 24:1, 2. The statement at the end of verse 2, "she *may* go and be another man's wife," is incorrectly understood when it is interpreted as permitting the remarriage of the "innocent party." The word "may" is not used here in the sense of "it is permitted, she is at liberty," as the original Hebrew makes plain. "May" is used here in the sense of "it is possible, it may happen." This is how we often use the word "may" in our everyday speech. If I say, "I may go to the store this afternoon," then I don't mean that I am permitted to go to the store, but I mean that it is quite possible, it may happen that I will go to the store. This is how Deuteronomy 24:1, 2 must be understood. The law here is only recognizing what may very likely happen, and in the case of this eventuality laying down a further commandment. No justification for the remarriage of the "innocent party" can be found here.

The same is true of the passage in I Timothy 3:2, 12. In this passage the Apostle Paul lists the qualifications of elders and deacons. Since the Apostle specifies that the elders and deacons must be "the husband of one wife," it is argued that it was permitted the ordinary members of the church, those who did not serve in the special offices, to be the husband of more than one wife, either due to polygamy or divorce and remarriage. This is an al-

together faulty argument. In no sense is the Apostle making requirements of officebearers here that are to be true only of them and not at all of the rest of the members of the church. On this argument, the officebearers are not to give themselves to wine, not to be greedy of filthy lucre, not brawlers, and proud, but it is permitted the rest of the members of the church to be drunkards, covetous, brawlers, and proud. This certainly is not the teaching of the Apostle in I Timothy 3. The requirements that he lays down for officebearers are requirements that ought to be true of every member of the church, but requirements which ought especially and to a greater degree to be true of officebearers. Especially in the case of the officebearers, but also of every member of the church, it ought to be true that he is the husband of one wife, or the wife of one husband, as the case may be. Remarriage of divorced people is not permitted.

Appeal is also made to Matthew 19:9 in support of the permissibility of the remarriage of the "innocent party." The passage contains Jesus' words, "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 also remarry.

In fact, this is not the teaching of Matthew 19:9. Not only does this passage not teach the right of the "innocent party" to remarry, but the last part of the verse is in reality a clear condemnation of the remarriage of the "innocent party." The last part of the text refers to the remarriage of the woman divorced in the first part of the text: "and whoso



marrieth her which is put away doth commit adultery." But the woman who was divorced in the first part of the text was divorced unlawfully. Her husband, divorcing her and marrying another, committed adultery. Concerning that woman, that woman who had been divorced unlawfully, who was therefore the "innocent party," Jesus says that whoever marries her "doth commit adultery." The Lord expressly teaches here that the "innocent party" may not remarry. The exception clause, "except it be for fornication," qualifies only the prohibition of divorce, and does not give a ground for remarriage.

There are at least two strong arguments from the Scriptures that may be brought against the position that allows for the remarriage of the "innocent party."

First of all, against this position is Jesus' unqualified condemnation of the remarriage of all divorced people. This is the Lord's instruction in Mark 10:11, 12: "Whosoever shall put away his wife, and marry another, committeth adultery against her. And if a woman shall put away her husband, and be married to another, she committeth adultery." This is also the teaching of Jesus in Luke 16:18, "Whosoever putteth away his wife, and marrieth another, committeth adultery: and whosoever marrieth her that is put away from her husband committeth adultery." In these passages Jesus forbids absolutely the remarriage of all divorced people. Whoever divorces and remarries commits adultery. Although there is one ground for divorce, there is no ground for remarriage.

In the second place, the Scriptures prohibit the remarriage of the "innocent party" by their teaching that nothing but death severs the marriage bond, so that as long as my marriage partner is alive, I am bound by the law to that partner. Divorce does not sever the marriage bond. If it did, then it would be permitted the "innocent party" to remarry. If divorce dissolved the marriage contract, then nothing could stand in the way of the right of remarriage.

This is the position concerning divorce that many have taken, that divorce does in fact break the marriage bond. This is the position of both John Murray and Jay Adams. In the quotation which we cited from Murray in the previous article, he 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* (emphasis ours, R.C.) 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]

Adams agrees with this position. Carrying this position out consistently, these men are forced to allow even the remarriage of the guilty party in the divorce, and ultimately all divorced people. If the divorce actually dissolves the marriage bond, what is to prevent remarriage?

