



**A Reformed
Semi-Monthly
Magazine**

The Standard Bearer

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The Chastening of the Lord

Ye have not yet resisted unto blood, striving against sin. And ye have forgotten the exhortation which speaketh unto you as unto children, My son, despise not thou the chastening of the Lord, nor faint when thou art rebuked of him: For whom the Lord loveth he chasteneth, and scourgeth every son whom he receiveth.

Hebrews 12:4-6 (Please read on through verse 11)

Chastened of the Lord. This passage assumes that we are involved in a great struggle with sin and that in that struggle we are suffering for Jesus' sake. We are persecuted and mocked by the world, sorely tempted, and have to battle against besetting sins. Besides, we share in the afflictions of the present time. Some are sick, others are lonely or distressed, some mourn, and some are facing the prospect of death. All these are the daily experiences of the child of God.

However, the question is: What is our attitude towards all of

this? Do we recognize all these experiences as coming from the hand of our heavenly Father, as the chastening of the Lord? Or have we forgotten the exhortation which speaks to us as sons: "My sons, despise not the chastening of the Lord"? Perhaps we are becoming weary and faint. Perhaps we even complain of our lot. Perhaps we are not so submissive to the Lord's way with us. Does the question nag in your soul, Why? Why does it have to be this way? Why me? If that be the case with you, then this word from our text is especially for you. According to the context, we as Christians are in a race. In that race we must lay aside every weight, anything that would hinder us in the running. Especially must we lay aside the sin which so easily besets us. Thus we run with patience.

We may be encouraged by that great cloud of witnesses, those heroes of faith who have run before us. We run that race in the strength and by the grace of Jesus. We must run, always looking to Him, for He is the author and finisher of our faith. Jesus, having endured the cross, is exalted at the Father's right hand in glory. By His grace we are enabled to run.

Apparently, however, the Hebrew Christians were becoming faint in the race. They found the struggle wearisome and were losing courage. They did not have the stamina anymore to endure the suffering for Jesus' sake. In spite of the great cloud of witnesses and their wonderful testimony of faith's victory, they were discouraged and were inclined to draw back, compromise, and avoid the suffering for Jesus' sake. They needed the ad-

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monition of our text, for they had forgotten an important truth, that this was the chastening of the Lord. That is our inclination also.

The text describes that chastening with three terms. There is, first of all, the word *chastening*. This word refers to the entire training and education of children, the cultivation of mind and morals. It employs for this purpose both commands and admonitions, both reproof and discipline. It refers also to the correction of error or the curbing of sinful passion. Finally, it may mean instruction which aims at the increase of Christian virtue. All of these ideas are included in the text. The second word is also found in verse 5, when chastening is spoken of as being *rebuked*. That word means to convict, refute, or correct. It means to reprimand severely, chide, admonish, or reprove. Especially this latter is the idea of the text. That chastening is further described in verse 6 as *scourging*, which is whipping.

The idea is quite plain. That chastening of the Lord is all of the suffering that we experience in this life, the trying of our faith, the disappointments, the troubles, the sorrows. Through these means the Lord molds us and prepares us for glory. Many are the means which the Lord uses. He uses the persecution of the world, its reproach and scorn. All are under the direction and control of the Lord. At times He may also use sickness or the taking away of a loved one through death. Often the chastening is so hard as to be almost unbearable. Always it will be a struggle for us.

Therefore we are reminded in verse 11 that "no chastening for the present seemeth to be joyous, but grievous." Indeed, it is painful. And because it is painful it causes us grief. We do not laugh; rather, we sorrow and grieve. That is our lot here upon the earth. Someday when the Lord takes us to glory He shall wipe away all our tears.

Yes, we sorrow and weep, but not as those who have no hope.

This is what the Hebrews had forgotten. And we often forget this as well. In life we are in a battle, striving against sin. As God's children we must know that that is how our life is. Life is not a happy lark, but a fierce battle, face to face with sin. We must fight against Satan who goes about as a roaring lion seeking whom he may devour. In addition there is the world of unbelief with its temptations, pleasures, treasures, and persecution. Then there is the battle with our very own flesh, which is no little enemy. In this battle the Hebrews had "not yet resisted unto blood." They had not yet died a bloody martyr's death. Many of the cloud of witnesses had resisted unto a bloody death. Jesus had done so on the cross. But the Hebrew Christians had not, and neither have we.

Since they had forgotten that they were being chastened by the Lord, they despised that chastening. Because they regarded it only lightly they were fainting at the rebuke of the Lord, becoming spiritually exhausted. The result was despair and discouragement. No doubt they began complaining of the difficulty of their way and sought ways to avoid it. They had forgotten the encouraging words of Proverbs 3:11, 12: "My son, despise not thou the chastening of the Lord."

That is the danger for us now. Though we are in that fierce battle against sin, yet we have not resisted unto a bloody death. The danger is that we forget that encouraging exhortation which speaks to us as sons: "despise not thou the chastening of the Lord, nor faint when thou art rebuked of him." Why is it a danger to forget such an exhortation? Because we not only complain of the Lord's way with us and fail to appreciate the wonderful way in which the

Lord prepares us for glory, but we seek ways to avoid the suffering of the Lord's chastening. The only way to avoid that suffering is to stop fighting sin, to compromise, and to draw back. That is sin! And that is all the more serious in the light of the wonderful purpose which the Lord's chastening serves.

That purpose is twofold. The first purpose is stated in verse 10: "that we may be partakers of his holiness." God chastens us in order that we may share in His holiness. As God is holy, so must we be holy. Holiness is separation from all that is sinful, from all that belongs to the darkness and pollution of sin. God, the Holy One, is perfectly pure.

Holiness is total consecration to Him. It is to serve Him and love Him with all that we have and all that we are. God works that holiness in us by means of chastening us. All our life long we must be chastened, rebuked, scourged in order to partake more and more of His holiness. Even the holiest of God's saints have but a small beginning of that holiness. Perfection is not reached until we are in glory. That is the purpose of God's chastening us. More and more through chastening we learn to hate and flee sin, more and more we are dedicated to God.

The second purpose we find in verse 11: "it yieldeth the peaceable fruit of righteousness unto them which are exercised thereby." God puts us through the vigorous exercise of chastening in order that we may have the peaceable fruit of righteousness. Righteousness is to be right with God, to meet God's standard, and thus to be in harmony with the Lord according to His Word and law. Legally God declares us such through the merits of the crucified, risen Lord Jesus Christ. By the work of the Holy Spirit we are actually righteous in all our works and ways, now in principle and perfectly in glory. That is a peaceable fruit. In that

*God
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consciousness God's child has perfect peace, peace with God and peace with himself and peace with his fellow saints. Chastening is a wonderful blessing indeed.

That is all the more reason not to despise the chastening of the Lord. The writer drives home the point by a reference to our earthly fathers. They chastened us according to their own pleasure, that is, according to what seemed good to them. Even though that was often mixed with sin, we gave them reverence, honored and obeyed them. So much the more should we be in subjection to the Father of spirits who chastens us for our profit, to make us holy. The peaceable fruit of His chastening is righteousness for us. How much more then ought we be in subjection to Him. For when we despise the chastening of the Lord, when we become faint at His rebuke, when we complain of our lot, and when we compromise to avoid the suffering, then we are failing to subject ourselves to our spiritual Father. Then we walk in disobedience and rebel against the good and perfect and wise will of

God. We must heed this word. Always, no matter how hard, no matter how grievous and painful, no matter how dark and sorrowful the way, always our prayer must be, "Have thine own way, Lord, have thine own way." That is the purpose of the Lord's chastening.

Finally, chastening is proof of our sonship. The text clearly points out that God deals with us as His sons, His children. God loves His children, and whom He loves He chastens. He scourges every son whom He receives. If you are without chastisement, if this is not your experience in life, then you are bastards, illegitimate children (v. 8). However, if you are a child of God, then you are chastened, and that exactly because God loves you. Eternally He has chosen us to be in Christ Jesus. God sent His Son to suffer and die the death of the cross for us, His sons. Therefore, He chastens us. That chastening is proof that we are the children of God. That we are chastened means that God is working His work in us. He is saving us.

Wonderful chastening of the

Lord. Always it is out of God's love for us and never meant to punish us. Punishment comes out of God's wrath and is always for the ungodly. For us His children there is no more punishment, for the punishment that we deserved was borne by Jesus, and that is finished. God chastens us out of love in order to save us. He never allows us to wander continually in sin as we are so prone to do. Always He chastens and always He rebukes, and always He seeks us out to bring us back. And when our faith grows weak and we begin to faint, He chastens in order to strengthen us that we might be consecrated to Him in holiness and be assured in our hearts that we are His sons, righteous in Christ.

Let us receive that chastening of the Lord with thankfulness, for God is doing so in order to bring us into His arms of loving fellowship. Let us always pray: "Not my will, Father, but Thine. Let thy will be done that we may be holy as Thou art holy, and that we may have that peace which passeth all understanding." □

Editorial

Shall We Please God or (Certain Kinds of) People? or The Regulative Principle of Worship (2)

God Himself regulates the public worship of Himself by His church. He prescribes in His Word what this wor-

ship must consist of. He tells His church *how* to worship Him. He does not leave the "how" of worship to the wisdom and whim of the worshipping people. It is not

even the case that the church may worship God in whatever manner she sees fit, as long as nothing in her worship conflicts with God's will. This would mean that what-

ever is not forbidden is permitted. This is the position of the Anglican Church and of Lutheranism.

The Reformed stand on the manner of public worship is radically different: Whatever is not prescribed is forbidden.

This is the regulative principle of worship.

Biblical

The regulative principle is biblical. It is the truth about worship laid down in the second commandment of the law of God: "Thou shalt not make unto thee any graven image, or any likeness of any thing that is in heaven above, or that is in the earth beneath, or that is in the water under the earth: Thou shalt not bow down thyself to them, nor serve them ..." (Ex. 20: 4, 5a). The second commandment differs from the first in that the first prescribes the *object* of our worship—*whom* we are to worship—whereas the second prescribes the *manner* of our worship—*how* we are to worship.

When God forbids us to worship Him by means of images, He forbids us to worship Him in any way of our own devising whatever. Forbidding improper ways of worship, He teaches, positively, that His Israel must worship Him only in the way that He prescribes in Holy Scripture.

This teaching, which is the heart of the second commandment, is the regulative principle of worship.

Clearly implied in the second commandment are the two great characteristics of pure worship of the God of Israel/church. The first is that right, pure worship is spiritual. The condemnation of images has its source in the spirituality of the being of God. As spirit, God requires spiritual worship.

How the new, contemporary, progressive worship conflicts with this characteristic of pure worship! It is nothing but a plethora of outward ceremonies and rituals.

The second characteristic of

right worship implied by the second commandment is that it is a service of the Word: the Word *read*; the Word *preached*; the Word *sung*; the Word *prayed*; and the Word *signified and sealed*. The Heidelberg Catechism teaches this in Question 98. Explaining the second commandment, the Catechism declares that God will have His people taught, and thus Himself worshiped, "not by dumb images, but *by the lively preaching of His Word*."

How the new worship fights against this characteristic of pure worship! The effect of every form of contemporary worship, if it is not the avowed purpose, is to marginalize the Word, to give less and less time and prominence to the reading and preaching of the Word, and, finally, to drive the Word out of the service altogether. It is not unheard of by this time, in Reformed and Presbyterian churches, that the service on Sunday evening is totally devoid of the preaching of the Word. There is not even the perfunctory nod toward preaching of the customary 10 or 15-minute homily. Reformed theologians, including reputedly conservative Reformed theologians, are now openly defending worship services in which the preaching of the Word has no place.

Confessional

There can be no challenge by Reformed persons to the interpretation of the second commandment as laying down the regulative principle of worship. For this is the explanation by the Reformed confessions. For those whose creeds are the "Three Forms of Unity," Question 96 of the Heidelberg Catechism is authoritative. To the question, "What does God require in the second commandment?" the Catechism answers: "That we in no wise represent God by images, *nor worship Him in any other way than He has commanded in His Word*."

Stated positively, the Catechism here teaches that we must

worship God only in the way that He has commanded in His Word. And this for the Catechism is the requirement of the second commandment.

But also the Belgic Confession teaches that our worship is strictly controlled by the will of Christ in Scripture. Although the subject is the government of the church by the elders, the Confession declares: "We reject all human inventions and all laws *which man would introduce into the worship of God*, thereby to bind and compel the conscience in any manner whatever" (Art. 32).

The Westminster Confession of Faith binds the regulative principle on all Presbyterians:

The acceptable way of worshipping the true God is instituted by Himself, and so limited by His own revealed will, that He may not be worshipped according to the imaginations and devices of men ... *or any other way not prescribed in the Holy Scripture* (21.1).

Accepting and practicing the regulative principle is confessional for Reformed and Presbyterian churches and people. Rejection of the regulative principle is attack upon the confessions. For an officebearer, this is transgression of his sacred vow to maintain and defend the confessions.

Traditional

Recognition and spirited defense of the regulative principle have solid support in the Reformed tradition. I choose three worthy representatives. None was a Puritan or a Scottish Presbyterian. (This is not to say that a Scottish Presbyterian would not be a worthy representative of the tradition, only that he would not speak so convincingly to the readers of this magazine.)

In his commentary on the Heidelberg Catechism, Zacharias Ursinus explains the second commandment as requiring "such worship ... as is pleasing to Him, and not such worship as that which is

according to the imagination and device of man." "A rule (is) given," Ursinus continues, "that we sacredly and conscientiously keep ourselves within the bounds which God has prescribed, and that we do not add anything to that worship which has been divinely instituted, or corrupt it in any part, even the most unimportant."

And then: "To worship God truly is to worship Him in the manner which He Himself has prescribed in His Word" (Z. Ursinus, *Commentary on the Heidelberg Catechism*, Eerdmans, 1956, p. 517; emphasis added).

About a hundred years later, the renowned Gijsbert Voetius, delegate to the Synod of Dordt and champion of the Reformed faith, taught the same. Voetius wrote a commentary on the Heidelberg Catechism in question and answer form. Treating the Heidelberg Catechism's explanation of the second commandment, Voetius asked when it happens that men worship in violation of the second commandment. Voetius' answer was:

Whenever one wills to honor and serve (God) by means of images, or whenever one wills to worship Him in such a manner as directly conflicts with God's Word or that is apart from God's Word, founded on the institutions of man, or on our own whims and fancies, as takes place under that of the papacy by means of its ceremonies and human traditions.

Voetius then asks, "What is here [in the second commandment] commanded us?" His answer is: "That we must worship God according to the regulation of His Word." To the question, whether we may use such ceremonies as Rome has, Voetius answers no, because "all such ceremonies are self-willed and arbitrary worship, contrary to Matthew 15:9, Galatians 1:8, and Colossians 2:18." These are the texts to which the Reformed tradition has always appealed in support of the regulative principle.

Matthew 15:9 is Jesus' warning, "But in vain they do worship me, teaching for doctrines the commandments of men." (See G. Voetius, *Voetius' Catechisatie over den Heidelbergschen Catechismus*, Gebroeders Hoge, 1891, pp. 783, 797; emphasis added.)

In their defense of the regulative principle, both Ursinus and Voetius show themselves faithful disciples of John Calvin, who is the third representative of the Reformed tradition.

I marvel at the audacity, or ignorance, of the Reformed theologians and ministers today who dismiss the regulative principle and open up Reformed worship to the self-willed, arbitrary, and fanciful ceremonies that characterize progressive worship. Either they do not know, or do not care, that Calvin taught the regulative principle. Either they do not know, or do not care, that, because he saw that rejection of the regulative principle was in large part the cause of Roman Catholic superstition and idolatry, Calvin urged the regulative principle as essential to right, Reformed religion.

Calvin's commentaries on the prophets are full of his impassioned warnings to the Reformation churches to practice and uphold the regulative principle of worship. Commenting on Amos 5:26, Calvin writes:

We ought not to bring any thing of our own when we worship God, but we ought to depend always on the Word of His mouth, and to obey what He has commanded.... When men dare to do this or that without God's command, it is nothing else but abomination before Him.

Explaining Isaiah 57:6, Calvin says:

The Jews chose their own method of worshipping God, and turned aside from the rule which He had laid down in His Law; and consequently ... every kind of worship

which they followed by their own choice was abominable and wicked; for in religion and in the worship of God it is only to the voice of God that we ought to listen.

To quote no more, I refer to the commentary that Calvin was working on at his death, the Ezekiel commentary. This is Calvin's comment on Ezekiel 20:28:

Not only does God wish worship to be offered to Himself alone, but that it should be without any dependence on human will: He wishes the law to be the single rule of true worship; and thus He rejects all fictitious rites.... *It is in (God's) power to determine how He ought to be worshipped*; and when men claim this power to themselves, it is like ascending to the very throne of God (emphasis added).

The regulative principle of worship is Reformed, confessional, and biblical. We may and must worship God *only* as He prescribes in His Word. This worship is accepted by Him. Traditional Reformed worship is scorned by the "worship leaders" and shunned by the worshipping multitudes today. But one thing may be said in its favor, and we are bold by the grace of God to say it: It pleases God.

Only this worship pleases God.

Progressive worship is praised to the skies today, and the people throng the courts of religious entertainment where actors act, dialogists dialogue, musicians make music, movie makers show movies, dancers dance, and the congregation sings mindless fundamentalist ditties and rank Arminian heresies. But one thing must be said against it, and we are bold by the grace of God to say it: It displeases God.

It is image worship. □

— DJE

(to be continued)

■ Baptism by Women

In the article, "Invalid Baptism by Women," in the *Standard Bearer* of 1 March 2000 you take a position that seems to go beyond what the Bible by necessary consequence would demand. With you, I wholeheartedly enjoin that for baptism the application of water in the name of the triune God is required, as well as that women are not lawfully called to be ministers. It must be admitted that WCF, ch. 28.2; Second Helvetic Confession, ch. 20; the Bremen Consensus; and the Scottish Confession of Faith maintain that a sacrament is only valid when performed by a lawfully called minister. And although, for decency and good order, it is indeed commendable that, in normal circumstances, sacraments are performed by those lawfully called, yet for all these Reformed confessions I still sense a reprehensible, pietistic leviticalism in this last validity restriction.

The first reason is that God's hand is never too short. God is able to bestow His grace in spite of what we mess up. We may even mean something for evil, but God intends it for good. A baptism in the triune God, in spite of all the misguided human understandings and actions, is still an act of God and will be of priceless comfort to the recipient who has accepted it in faith.