But divorce does not dissolve the marriage bond. No act of man, but only an act of God can dissolve that which God has united. And God dissolves the marriage bond by death. Because only death dissolves the marriage bond, it is the only ground for remarriage.

This is the teaching of the Scriptures. This is the teaching of the Apostle Paul in Romans 7:1-3: "Know ye not, brethren, (for I speak to them that know the law,) how that the law hath dominion over a man as long as he liveth? For the woman which hath an husband is bound by the law to her husband so long as he liveth; but if the husband be dead, she is loosed from the law of her husband. So then if, while her husband liveth, she be married to another man, she shall be called an adulteress: but if her husband be dead, she is free from that law; so that she is no adulteress, though she be married to another man."

In this passage the Apostle teaches that as long as they are alive, a husband and a wife are bound by the law to each other. If while they are both alive, either of them is married to someone else, they commit adultery. Only death frees the husband or wife from the law of marriage.

This is also the Apostle's teaching in I Corinthians 7:39: "The wife is bound by the law as long as her husband liveth; but if her husband be dead, she is at liberty to be married to whom she will; only in the Lord."

There is only one thing that sets a woman at liberty to marry again. That is not her divorce from her first husband. But it is only the death of her husband. Then she is free to marry again, without fear of committing adultery.

In clear language the Scriptures condemn divorce, except on the ground of fornication. In equally clear language, the Scriptures condemn the remarriage of divorced people, even the remarriage of the "innocent party."

This is not to say that the Scriptures and the church are unsympathetic to the plight of divorced people. This is not to say that we are cold, hard-hearted, and unfeeling with respect to the difficulties of divorced people who are forced to face the rest of their life alone, without the help and companionship of a husband or a wife. We are sympathetic to their situation. The Scriptures are sympathetic to their situation. But our sympathy must



not cloud our judgment. Our feelings must not lead us to violate the teaching of the Word of God.

Our sympathy for divorced people must not encourage them to go in the direction of disobedience to the Word of God. Is this sympathy? Is this love? Of course not. Our sympathy for divorced people shows itself in our call to them to live as God requires of them. Our sympathy shows itself in our pointing them to God, God's grace, and God's

Word for the strength that they need to live the life to which God calls them. Since God calls them to this life, He will also give them grace sufficient to live this life. It will not be easy. But then, is the Christian life ever easy? The way into the Kingdom is a straight and a narrow way, also as regards marriage. Few there are who find it. But those who do, those who walk this narrow and difficult way, enjoy the eternal life that is at the end of this way.

## GUEST ARTICLE

*Steven R. Houck*

# God's Sovereignty and the Psalms (1)

### THE PROPER EMPHASIS

"Know ye that the Lord he is God . . ." (Ps. 100:3). Are not these words of the psalmist the expression of the faith of every true child of God? The Christian believes that his God is indeed GOD. He is the absolutely sovereign God of heaven and earth. It is He Who has created the world by His sovereign power. It is He Who even now upholds the world and all that is within it. It is He Who sovereignly governs and directs all the affairs of this world by His eternal counsel and almighty power. Even man is absolutely subject to His will. No one can frustrate God's will, nor may anyone question God's works and ways. It is He Who is God, also in salvation. He sovereignly saves His people. In eternity He chose those whom He would save. In time He alone applies the work of Christ to His people and leads them to eternal life in glory. Thus the child of God declares, "who is so great a God as our God? Thou art the God that doest wonders . . ." (Ps. 77:13-14). Indeed, "the Lord he is God."

God's sovereignty is so clearly taught in Holy Scripture that it is impossible for anyone to deny this doctrine without denying the very Scriptures

themselves. There are those however who, while they do not openly deny God's sovereignty, nevertheless deny that this doctrine ought to be emphasized. It is just one doctrine among many and therefore must be "kept in balance" with the rest. Moreover, they tell us that God's sovereignty takes us into the area of the "secret things" of God and it is very dangerous for God's people to concern themselves with these things which belong only to God. Thus they counsel us that while we may believe the doctrine of God's sovereignty, we dare not make too much of it. If we do, we will become "one-sided."