The second reason is that making a baptism dependent on the qualifications of a minister implies an exclusivistic, mediatorial, biblically unacceptable position of the minister. This notion, which is held among many of the Reformed, is brought about by unnecessarily limiting the interpretation of the term "preacher" in Romans 10:14, 15 to a homilete rather than including any believer who communicates the Word of peace and grace in whatever way. But, although the

offices in the church should never be belittled, undermined, or relativized, leadership in the Bible is not based on exclusivism (qualification) but on excellence (worthiness). The deacons appointed in Acts 6 are sought for their good reputation and being full of the Holy Spirit and wisdom (Acts 6:3). Members of the body of Christ are to use their gifts in proportion to their faith (Rom. 12:6-8). Elders who rule well are to be counted worthy of double honour (1 Tim. 5:17). If anyone speaks, let him speak as the oracles of God (1 Pet. 4:10-11). God may use those whom He has appointed to certain positions but, especially if they think too highly of themselves, God will confound them by using others in their stead. Barak was humbled by Deborah and Jael. God's prophets may be humbled by a lying spirit which He put in their mouths. Again, God's hand is never too short. Men may judge a particular baptism invalid, but God may scorn that depreciation.

The third reason is that it is questionable whether the Bible indeed requires that only lawfully called ministers administrate baptisms. I like to quote what I just read in the most recent *Messiah's Mandate*, not to set you up against its author but to consider the arguments.

The rule of the Directory for the Publick Worship of God of the Westminster Assembly is that baptism must be performed by a minister. Yet this does not comport with Scripture. Thus the rule's origin is in man, i.e., in a human tradition. The Old Testament antecedent, circumcision, did not require the rite to be performed by someone specifically called. Zipporah's circumcision of her and Moses' son was valid. God Himself approved of it and accepted it (Ex. 4:25, 26). The same

unconcern with administrators is true in the New Testament. Kistemaker, commenting on the baptism of Cornelius' household in Acts 10:48, is unafraid to accept the obvious: "Peter, as the Greek text implies, orders the ... Jewish Christians to baptize the Gentile converts." These Jewish Christians were simply "some of the brothers" (Acts 10:23) — the common term — not "some other ministers." The apostle apparently regarded these ordinary, male Jewish Christians as covenantally competent to perform the rite of baptism. "The apostles, then, place emphasis not on themselves but on the name of Jesus." Barnes agrees, explaining that "it seems not to have been the practice of the apostles themselves to baptize very extensively." J.A. Alexander is forceful on this point: "It can scarcely be mere fortuitous coincidence, that Peter, Paul, and Christ Himself, should all have left this rite to be administered by others. 'Jesus Himself baptized not, but His disciples' (John 4:2). 'I thank God that I baptized none of you, save Crispus, etc.' (1 Cor. 1:14). 'Christ sent me not to baptize, but to preach the gospel' (1 Cor. 1:17). Baptisms were performed under the apostles' supervision, but not necessarily by their hands."

The fourth reason is that infant baptism (IB) and adult baptism (AB) are connected with profession of faith (PF). Admittedly, IB and AB are sacraments and PF is not. But the questions in the forms (PF 1-4, and AB 1-5) cannot be seen apart from each other. PF 1 cannot be affirmed without agreement with AB 1+4 and is a faithful response to IB 2+3. PF 2 cannot be affirmed without agreement with AB 2+3 and accepts IB 1. PF 3+4 cannot be affirmed without agreement with AB 5. Would you consider the PF in a former church of someone, who would seek mem-

bership in the PRC, "invalid" if his baptism was "invalid"? Should not the PF overrule the "invalidity" of baptism, since PF is a consummation of the intent of baptism, expressed specifically in PF 2: "Do you openly accept God's promise, which has been signified and sealed unto you in your baptism"?

Through the *Standard Bearer* I have learned and do appreciate your biblical stand, e.g., on marriage and divorce, for which you are mocked, unjustly, by other churches. I find this issue, baptism by women, important enough to ask you to look more closely to the spirit of baptism and PF than to the letter, for I would not want to see you mocked for anabaptism. I would suggest that, although feminine ministers are a heretical phenomenon, baptisms performed by them are still valid.

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Response:

Your letter objecting to my editorial, that the baptism by women ministers is invalid, raises issues that are of uncommon importance to the Reformed church today. Therefore, I respond at greater length than I like to do in the letters column.

It goes without saying that I appreciate your interest in our magazine and am thankful for your encouraging words concerning our biblical stand and your profit from our writing. Your letter is a careful, thoughtful contribution to the subject under discussion.

Nevertheless, the positions you advance are erroneous.

First, the Reformed confessions and church order are binding upon Reformed Christians. It is not permitted to any member of a Reformed church to criticize a teaching of the confessions of his church as "reprehensible, pietistic leviticalism." I remind you that, in addition to the creeds you mention in your opening paragraph, I

appealed also to the Belgic Confession as teaching that baptism by women is invalid.

Second, you carry the error of baptism by women a step further. The churches that lately ordain women yet acknowledge the necessity of ordination for preaching and administering the sacraments. But you question whether a lawful call by the instituted church is necessary for preaching and baptizing, as, evidently, does the author of the article in *Messiah's Mandate* that you quote. To your mind, the preacher in Romans 10:14 is not precisely and exclusively the man who is called to the office of the ministry by the church (even though the next verse insists on his being "sent"!). Rather, he is "any believer who communicates the Word of peace and grace in whatever way." Also, you challenge the position that "the Bible indeed requires that only lawfully called ministers administrate baptisms."

Article 30 of the Belgic Confession teaches that preaching the Word of God and administering the sacraments are the work of "ministers, or pastors." And Article 31 of this Reformed confession teaches that this work is an "office," to which the minister is chosen "by a lawful election by the church." Article 31 goes on to identify this "lawful election by the church" with God's "calling" of the minister.

Article 3 of the Church Order of Dordt forbids anyone "to enter upon the ministry of the Word and sacraments without having been lawfully called thereunto." Preaching and the administration of the sacraments belong to office in the church. One occupies and exercises this office only by the lawful call.

What is taught about office in the church in Articles 30 and 31 of the Belgic Confession and in Article 3 of the Church Order of Dordt may not be questioned, much less set aside, in the Reformed churches. One who is de-

termined to press an objection against this teaching of the confessions must present a formal overture to synod ("gravamen").

Third, you mistake my editorial when you suppose that it intends to make "baptism dependent on the qualifications of a minister." I expressly deny that the validity of baptism at all depends on the doctrinal soundness or personal holiness of the baptizing minister. But I contend that a woman cannot be lawfully called to the office of the ministry inasmuch as Christ, the King of the church, has forbidden the church to call women to the office of minister of the Word, or "bishop." Since one of the three requirements for valid baptism is that it be administered by someone who has been lawfully called, baptisms by women are invalid.

Baptisms by women are not invalid because the female minister is unqualified. But baptisms by women are invalid because the female who baptizes is not, and cannot be, a minister.

Fourth, "profession of faith," or as we prefer, "*confession of faith*," cannot render an invalid baptism valid. If a person baptized by a woman someday seeks admission as an adult into a Protestant Reformed congregation, the church should baptize the individual upon hearing his public confession of faith on that occasion. I only note that the form of public confession of faith used in the Protestant Reformed Churches does not include any such question as the one you quote: "Do you openly accept God's promise?" etc.

Fifth, your fear that for denying the validity of baptism by women I may be charged with Anabaptism is completely unfounded. Surely, staunch defense of the lawful call and, thus, of office in the church is Reformed. It was the Anabaptists who tended to reject the special offices in the church and who in this way broke down the instituted church. Gifts, not the lawful call, were for them

the requirement for preaching and administering the sacraments. In his fine study, *Calvin and the Anabaptist Radicals* (Eerdmans, 1981), Willem Balke wrote:

The divergence between Calvin and the Anabaptists becomes obvious also in their respective concepts of office. The Anabaptists had no elaborate theology of office. At first they accepted itinerant preachers or "messengers." In their congregations they accepted one prominent person as a leader.

In contrast, Balke added, "all who are acquainted with Calvin's theology of the 'office of pastor' will realize how highly he regarded the faithful exercise of this office in the midst of the local church" (pp. 235, 236).

According to Calvin, Christ has instituted the office of the ministry, or "office of pastors," to be of "perpetual duration" in the church (*Institutes*, 4.3.1-6). Such is the importance of the office of the ministry that "whoever, therefore, studies to abolish [it] ... or disparages it as of minor importance, plots the devastation, or rather the ruin and destruction, of the Church" (*Institutes*, 4.3.2; Beveridge translation). "The two principal parts of the office of pastors are to preach the Gospel and administer the sacraments" (*Institutes*, 4.3.6). Since "no one should assume a public office in the Church without a call," those who "push themselves forward to teach or rule" (and, we may add, to baptize) in the church, without a call, do so "presumptuously." They show themselves "restless and turbulent men" (*Institutes*, 4.3.10).

Calvin devotes the last three sections of chapter 15 of book 4 of the *Institutes* to the argument that, since preaching and administration of the sacraments belong to the office of the minister, baptizing by private individuals, particularly women, is forbidden.

It is here also pertinent to observe,

that it is improper for private individuals to take upon themselves the administration of baptism; for it, as well as the dispensation of the Supper, is part of the ministerial office. For Christ did not give command to any men or women whatever to baptize, but to those whom he had appointed apostles.

Calvin appeals to Augustine, Tertullian, and Epiphanius in support of the position that "a woman is not permitted to speak in the Church, nor yet to teach, or baptize, or offer, that she may not claim to herself any office of the man." To the response that the church fathers only condemned women's baptizing as a regular thing, not as "an extraordinary remedy used under the pressure of extreme necessity," that is, when a baby seemed about to die at birth, Calvin replies: "Since he declares it mockery to allow women to baptize, and makes no exception, it is sufficiently plain that the corruption is condemned as inexcusable on any pretext."

You bring to my attention that the author of an article in *Messiah's Mandate* appeals to Zipporah's circumcision of her son in support of his contention that valid baptism can be administered by others in the church besides the minister.

Listen to Calvin on the appeal to Zipporah in defense of baptism by any other than the ordained minister. In the context of his insistence that baptism belongs strictly to the office of the ministry, to which only some are called by the church, Calvin writes:

The example of Zipporah (Exod. 4:25) is irrelevantly quoted. Because the angel of God was appeased after she took a stone and circumcised her son, it is erroneously inferred that her act was approved by God. Were it so, we must say that God was pleased with a worship which Gentiles brought from Assyria, and set up in Samaria. But other valid reasons prove, that what a foolish woman did is ignorantly drawn

into a precedent.... The last thing intended by Zipporah was to perform a service to God.... Her presumption is inexcusable in this, in circumcising her son while her husband is present, and that husband not a mere private individual, but Moses, the chief prophet of God, than whom no greater ever arose in Israel. This was no more allowable in her, than it would be for women in the present day under the eye of a bishop (*Institutes*, 4.15.20-22).

Summing up, the preaching of the Word and the administration of the sacraments, which are Christ's means of His grace in the church, belong strictly to the office of the ministry. To this ministry, qualified and trained men are called by Christ both by an internal call and by lawful election by the church. Inasmuch as Christ has clearly made known His will in Scripture that women are prohibited from ruling office in the church, women cannot be lawfully called to the office of the ministry. And since administration by one lawfully called is one of the requisites of valid baptism, baptisms by women are invalid in the church of Christ.

— Ed.

■ Problems with Women Ministers

Holy Scripture dictates that women in the office of minister of the gospel is wrong. No doubt about it. There can also be no doubt that as unlawfully called officebearers, women ministers are conducting invalid baptisms. One can surely accept the fact that this will become problematic for PRC consistories in years to come.

Would it be correct to extrapolate that unlawfully called and ordained ministers would also be conducting invalid marriages? If so, now what?

How about the decisions made by a consistory with women ministers and elders? Is a public confession of faith valid if it is heard

and accepted by women ministers and elders?

What about classical and synodical decisions made by bodies that include unlawfully ordained officebearers?

Recognizing that baptism is a sacrament while marriage is not may help in dealing with some situations. But it stands to reason that women preachers would be functioning illegally in all aspects of the office they hold.

Your editorial ("Invalid Baptism by Women," *Standard Bearer*, March 1, 2000) surely generated some discussion. Be assured that your work as an unwavering apologist for the Reformed faith is appreciated.

Eric J. Ophoff, Sr.
South Holland, IL

■ Incomplete Response

I am commenting on your March 1, 2000 *Standard Bearer* response to a letter from an Anglican "Presbyter." For the most part I enjoyed your response. However, there is one part of his letter that seems to have escaped your attention. That is the Anglican's statement, "in fact, good hymnology is the church-catholic (Col. 3:16)." He seems to suggest that Colossians 3:16 is a mandate for the hymns of Watts and C. Wesley.

First, I would like to suggest that our brother Anglican has a wrong interpretation of Colossians 3:16. He ought to be instructed that in the Septuagint (Greek translation) that the apostle Paul used, the headings over the different Psalms in their titles were designated "*Psalmos*" (a Psalm), others, "*ode*" (a song), and others, "*alleluia*." This last is a word borrowed from the Hebrew, and when used as a noun in the Greek language is equivalent to "*hymnos*" (a hymn). Paul, under the influence of the Holy Spirit, is basically commanding the New Testament church catholic to continue to have the Psalms as the song book of the

New Testament church catholic. The primitive New Testament church understood this, and uninspired compositions did not appear until after AD 350.

Our Anglican brother ought not only to be aware of the hymns of Watts and Wesley, he should also be aware of the erroneous teachings which influence their songs. Dr. Watts in particular wrote many beautiful hymns which fired up the emotions. He also wrote 150 imitation Psalms, which hundreds of Presbyterian churches in the U.S. adopted and subsequently left inspired Psalmody. In those 150 imitation Psalms, Dr. Watts left out all the imprecations (admonitions, warnings, and judgments) to the apostate church that were in the inspired Psalmody. He did this because, in Dr. Watts' own words, "I wanted to try and make David talk like a Christian." Can you imagine that under the influence of the Holy Spirit David did not speak like a Christian? Dr. Watts' hymns portrayed the same sentiment. He portrayed a God of love but not a God of judgment, not a complete God!

Now look at the admonition of Paul in Colossians 3:16, who under the influence of the Holy Spirit wrote, "Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly in all wisdom" (would our Anglican brother believe this to be inspired Psalmody or uninspired composition of Watts and Wesley?); "teaching and admonishing one another" (in Psalmody, or words of Watts and Wesley?); "in Psalms and hymns and spiritual songs" (all Psalms!); "singing with grace in your hearts to the Lord."

I rest my case in the interest of God's glory.

John VanBaren
Grandville, MI

■ A 900-Pound Gorilla

A hearty "Amen" to the editorial on Hillsdale ("The Hillsdale Scandal," *Standard Bearer*,

March 15, 2000).

It strikes me that divorce and Sabbath-breaking are like two 900-pound gorillas in the parlor. Everyone sees them, but no one says anything about them. These sins are rampant in the "Christian" population. Clever conservative fund-raisers like D.J. Kennedy fulminate about the bad things that unbelievers do ... but within the "Christian" camp? Divorce? Sabbath-breaking (including the obsession with NFL football)? Participation in antinomian worship? Not a peep!

Therefore, your comments on divorce and remarriage are appreciated.

J.M. Rodgers
California

■ Friends in Other Churches

With great pleasure, we read your editorial, "A Time to Laugh, A Time to Dance" (*Standard Bearer*, Feb. 15, 2000). Our son and daughter are looking forward to attending this year's Protestant Reformed Young People's Convention. To tell the truth, we were secretly feeling a little insecure regarding their attendance since the convention is part of the 75th anniversary celebration of the PRC. Perhaps, our children would not quite fit in. Tears fell from our eyes and joy filled our hearts when we read your last paragraphs inviting those of us who are "friends" in other churches, one with you in the truths of the sovereignty of God.

Our family took time at our dinner table to read your article together, so that our children will be confident of their welcome this June.

Once again the Lord brought His desires to your mind to write that editorial.

Henry and Bonnie Boyd
Belhaven, NC

■ "Whom Say Men That I, the Son of Man, Am?"

One could hardly avoid the extensive coverage of the visit of Pope John Paul II to the Holy Land. Television presented its live reports. Newspapers provided almost minute-by-minute accounts of his activities. Many admired his skillful attempts to reconcile those of different religions.

There was one purpose that his visit to the Holy Land served. The question was raised again: Who is Jesus who was born, suffered, died there and arose again? It was *Newsweek*, March 27, 2000, that presented the question in its cover story. The article points out that most major world religions recognize Jesus. It reflects first on the position of Judaism. It recounts some of the history of the conflict between Judaism and Christianity. Its attitude is summarized thus:

That Jesus was a Jew would seem to be self-evident from Gospels. But before the first Christian century was out, faith in Jesus as universal Lord and Savior eclipsed his early identity as a Jewish prophet and wonder worker. For long stretches of Western history, Jesus was pictured as a Greek, a Roman, a Dutchman—even, in the Germany of the 1930s, as a blond and burly Aryan made in the image of Nazi anti-Semitism. But for most of Jewish history as well, Jesus was also a deracinated figure: he was *the* apostate, whose name a pious Jew should never utter.

(But the article concludes:) Today, the Jewishness of Jesus is no longer a question among scholars. That much of what he taught can be found in the Jewish Scriptures is widely accepted by Christian as

well as Jewish students of the Bible. At some seminaries, like Hebrew Union, a course in the New Testament is now required of rabbinical candidates. Outside scholarly circles, there is less focus on Jesus, and most Jews will never read the Christian Bible. And, of course, Jews do not accept the Christ of faith. "They see Jesus as an admirable Jew," says theologian John Cobb, "but they don't believe that any Jew could be God."

Another religion, Islam, also recognizes Jesus. He is recognized in their "bible," the Qur'an. *Newsweek* presents the following summary of their teachings concerning the Christ:

At the onset of Ramadan last year, Vatican officials sent greetings to the world's Muslims, inviting them to reflect on Jesus as "a model and permanent message for humanity." But for Muslims, the Prophet Muhammad is the perfect model for humankind and in the Qur'an (in Arabic only), they believe, the very Word of God dwells among us. Even so, Muslims recognize Jesus as a great prophet and revere him as Isa ibn Maryam—Jesus, the son of Mary, the only woman mentioned by name in the Qur'an. At a time when many Christians deny Jesus' birth to a virgin, Muslims find the story in the Qur'an and affirm that it is true. "It's a very strange situation, where Muslims are defending the miraculous birth of Jesus against Western deniers," says Seyyed Hossein Nasr, professor of Islamic studies at George Washington University. "Many Westerners also do not believe that Jesus ascended into heaven. Muslims do." Indeed, many Muslims see themselves as Christ's true followers.

What Muslims believe about Jesus comes from the Qur'an—not the New Testament, which they consider tainted by human error. They also draw upon their own

oral traditions, called *hadith*, and on experts' commentaries. In these sources, Jesus is born of Mary under a palm tree by a direct act of God. From the cradle, the infant Jesus announces that he is God's prophet, though not God's son, since Allah is "above having a son" according to the Qur'an.