The Scriptures, however, teach us that God's sovereignty is not just another doctrine. It is the very heart of the gospel. If anything ought to be emphasized, it is God's sovereignty. God is revealed as the Sovereign One on every page of Holy Scripture. While this can be shown from a survey of the whole Bible, we turn our attention to just one book of the Bible — the book of Psalms. If there is any one book of the Bible that ought to demonstrate the proper emphasis of the Christian life, it is the book of Psalms. For in the Psalms we do not have detailed instruction in doctrine, such as in the book of Romans, but the expression of the heart and soul of the believer. The Psalms are expressions of the daily experience of the child of God. In them we find the believer's sorrows and joys, his fears and com-

---

*Steven R. Houck is a missionary of the Protestant Reformed Churches, working currently in Ripon, California.*



fort, his desires and prayers. In them we find the proper emphasis of the Christian life. The emphasis is very obvious too — GOD IS THE SOVEREIGN GOD. The child of God finds His comfort in that fact. He not only believes it to be true, but it is the heart and soul of his faith.

### THE GLORIOUS SOVEREIGN KING

The Psalms are songs of praise and adoration of God. They are songs that praise God for His greatness and His glory. They acknowledge God to be the sovereign King. The psalmists know of no impotent and helpless god. They know of no god that is dependent upon man and his will. The God of the psalmists is the King. He is the eternal Ruler, Master, and Sovereign. Thus the psalmist exclaims, "The Lord is King for ever and ever . . ." (Ps. 10:16). The Lord is the sovereign King of all the world. He is the King of every creature. All are subject unto Him — both the righteous and the wicked. "For the Lord most high is terrible; he is a great King over all the earth. He shall subdue the people under us, and the nations under our feet" (Ps. 47:2-3). Because God is the King, He is also the Judge. He holds man responsible for all his deeds. Those who refuse to obey His ordinances have reason to fear His terrible anger. He comes as the Sovereign Judge to destroy the wicked. But in His just judgment He also delivers His people. Therefore Israel could sing of the sovereign Judge, "Thou, even thou, art to be feared: and who may stand in thy sight when once thou art angry? Thou didst cause judgment to be heard from heaven; the earth feared, and was still, When God arose to judgment, to save all the meek of the earth" (Ps. 76:7-9).

God is not just another king, however. He is THE KING. He is the great and glorious King Who fills the hearts of men with awe. When we behold Him we must proclaim, "O Lord our Lord, how excellent is thy name in all the earth! who hast set thy glory above the heavens" (Ps. 8:1). When the Lord manifests Himself in His majesty, then "Clouds and darkness are round about him: righteousness and judgment are the habitation of his throne. A fire goeth before him and burneth up his enemies round about. His lightnings enlightened the world: the earth saw and trembled. The hills melted like wax at the presence of the Lord, at the presence of the Lord of the whole earth" (Ps. 97:2-5). The sovereign God is so high that He must bend Himself down just to behold the things of this earth. He is so great and glorious and man is so little. Even heaven itself is lowly in comparison with the majesty of God. The glory of the angels can not match the glory of the Most High God. "The Lord is high above all nations, and his glory above the heavens. Who is like unto the Lord our God, who dwelleth on high, Who humbleth himself to behold

the things that are in heaven and in the earth!" (Ps. 113:4-6).

It is not strange then, that God demands that we fear and worship Him. We are nothing in comparison with the Sovereign God. He is the glorious King Whom we are obligated to serve. "For who in the heaven can be compared unto the Lord? who among the sons of the mighty can be likened unto the Lord? God is greatly to be feared in the assembly of the saints, and to be had in reverence of all them that are about him" (Ps. 89:6-7). We owe God reverence. We must honor Him as the glorious God. Man must not boast in himself and his doings, but in the majesty of God. Our duty is to worship the Lord with songs of praise. "Give unto the Lord, O ye mighty, give unto the Lord glory and strength. Give unto the Lord the glory due unto his name; worship the Lord in the beauty of holiness" (Ps. 29:1-2).

### GOD'S SOVEREIGN POWER

The psalmists not only praise God as the glorious King, but they praise Him for the manifestation of His great power. God is indeed the Ruler. His wondrous power is displayed everywhere. We see it in the creation of heaven and earth. The psalmist bursts forth in a song of praise of the Creator's power when he says, "Praise ye the Lord. Praise ye the Lord from the heavens: praise him in the heights. Praise ye him, all his angels: praise ye him all his hosts. Praise ye him, sun and moon: praise him, all ye stars of light. Praise him, ye heavens of heavens, and ye waters that be above the heavens. Let them praise the name of the Lord: for he commanded, and they were created" (Ps. 148:1-5). Men, angels, sun, moon, stars, and every creature ought to sing praises to God for "he commanded and they were created."