Nonetheless, the Muslim Jesus enjoys unique spiritual prerogatives that other prophets, including Muhammad, lack. Only Jesus, and his mother were born untouched by Satan. Even Muhammad had to be purified by angels before receiving prophethood. Again, in the Qur'an Muhammad is not presented as a miracle worker, but Jesus miraculously heals the blind, cures lepers and "brings forth the dead by [Allah's] leave." In this way Jesus manifests himself as the Messiah, or "the anointed one." Muslims are not supposed to pray to anyone but Allah. But in popular devotions many ask Jesus or Mary or John the Baptist for favors. (According to one recent estimate, visions of Jesus or Mary have occurred some 70 times in Muslim countries since 1985.)

Although Muhammad supersedes Jesus as the last and greatest of the prophets, he still must die. But in the Qur'an, Jesus does not die, nor is he resurrected. Muslims believe that Jesus asked God to save him from crucifixion, as the Gospels record, and that God answered his prayer by taking him directly up to heaven. "God would not allow one of his prophets to be killed," says Martin Palmer, director of the International Consultancy on Religion, Education and Culture in Manchester, England. "If Jesus had been crucified, it would have meant that God had failed his prophet."

When the end of the world approaches, Muslims believe that Jesus will descend to defeat the antichrist—and, incidentally, to set the record straight. His presence will prove the Crucifixion

was a myth and eventually he will die a natural death. "Jesus will return as a Muslim," says Nasr, "in the sense that he will unite all believers in total submission to the one God."

What does Hinduism say?

As Gandhi was, many Hindus are drawn to the figure of Jesus by his compassion and nonviolence — virtues taught in their own sacred Scriptures. But also like Gandhi, Hindus find the notion of a single god unnecessarily restrictive. In their perspective, all human beings are sons of God with the innate ability to become divine themselves. Those Hindus who read the Gospels are drawn to the passage in John in which Jesus proclaims that "the Father and I are one." This confirms the basic Hindu belief that everyone is capable through rigorous spiritual practice of realizing his or her own universal "god-consciousness." The great modern Hindu saint Ramakrishna recorded that he meditated on a picture of the Madonna with child and was transported into a state of *samadhi*, a consciousness in which the divine is all that really exists. For that kind of spiritual experience, appeal to any god will do. "Christ-consciousness, God-consciousness, Krishna-consciousness, Buddha-consciousness—it's all the same thing," says Deepak Chopra, an Indian popularizer of Hindu philosophy for New Age Westerners. "Rather than 'love thy neighbor,' this consciousness says, 'You and I are the same beings.'"

And what about Buddhism?

The life stories of Jesus and the Buddha are strikingly similar. Both are conceived without sexual intercourse and born to chaste women. Both leave home for the wilderness where each is tempted by a Satan figure. Both return enlightened, work miracles and challenge the religious establishment by their teachings. Both attract disciples and both are betrayed by one of them. Both preach com-

passion, unselfishness and altruism and each creates a movement that bears the founder's name. Thich Nhat Hanh, a Vietnamese Zen Buddhist monk with a large Western following, sees Jesus and Buddha as "brothers" who taught that the highest form of human understanding is "universal love." But there is at least one unbridgeable difference: a Christian can never become Christ, while the aim of every serious Buddhist is to achieve Buddhahood himself.

After examining the various answers given to the question, "Whom do men say that Jesus is?", the article comes to the remarkable conclusion:

Clearly, the cross is what separates the Christ of Christianity from every other Jesus. In Judaism there is no precedent for a Messiah who dies, much less as a criminal as Jesus did. In Islam, the story of Jesus' death is rejected as an affront to Allah himself. Hindus can accept only a Jesus who passes into peaceful *samadhi*, a yogi who escapes the degradation of death. The figure of the crucified Christ, says Buddhist Thich Nhat Hanh, "is a very painful image to me. It does not contain joy or peace, and this does not do justice to Jesus." There is, in short, no room in other religions for a Christ who experiences the full burden of mortal existence—and hence there is no reason to believe in him as the divine Son whom the Father resurrects from the dead.

Even so, there are lessons all believers can savor by observing Jesus in the mirrors of Jews and Muslims, Hindus and Buddhists. That the image of a benign Jesus has universal appeal should come as no surprise. That most of the world cannot accept the Jesus of the Cross should not surprise, either. Thus the idea that Jesus can serve as a bridge uniting the world's religions is inviting but may be ultimately impossible. A mystery to Christians themselves, Jesus remains what he has always been, a sign of contradiction.

Several remarkable facts stand out. First, most religions are ready to recognize and embrace Jesus, though true Christians do not reciprocate. They cannot acknowledge that any of the "prophets" of other religions present some aspects of truth. Nor can they acknowledge that these represent the true God.

Secondly, one sees the workings of Satan in all of this too. Each of these "religions" will present Jesus in its own way and with its own unique twist. It is deceptive: Which religion truly presents the real Jesus? Satan would deliberately confuse people. In the wilderness temptations, Satan sought to persuade Jesus that if He listened to Satan, He would rule the kingdoms of the earth—without crucifixion. Though Christ rejected these temptations, Satan now will present the Christ as though in fact He did what Satan presented. He has become the good teacher, honored by most religions for His Word and miracles. Satan seems to understand that he cannot deny the existence of Jesus—but he can portray Him contrary to the testimony of Scripture. And many will not know what to believe.

Thirdly, and most importantly, the article emphasizes what is the real truth: only the Jesus of the Bible is presented as the divine Son of God, second person of the Trinity, who must suffer and die on the cross to pay for the sins of His people. All other religions reject that. Only the faithful Christian confesses and rejoices in that fact. There can be no synthesis of religions, no agreement concerning the Christ. Christ asked His disciples, "But whom say ye that I am?" Peter's answer resounds through the ages and from the lips of every faithful Christian, "Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God." And when, shortly after, Christ tells of impending suffering, death, and resurrection, Peter denounced the very thought. Then it was that Christ said to Peter, "Get thee be-

hind me, Satan. Thou art an offence unto me. Thou savorest not the things that be of God but those that be of men." That judgment of Christ remains emphatically true still today.

■ Prayer via Internet?

Faithful readers in Colorado continue to provide interesting articles from Denver newspapers. Therefore, although I no longer get those newspapers, the articles of interest still appear in this column.

One of interest and concern appeared in the *Rocky Mountain News*, March 13, 2000. The article speaks of "Tapping into God—Web sites put prayers into space, e-mail God and split theologians."

Time was when those who wanted to communicate with a higher power clasped their hands, perhaps kneeling in a hallowed sanctuary, and fervently appealed for divine aid.

Now they can sit at their computer screens, tap out keyboard prayers, and, in at least some cases, genuinely feel they are reaching their Maker online.

...Today, there are e-mail addresses for "God," and many home pages devoted to God. Also, several Web sites claim they can link the computer user di-

rectly to God. Sometimes, this God even responds.

"Simply click on the PRAY button and transmit your prayer to the only known location of GOD," says one of the most audacious Web sites....

...Newprayer.com makes an even bolder claim—that it can send prayers via a radio transmitter to God's last known location, a star cluster called M13 believed to be one of the oldest in the universe.

...Crandall Stone, 50, a Cambridge, Massachusetts Engineer and freelance consultant, set up the site last winter after a night of sipping brandy and philosophizing with friends in Vermont. The conversation turned to Big Bang theories of creation, and someone suggested that if everything was in place at the time of the explosion, then God must have been there, too.

"It's the one place where we could be sure He was," Stone said. "Then we thought that if we could find that location and had a radio transmitter, we could send a message to God."

After consulting with NASA scientists, the friends settled on M13 as the likely location. They chipped in about \$20,000, and built a radio-wave-transmitting Web site.

The absurdity of this all should be obvious. Again, several things become clear. The Internet and e-mail are inventions which can be used mightily to spread the Word and contact many peoples in many nations. The Internet has been used mightily by Satan to send out all manner of vile corruptions which can flow into the home of the Christian as well.

But Satan would duplicate the "religious." Not only are false religions presented also via the Internet, but distorted and confusing presentations of "Christianity" appear. All of this is surely designed to confuse and deceive. Scripture speaks of our approach unto God. We need no intermediaries to approach to God, nor do we need modern inventions to convey "prayers" to Him. The everywhere-present God hears the prayers of His people whether uttered in the closet or in the unity of the saints in His house of prayer. But, contact God via the Internet? This makes of prayer to God a matter of joke. Or, worse, it makes one think of God as limited, bound by space, and unhearing unless aided by man's inventions. It is further reflection of the sin of this age in which we live. □

When Thou Sittest in Thine House

Rev. Wilbur Bruinsma

The Covenant of Marriage

2. Courtship Within the Covenant (cont.)

Where to Go on a Date

In this article we are going to consider where to take a young woman on a date.

What? Is this guy really going to tell us where we may or may

not go on a date? That is a little beyond his realm of authority, is it not? Not even the Bible dictates to young men where they may or may not take their girl on a date! If God Himself does not do this, how

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presumptuous, then, for any person to dictate to young people where they may go on a date!

I must confess that when speaking of this important aspect of dating we do enter the whole area of Christian liberty. This is not to say that the Bible has nothing to say about where we may *not* go on a date. It certainly does! Neither is this to say that parents do not have the authority to establish their own set of rules in this area. They have the right, not only, but the calling to regulate and dictate this part of the dating life of their children. Parents who allow their children to go out on a date with no knowledge of where they are going are not taking their own responsibility before God very seriously. At the same time, we also recognize that there are no patent rules that Scripture gives in this area of life. God leaves it to the wisdom of godly parents and to the sanctified good sense of their believing children.

Although this is true, the Scripture once again does set forth general principles and guidelines that govern every aspect of life, including where we go when dating. We are going to take a look at a couple of these principles and discover how they guide us into sanctified dating. Then we will try to apply these practically in order that young men might determine where they should take a girl on a date.

The first principle is one we have emphasized in all our articles on dating: the purpose of dating is to search out a life's mate. What does this have to do with where we go on a date? Everything, really! If we were to view dating, as the vast majority do today, as recreational, then the purpose of dating is simply to go out and have fun with a member of the opposite sex. It is not to be taken seriously, but simply as a means of recreation. That will in turn determine the places we go. We will take little time out to do any serious talking together. Important issues

regarding our spiritual life will never become the objects of discussion because we are too busy having fun. Every date will have to be a new adventure. And when time is spent talking, it will be about the adventure and fun itself rather than anything serious. In the last days, Paul teaches us in II Timothy 3, men will be lovers of pleasure more than lovers of God. If there is any place that this reveals itself it is in recreational dating.

On the other hand, if the purpose of dating is, as it should be, to search out a life's mate, then that too will determine the places we go. We will use the places we go to search out who that person we are dating really is. If we are a young woman we will seek to find out such things as these: What are his interests? What are his spiritual goals and desires? What is his relationship with God and his Savior? What kind of a husband and a father will he make? If we are a young man, we will want to find out the answers to the same questions about the young woman we date.

This does not mean that we may never go to a place and simply have a good time with each other. Enjoying various forms of entertainment on certain dates is not synonymous with recreational dating. It can even be advantageous to go out on a date to places where we can be put at ease with each other. But when we use dating to look for a life's mate, we also understand that dating is not all fun! It is serious! There must be plenty of time spent when out on dates to talk about the seriousness of life and how we deal with it from a spiritual point of view. We must also go to places that will generate discussions over spiritual matters. That then is the first principle that will influence where we go on a date.

A second principle that governs us is a deep understanding of who we are. We are sanctified sin-

ners! We confess that in our lives in general. We must also understand how all this should determine where we go on dates.

We are sanctified! We are covenant youth! We are those who are washed in the blood of Jesus Christ and cleansed from the filth of sin. We are no longer slaves to sin and Satan. Christ has set us free to serve Him purely and out of a good conscience. The Word of God is clear: "Know ye not that the unrighteous shall not inherit the kingdom of God? Be not deceived: neither fornicators, nor idolaters, nor adulterers, ... nor drunkards ... shall inherit the kingdom of God. And such were some of you: but ye are washed, but ye are sanctified, but ye are justified in the name of the Lord Jesus, and by the Spirit of our God" (I Cor. 6:9-11). The command of God's Word to us in dating as well as in all the rest of life therefore is clear in Romans 6:12, 13: "Let not sin therefore reign in your mortal body, that ye should obey it in the lusts thereof. Neither yield ye your members as instruments of unrighteousness unto sin: but yield yourselves unto God, as those that are alive from the dead, and your members as instruments of righteousness unto God." We are sanctified!

But we are also still sinners! We must know this of ourselves too! "I find then a law, that, when I would do good, evil is still present with me" (Rom. 7:21). We still have within us a sinful flesh that is attracted to the sins of our unbelieving society. Satan is adept at placing temptations before God's children by means of this wicked world. And often those temptations come in the way of the sinful entertainment of this world. Besides that, the works of the flesh are still manifest in us. The same sins the wicked world is enslaved to are sins that appeal to our sinful natures. If given the right situation and the right atmosphere we too are not above falling into temptation and sin. As covenant young

men and women we must know ourselves. We must not allow the foolishness of youth to govern us in our dating. We must know the power of our sinful flesh, and then avoid those places and situations which would tempt us into sin. We must also know our salvation in the cross of Jesus Christ and what this requires of us in the places we go.

Knowing these things, young men and women, "work out your salvation with fear and trembling" (Phil. 2:12) when it comes to where you go on a date! "Let us have grace whereby we may serve God acceptably with reverence and godly fear: for our God is a consuming fire" (Heb. 12:28-29). The Bible does not lay down all kinds of particulars as to where you may or may not go on a date! This belongs to your liberty! Only you may not use your liberty as an occasion to the flesh. You must use your liberty in dating to serve the Spirit. You must choose wisely the places you go on a date so that through them you will be able to discover for yourselves a proper, godly mate.

Bearing that in mind, let's divide the possible places we may or may not go on a date into three groups. The first group is made up of places we definitely ought not to go. The second is those places where we are at liberty to go since they are not wrong in themselves. The third group consists of those places we should be sure to go.

It almost goes without saying that there are places we should *not* go on a date. The simple ABCs of godly living require of us to avoid them. These are places that incite lust in us or affect our feelings and emotions in such a way that we are open and susceptible to sinful thoughts and actions. In our present, hedonistic society these places are everywhere. They are

an accepted part of our culture. Yet, they have contributed in large part to the moral breakdown of our society. Rather than being swept along with them, we must keep ourselves unspotted from them.

The theaters, bars, and dance halls are not places where young Christian couples will be able to nurture a godly relationship.

We must know the power of our sinful flesh, and then avoid those places and situations which would tempt us into sin.

Peter points out these "abominable idolatries" which will hinder us from discovering a godly mate in I Peter 4:3. God instructs us there that we must not run with the world in lasciviousness (having no sexual restraint) or lust (strong desire for that which is forbidden).

We must not give ourselves to excess of wine (drunkenness), revelings (late-night gatherings where people sing and dance to the godless music of the wicked), or banquetings (drinking parties). These places may appeal to our sinful flesh, but they must at all costs be avoided. This is true of life in general and for people of all ages, but especially ought it to be applied to dating. Young men and women who frequent these places while dating are setting themselves up for a fall in marriage. This warning of God's Word can be ignored by foolish young men and women (and even parents who allow such goings on with their youth), but this sin will be visited upon them (unless they repent) later on in marriage.

There is a second group of places to go on a date that belongs to a young person's liberty. There are sports activities, social gatherings, school functions, all of which can be very enjoyable, and beneficial too. These places give us as young couples time to converse with and enjoy the company of fellow saints. There are also times when a young couple can spend time alone. They must have quiet time to talk about the issues of

marriage and life. At the same time, they have to be very careful not to go to a place that may be overcharged with sensuality. We are sinners, do not forget! Satan can lead us into temptation! We know ourselves well! But we are sanctified too and we can use our sanctified common sense to determine where those quiet hours alone can be spent.

A third group of places couples can go on a date is vital to their dating life. These are places which will lead you together as a young couple into a consideration of God's Word and how it applies to every area of life. These are places that will promote spiritual communication in your relationship. They are places that belong to the life of the church and the family. What better place to take a date than to church or some church function? It is sad, very sad, when lectures, speeches, and seminars are sorely neglected by dating couples. For some reason young people of the church think these functions are for the old and married. Basketball games are jammed with dating couples (that is not wrong in itself), but these church functions are so poorly attended! Why? Do we perhaps have this underlying notion that dating is always supposed to be fun? If we have that idea, we are wrong! A young man ought to consider taking his date to church, Bible society, a seminar, or such like. It will stand him and the girl he dates in good spiritual stead for the future. We do want a strong marriage, right? Well, this will aid and assist in that.

Then there is the old adage, "there's no place like home!" That saying is lost in our present society. Young men and women do not seem to like it at home. That is true even within the realm of the church. That does not bode well for young couples today who are looking to establish their own home. A wonderful place to take a date is home! There are good times to be found there! There is

laughter and good conversation. There is eating and drinking together in a godly way! What better way for a young couple to learn how to establish their own home and family than to spend time in their homes and families when dating!

This is an aspect of dating that is sorely neglected. Sometimes, I think, parents are at fault, because they are too busy with their own

lives to take thought of their own dating children. The home with the family is an important place for dating couples to be. God smiles on that young man and woman who on a Sunday night gather around the table with parents and siblings discussing the sermon and other concerns. God frowns on that young couple who hurry from church to the beach or the park to spend time in useless chatter and sexual passes!

The places we go on a date certainly are of importance, as we have found. In this area, too, a young man and woman must seek to establish a relationship of friendship that is rooted in God! They must sanctify dating by frequenting sanctified places!

Want a solid marriage, covenant young men and women? Then do the right thing when it comes to where you go on a date! It makes a difference! □

Marking the Bulwarks of Zion

Prof. Herman Hanko

Berengar and Transubstantiation (2)

Introduction

During the Middle Ages two controversies were carried on over the doctrine of Christ's presence in the bread and wine of the Lord's Supper before the view of transubstantiation was finally adopted. One controversy occurred in the ninth century; the other in the eleventh. The controversy in the ninth century was between Radbertus and Ratramnus, both monks in the monastery in Corbie, France.

Radbertus taught that the bread and wine were literally changed into the body and blood of Christ, while Ratramnus taught that Christ was present only spiritually in the sacrament.

That controversy finally died with the death of the two antagonists, and without any resolution to the problem. Both views con-

tinued to be taught in the church, although little by little the views of Radbertus gained ground.

The second controversy took place in the eleventh century. This too took place between two monks. In a way, it was more important than the first one because this controversy led directly to the adoption of transubstantiation as official church dogma. It took place between Berengar and Lanfranc, although Berengar is the principal character. On his life we concentrate our attention.

The Early Life of Berengar

Berengar was born in or near the city of Tours in the year 1000. Tours was an important city in France because, as every schoolboy knows, Charles Martel defeated the invading Moslems at Tours in 732, slammed the southern door of Europe in their faces, and prevented Mohammedanism from overrunning Europe. A ditty helped the memory: "In 732, at the battle of Tours/Charles Martel defeated the Moors."