Moreover, the sovereign God even now governs and directs all of the affairs of this world by His power. The psalmist declares, "Wherefore should the heathen then say, Where is now their God? But our God is in the heavens: he hath done whatsoever he hath pleased" (Ps. 115:2-3). God does whatever He pleases. His power is so high, so mighty that whatever He has willed, He brings to pass. His will is never frustrated. Not even by the wicked who think that they can defy God and destroy His people. God so governs, that all things take place according to His good-pleasure. "The Lord reigneth, he is clothed with strength, wherewith he hath girded himself: the world also is stablished, that it cannot be moved" (Ps. 93:1). All things are what they are and do what they do because God so establishes them. No one is able to "move" anything from the place God has given it.

In many places the psalmists sing praises to God



for the power and control He exerts over the animal world and the "forces of nature." Creation in general stands in the service of the Sovereign King (Ps. 74:13-17, 104:5-24, 105:16-41, 147:8-18). But what is even more important is the fact that God's rule extends over man — both the wicked and the righteous. Even man, who seeks to be so independent, is bound to the will and power of the sovereign God. Man strives for power and authority, but it is God Who gives both to those whom He pleases. "For promotion cometh neither from the east, nor from the west, nor from the south. But God is the judge: he putteth down one, and setteth up another" (Ps. 75:6-7). All that man does is dependent upon the power of God. Man can do nothing without God. "Except the Lord build the house, they labour in vain that build it: except the Lord keep the city, the watchman waketh but in vain. It is vain for you to rise up early to sit up late, to eat the bread of sorrow: for so he giveth his beloved sleep. Lo, children are an heritage of the Lord: and the fruit of the womb is his reward" (Ps.

127:1-3). Man may seek to build a house but if God does not build it, it is impossible for man to do it. The watchman may seek to guard the city, but if God does not guard it, all his watching is vain. If a man sleeps in peace, it is because the Lord has given him sleep. Even our children are given to us by the wondrous working of God's power. Yea, all the affairs of man's life are under His control and direction.

No, the God of the Psalms is not a weak, impotent god. He is not a god who must work around man's will and way. He is the sovereign God Who has all things in His hands. He is the glorious King Who created, upholds, and governs the world. Thus with the psalmist we must praise the Lord by singing, "For I know that the Lord is great, and that our Lord is above all gods. Whatsoever the Lord pleased, that did he in heaven, and in earth, in the sea, and all deep places" (Ps. 135:5-6).

(to be continued)

## News From Our Churches

December 24, 1985

Six years may seem like a long time to be away from home but for Rev. Arie den Hartog and his family this time has passed quickly. In the year ahead, Rev. den Hartog will be seriously considering what the will of the Lord will be for them as far as staying in Singapore or returning to the States is concerned. Here is the latest news in regards to their work on the island.

"December as usual will be a busy month in the church. Next week will be the Student's Bible Camp . . . I am to give four messages on the theme 'The Christian's Firm Foundation' . . . I have another three special speaking engagements . . . One of these . . . meetings the church will be inviting parents and relatives to come to hear the Christmas story. The message will therefore be translated into Chinese . . .

"The greatest problem we continue to face is that of having more girls than boys in our membership. The sisters who are getting older are discouraged at not being able to find Christian marriage partners.

"The church is once again seriously considering the matter of starting another congregation. The two main reasons for this are the hope that in doing

this we will be able to expand the witness of our church and the fact that Brother Jaikishin Mahtani will soon be returning from his seminary training in the U.S.A. The major obstacle that we always face however is the difficulty of finding a meeting place."

Jamaica is the home for Revs. Bruinsma and Joostens and their families. They have been very busy on the island organizing the field so that the labors of Rev. Bruinsma can be beneficial to a greater number of churches. Here are a few sentences from Rev. Joostens' letter to the congregation of First Church.

"We, that is Elder Reed and myself, have been going through the hills in Cave Mt. visiting the people . . . The clothing we brought has been distributed in Waterworks and Beeston congregations. The next batch will find us dealing with Cave Mt. and Belmont.

" . . . I can report that though I miss the duties at First Church, I have found attentiveness here to God's Word, and a readiness to learn. The singing is a high priority with us. We are looking forward to the Psalter booklets to facilitate this."

And Rev. Bruinsma has also sent a letter in which he made the following comments.