He was early committed to the monastic life and rose quickly in the Benedictine Order. He became canon and director of the cathedral school in Tours, in which school he sharpened his teaching skills. Soon he was elevated to the rank of archdeacon in Angers, but retained his love for teaching. Berengar was a popular teacher, whose fame soon spread throughout France, and students from every part of France flocked to his school.

Berengar the Man

Berengar was something of an enigma, however. He was, himself a monk, deeply devoted to monasticism. Yet he could understand that a monastic life did not enable one to escape from the world. He saw the dangers inherent in a life of seclusion. He wrote to his fellow monks:

The hermit is alone in his cell, but sin loiters about the door with enticing words and seeks admittance. I am thy beloved — says she — whom thou didst court in

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the world. I was with thee at the table, slept with thee on thy couch; without me, thou didst nothing. How darest thou think of forsaking me? I have followed thy every step; and dost thou expect to hide away from me in thy cell? I was with thee in the world, when thou didst eat flesh and drink wine; and shall be with thee in the wilderness, where thou livest only on bread and water. Purple and silk are not the only colors seen in hell,— the monk's cowl is also to be found there. Thou, hermit, hast something of mine. The nature of the flesh, which thou wearest about thee, is my sister, begotten with me, brought up with me. So long as the flesh is flesh, so long shall I be in thy flesh. Dost thou subdue thy flesh by abstinence? — thou becomest proud; and lo! sin is there. Art thou overcome by the flesh, and dost thou yield to lust? sin is there. Perhaps thou hast none of the mere human sins, I mean such as proceed from sense; beware then of devilish sins. Pride is a sin which belongs in common to evil spirits and to hermits.

Berengar was a man of rare learning and deep piety.

He also was brave — up to a point. He was not afraid to challenge church authority when he believed it was wrong. Nor was he afraid to stand up for his views, as long as it did not mean suffering. Twice he recanted when faced with the threat of death. Twice he regretted it. Finally he died in sorrow for betraying the truth which he believed.

His writings reveal, as one historian put it, a worthy man, a loving Christian of tender and plausible nature. His learning was vast, and he was a most zealous student of the fathers. He practiced medicine as a physician and was a theologian among theologians. He was admired as an orator and preacher of no little ability. He was friend and counselor to some of the foremost men in France, and occasionally moved in

the highest circles without losing his humility.

But he was, in all respects except one, a man of the church. He agreed with church doctrine, good and bad, and opposed the general teachings of the church only on the question of Christ's presence in the sacrament.

Berengar's Life of Controversy

Berengar had done his homework. After careful study of the fathers and the teachings of Scripture, he had come to the conclusion that the view which was later called transubstantiation was a vulgar superstition. It was contrary, he said, to Scripture, to most of the fathers, and to reason. It was contrary to Scripture because, although Jesus had said in John 6 that He was the bread of life, He had clearly meant this in a symbolic sense. Although a few of the fathers had taught what Rome was now teaching, many more, including Augustine, had repudiated such notions. And it was unreasonable in the extreme to believe that something that looked like bread, felt like bread, and tasted like bread, was not bread, but a human body.

He could have saved his breath. While here and there a few agreed with him, his views were quite in the minority.

His most influential opponent was Lanfranc, whom we only briefly mention. Lanfranc was one of the great Roman Catholics of the Middle Ages, but he enters our present story only marginally.

Lanfranc was born 1005 and entered a monastery early in life. He became Prior of the prestigious convent in Bec in Normandy in 1045, but was appointed to the position of Archbishop of Canterbury in England. This position was the highest ecclesiastical post in the whole land. He served in that position from 1070-1089. From that position he carried on a running battle with the English kings in a relentless defense of papal claims

against the struggles of the kings to free themselves from papal rule.

But he did find time to answer Berengar. He did this in a book which was useful in establishing transubstantiation as official church dogma.

Berengar's views concerning the symbolic presence of Christ in the sacrament of the Lord's Supper frightened the church half out of its wits. This is evident from the fact that the regional synods that met to condemn Berengar were almost more in number than one can count. They followed upon each other in such rapid succession that sometimes two or three were held in the same year.

Here is an abbreviated list. He was condemned by Pope Leo IX at a Roman synod in 1050. He was summoned to a synod at Vercelli, to which he did not come, and was condemned *in absentia* — that is, without being granted a hearing. In Paris in 1051 he was threatened with death if he did not recant.

But an interesting thing happened in his home city of Tours in 1054. Present at the synod there was a man by the name of Hildebrand, destined to become one of the greatest, if not the greatest, of the Medieval popes (Gregory VII). Hildebrand was on papal business of another kind, but listened intently to Berengar's views. Persuaded that Berengar was correct in his position, Hildebrand persuaded the synod to rebuke Berengar mildly, but to tolerate his views.

But Berengar was summoned to Rome in 1059 and condemned by a Lateran Council, which ordered him to recant on his knees and throw his books into the fire. Fearful of what would happen to him, he complied and went against his own conscience.

Back in France, he recanted his recantation and began to teach his views once again. At this point Lanfranc wrote his important book, and the weight of almost the whole church was against Berengar. At a

synod in Poitiers in 1075 he was almost killed.

Hildebrand became pope and Hildebrand summoned him to Rome in an effort to protect him. But another Lateran council in 1079 would not even be persuaded by the pope, and in its fury condemned him once again. And, best of all, when Berengar appealed to Gregory for help, Gregory abandoned him, fearful that his own orthodoxy would come into question. Berengar submitted and once again recanted.

But returning to France, he regretted what he had done and publicly announced that he was of the same opinion as formerly. Pondering Gregory's betrayal, he wrote:

Confounded by the sudden madness of the pope, and because God in punishment for my sins did not give me a steadfast heart, I threw myself on the ground and confessed with impious voice that I had erred, fearing the pope would instantly pronounce against me the sentence of excommunication, and that, as a necessary consequence, the populace would hurry me to the worst of deaths.

He could hardly live with himself after this, and he retired to a lonely life of strict monastic seclusion on the island of St. Come. There he lived in regret for his cowardice, but died in peace in 1088.

The End of the Matter

Transubstantiation won the day. Berengar was the last voice raised in protest against such a monstrous view as Rome wanted. That view, as horrible as it is, became official Romish doctrine in 1215 at the Fourth Lateran Council under Innocent III, and remains the official teaching of Rome.

Transubstantiation is not a doctrine that stands by itself. It leads to and is connected with other doctrines.

The view of transubstantiation

developed along with the idea of the clergy as *priests*, that misnomer by which they are called yet today. But priests bring sacrifices. In the early church, when it was first suggested that clergy be called priests, the sacrifices they brought were considered spiritual sacrifices of thanksgiving.

But these sacrifices were, for all that, connected to the Lord's Supper. The result was that in the minds of the people, and eventually in the entire church, these sacrifices were considered sacrifices of atonement. How was that to be explained?

The answer lies in the Romish doctrine of the mass. When a priest performs the mass, that is, administers the Lord's Supper, he miraculously, but very really, changes the bread and wine into Christ's body and blood. By doing this, he performs the sacrifice which Christ offered for sin on the cross. Golgotha is reenacted. Calvary takes place in every mass. Christ dies a million times, at the hand of the priests. And the people, eating this bread and wine, participate in the sacrifice of Christ and eat His body and blood.

No wonder the Reformers could not find enough words to condemn this view. But they pointed out, with precision, that such a view denied the completeness and perfection of Christ's one sacrifice for sin. And, just as wrongly, it introduced a terrible sin into the worship, the sin of idolatry. The mass, our Heidelberg Catechism says, is an accursed idolatry. Many evangelicals, lusting for union with Rome, think this language too strong and want to remove it. But let that never happen. Ursinus and Olevianus were right.

Other terrible doctrines followed.

The doctrine of concomitance was now taught. According to this doctrine, the people need only eat the bread and need not drink the wine (lest the blood of Christ be

spilled) because Christ's body and blood are present in both bread and wine.

The bread and wine were worshiped by the throngs in exactly the same way pagans bow before gods of wood and stone. And this worship of the elements became a crucial part of Rome's liturgy.

Because a sacrifice took place at the mass, it was necessary to have an altar. The result was this: a priest, an altar, a sacrifice. It was all in place. But a priest took the place of the preacher and a sacrifice took the place of God's Word; the altar took the place of the pulpit and the words of consecration (spoken in Latin so that none understood) took the place of preaching.

But none had to understand what was said, because the sacraments worked automatically (if I may use that word). If one actually ate Christ's body and drank His blood, then Christ was communicated to the participant even though no faith at all was present. A person received Christ automatically. The doctrine was called *ex opere operato*, which Latin expression means that the sacrament has, *in itself*, and apart from faith, power to work grace.

The whole wretched system, cloaked in superstition of the worst kind, became a key building block in Rome's mighty sacerdotal system, by which God's people were held in bondage.

It took the Reformation to restore the truth. And the Reformation was a vindication of Berengar's views, for Calvin taught the same as Berengar. Christ is present spiritually, and Christ becomes the possession of the child of God by faith, worked by the Holy Spirit.

The Confession of Faith states the Reformed view. You ought to read the whole article. We quote only a small part:

In the meantime we err not when we say that what is eaten and drunk by us is the proper and

natural body and the proper blood of Christ. But the manner of our partaking of the same is not by the mouth, but by the spirit

through faith. Thus, then, though Christ always sits at the right hand of His Father in the heav-

ens, yet doth He not therefore cease to make us partakers of Himself by faith. This feast is a spiritual table... (Article 35). □

In His Fear

Rev. Daniel Kleyn

Childlessness

It is natural for a married couple to desire children. In fact, even unbelievers desire this. It is true that they generally do so for selfish reasons, and thus often twist and subject this desire to the service of sin and the pursuit of earthly pleasure. Yet it cannot be denied that they too are created by God with the desire to bring forth children.