*David Harbach is a teacher at Adams St. Prot. Ref. Christian School, Grand Rapids, Michigan.*



"At this time there are three Jamaican ministers who each labor in a congregation. This means there are four churches who have been without a minister either for as long as they have existed or at least for many, many years now. It is in these congregations we have set up Sunday services, mid-week Bible study groups, and organized Sunday School instruction. Besides this I am presently teaching elder Thomlyson in Beeston Spring to be a minister in his congregation."

Rev. Joostens and his family have returned to the States for the Christmas vacation. Rev. C. Hanco has left for Bradenton for the winter.

First Church, Grand Rapids, Michigan is now holding services in their new church. But they will not be holding their dedication service until April or May because the building is not complete, December is a busy time of the year, and they will

have more time to prepare a nice program which will include former ministers who are not going to be in the Grand Rapids area for December or January.

Tapes of the six messages and the question and answer period given during the conference on Marriage are available for \$10 from South Holland's Evangelism Committee, 16515 South Park Ave., South Holland, IL 60473.

In a good number of church bulletins recently we have noticed reference to the magazine of our schools, *Perspectives in Covenant Education*. The intent of the brief notice in each was to encourage subscription to "Perspectives." We'd like, if we may, to underscore that. You will enjoy this little publication, which comes out three times each year. Many of you who do not currently subscribe have received a free copy of the Fall 1985 issue. Have you read it? Did you like it? Then ask to receive it regularly — by sending a card or letter to *Perspectives in Covenant Education*, 1150 Adams St. S.E., Grand Rapids, MI 49507.

### RESOLUTION OF SYMPATHY

The Ladies Aid Society of Hope Protestant Reformed Church (Walker, MI) expresses its Christian Sympathy to Mrs. Dorothy Engelsma in the death of her sister, MRS. HARRY VANDER PLOEG.

"Blessed be God, even the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of mercies, and the God of all comfort." (II Corinthians 1:3)

Prof. H. Hanco, Pres.  
Eilene Terpstra, Sec'y.

### NOTICE!!!

Classis West of the Protestant Reformed Churches will meet in South Holland, IL on Wednesday, March 5, 1986, at 8:30 AM, the Lord willing. Delegates in need of lodging should notify the Clerk of the South Holland Council.

Rev. David Engelsma, Stated Clerk  
Classis West

### WEDDING ANNIVERSARY

On January 24, 1986, the Lord willing, our beloved parents and grandparents, MR. AND MRS. RHINE LUBBERS, will celebrate their 40th wedding anniversary. We praise God for the covenant love and instruction we have received from them. We are thankful too, for the many sacrifices they have made in their life on behalf of us, their children. We cherish the many fond memories they have given us and value the many Godly ideals they set before us. We pray that God may reward them richly and continue to give them an abundance of His joy and peace.

"O how delightful, God of grace, The paths of those that seek thy face." (Psalm 84)

Andy and Mic Buist  
Randy, Marci, Mendi  
Tom and Judy Henson  
Al and Karen Karsten  
Missy, Brad, Michael, Jonathan  
Gary and Rachel Bouwkamp

Bern and Diana Lubbers  
Mark and Elaine Clawson  
Keven, Shannon, Jeremy  
Rick and Jill Lubbers  
Stephanie

### IN LOVING MEMORY

One year ago, on January 21, 1985, the Lord quite suddenly took our beloved husband, father and grandfather, JOHN B. LUBBERS to his heavenly home. We rejoice that he is now free from all suffering and sin, and we thank God for giving us the grace and strength to bear our loss.

"I will lift up mine eyes unto the hills from whence cometh my help. My help cometh from the Lord, which made heaven and earth." (Psalm 121:1, 2)

Mrs. John B. Lubbers  
Bernard Lubbers  
Gerald and Marilyn Lubbers  
Marvin and Judy Lubbers  
Gerald and Bea Visser  
Genevieve Lubbers

Marvin and Marge Lubbers  
Evelyn Lubbers  
J. Kim and Lillian Oudman  
Clifford and Willa Lubbers  
17 grandchildren  
1 great-grandchild

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

### NOTICE!!!

Effective February 1, 1986, the Zip Code for the POST OFFICE BOXES at the Eastown Station (Grand Rapids, MI) will be 49516.

This means that all correspondence to The Standard Bearer should be addressed to P.O. Box 6064, Grand Rapids, MI 49516.

H. Vander Wal  
Business Manager