Believing couples, however, have more than just a natural desire for children. Their desire is also spiritual. They long for children because they understand that children are a gracious gift from God. They long for children because they understand the truth of God's covenant. They understand especially that the covenant means that God is pleased generally to give to believing parents elect children. Having these things in mind as they marry in the Lord, believers earnestly desire to be blessed with covenant children.

In some instances, however, God does not give children. His plan is different from ours. Instead of a child there is emptiness.

I write especially with such childless couples in mind. The struggles they face and experience

are extremely difficult. Childlessness is for them an intense trial, a severe test of faith. Often it is a lifelong struggle. Important it is for such couples, therefore, to know how the Lord calls them to deal with this particular burden in life.

There are also other couples in the church, however, who strongly desire children. Perhaps God has given one or two children, but not more. They too, though in a different measure, face some of the same difficulties.

May the Lord give to each the grace needed to live a life that is pleasing to Him regardless of the particular trials He sends.

The Scriptures indicate that childlessness has been experienced by some of God's people from almost the beginning of time. Abraham and Sarah, for example, having received God's covenant promises with regard to an offspring, remained barren until it was humanly impossible for them to have children. Scripture also mentions others who were barren, such as Isaac and Rebekah, Jacob and Rachel, Manoah and his wife, Elkanah and Hannah, and Zachariah and Elisabeth. Although all these couples eventually received children, they first went through some terrific struggles of faith.

One thing that God makes crystal clear through these accounts in Scripture is that He alone controls

conception. He gives children to some, and that in His time. To others He does not give children. God alone is sovereign over life, not man.

The world, we know, thinks otherwise. Man believes that he, with his advanced knowledge and expertise in the use of birth control, in vitro fertilization, and other medical means, can control conception and life. But he is as wrong as it is possible to be. God alone is the Giver of life. In fact, God even sovereignly controls the (often sinful) means that men use.

While God was pleased to give children to those mentioned above, that was not then, and is not now, always the case. More than a few godly couples find they are unable to have their own children.

There are many things that make the burden of childlessness difficult for a believing couple. It is difficult for them to hear that another couple is expecting a child. It is difficult for them to visit a mother and her newborn in the hospital. It is difficult for them to witness a baptism in church. It is difficult for them to visit with families that have children. It is difficult for them to speak with other women because they, as mothers, often talk about their children. It is difficult for them to be reminded each month of the barrenness that the Lord has willed for them. It is difficult for them to hear some parents speak of children being

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"planned" or "unplanned." It is difficult for them to hear some mothers say that their children are at times a "nuisance." It is difficult for them because they often sit alone in a quiet house. It is difficult for them because they realize, as they get older, that they will never experience the joys of children and grandchildren, as most others do. And it is especially difficult because the Scriptures speak of children as blessings of Jehovah. The childless couple can feel that they are missing out on the experience of the joys of God's covenant of grace.

Because of these things, the question the childless couple often asks is, "Why?" "Why doesn't the Lord give us children? Why doesn't the Lord grant us our request for this? Why is His answer, No?" Perhaps they even ask, "If the Lord has willed that we not have children, why does He still give us such a strong desire to have them?"

Ultimately the answer to these questions is what we read in Isaiah 55, "For my thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways my ways, saith the LORD. For as the heavens are higher than the earth, so are my ways higher than your ways, and my thoughts than your thoughts."

This text reminds us of the fact that we are often unable to understand the ways and the mind of God. That is why the child of God must be so careful with the question, Why? God does not always (or even often) show us why. And the reason He does not is because He knows that we, from our finite, earthly perspective, would not understand. His ways are far above our ways. His thoughts are way beyond what we can know and understand. But in all He does God is wise. God has a good reason for not giving children to some. He has planned the

lives of all His children, and His plan is perfect.

Knowing this, the childless couple asks instead, "How does the Lord call us to deal with this burden? Many difficulties are experienced because of it. How do we, by God's grace, endure this terrible struggle?"

Perhaps one of the most important things for the childless couple to realize and remember is that although they have no children, their marriage is complete. It is certainly a good thing, in our day, that much emphasis is placed upon the calling godly parents have to bring forth children. But sometimes this emphasis can make us forget a fundamental truth regarding marriage — children do not make a marriage complete. What makes a home a home and a family a family is not children, but a godly marriage. And thus a home without children is not less blessed than one with children.

For this reason, those who are childless must not let this struggle ruin their marriage and drive them apart. That can happen. There is a danger for childless couples to live totally separate lives. Instead, they should work to strengthen their marriage and the closeness they have as husband and wife.

This means bearing the burden together. The husband must not let the wife bear it alone, nor the wife the husband. The husband especially needs to be sensitive to the struggles his wife experiences because of childlessness. The woman, perhaps more than the man, feels the emptiness. This does not deny, however, that the husband does as well. And so the wife must not be insensitive to that either.

Husband and wife must help and support one another. This requires good communication. They need to talk often to each other

about their struggles. They need to pray together about it. In these ways they will become closer and their marriage will be strengthened.

Those who are childless must also realize that they have a place in the church and covenant of God — a special place.

There is always much work to be done in the church and among the people of God. The sick need help. The widows, widowers, and elderly need visits. Those facing certain struggles in life need encouragement. Mothers with many young children need assistance. And our Christian schools often need extra help too.

Parents who have busy families often do not have the time to do these things. The childless couple, however, does. This is part of the special place God has given them in the church. It is good, therefore, to pray for and look for such work. It could be that this is the very reason why the Lord has not given children.

The childless couple is also able to do most of these things *together*. That is also true with regard to other aspects of their life in the church, such as attending Bible studies and lectures. Sometimes a couple with children finds that one of them has to stay home to care for the children. Those who have no children have time and opportunity to do many (if not most) things together.

It is true that the childless couple sometimes wish they did not have that time. That is, they wish they had children, their own children, to keep them busy. But the Lord has planned otherwise. They must seek to find, therefore, what other duties and work the Lord places before them. It is good for them to keep themselves busy in the work of the church. God will surely bless that.

There are also other ways in which those who have no children can be and ought to be involved in

*"For
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LORD."*

the church. As members of the church, they rejoice with the whole congregation at the birth and baptism of a covenant child. God gives that child to believing parents, but He also gives that child to the church. In this way the childless couple experiences the covenant blessings of God.

This implies being involved, as opportunity arises, in the nurture and upbringing of these children. It implies being thankful that mothers talk often to each other about their children and the calling God gives them to raise those children. It implies being thankful when you see the children of the church learning the truth and maturing in their faith. And it implies rejoicing with the whole congregation when the children of the church confess their faith in Christ. "Rejoice with them that do rejoice, and weep with them that weep" (Rom. 12:15).

Another important thing for the childless couple to remember is that all of God's people experience affliction in this life. Every home and every child of God has a cross to bear. Some are troubled by lifelong sickness. Some are afflicted by marriage and family problems. Some have children that forsake the ways of God and never return. Some remain single their whole life. Some struggle with poverty or loneliness or the death of a loved one.

It seems that as each of us experiences his own particular burdens in life, he can feel that his particular affliction is greater than that of any other child of God. We all think that way at times. We are convinced that no one else is suffering as we are. No one else's burden is quite as heavy as ours is. And no one can possibly know what we are going through.

That is how it can seem to the childless couple as well. But that is not necessarily so. It should be remembered that all God's people suffer. And none suffers more than

he is able to bear, for "God is faithful, who will not suffer you to be tempted [or tried] above that ye are able; but will with the temptation also make a way to escape, that ye may be able to bear it" (I Cor. 10:13).

The most important thing, however, is that the childless couple learn to submit to the will of God for them. I realize this is easy to say, but quite another thing to do. It is a very real struggle of faith. Yet this is what the Lord requires.

Those who are childless must realize that God wills this childlessness. The reason why God does this is usually unknown. But God's ways are not our ways. And God's ways are always good. The couple must learn to confess, and to believe in their hearts, that all things work together for their good. Yes, all things. And that for their eternal good.

What this really means is that the childless couple must learn to deal with their trial as each child of God must deal with his or her particular trials in life. Regardless of the burden that God places upon His children, each must learn proper submission to the will of a loving heavenly Father. We confess that God is sovereign. We confess that He determines and controls all things — not only the "good" things, but also the so-called evil things that happen to us. And the wonderful confession we make is that God does all this as a Father. This means He lovingly sends the burden of childlessness. He sends it because it is for the eternal good of that couple not to have their own children.

Learning submission to the will of God requires much prayer. Those prayers certainly may include the requests for children. After all, God alone can grant that

request. He alone can fulfill that desire of our hearts. But we must pray especially for grace. Perhaps the childless couple will always remain childless. As difficult as that is, they must learn that this is God's will for them. And therefore they need His grace. The Lord tells us in our trials, "My grace is sufficient for thee" (II Cor. 12:9). The grace of God is all we need. In the midst of our trials it is our greatest need. And God promises to give it.

Submission to God's will also means learning to believe in our hearts that God's ways for us are best. We would like our

ways to be God's ways.

And when they are not, we struggle. But remember, God is wise.

His wisdom is way beyond our wisdom.

God in His wisdom looks at everything in the light of eternity.

We see things one moment at a time, but the

Lord sees the whole of our earthly life, including its end or goal. He knows the way you and I must walk to be prepared for our unique place in heavenly glory. He knows it because He has ordained it. Thus we must and can conform our wills to God's will. God's will and way for us is the only pathway that will lead us to glory. It is the pathway we must walk to reach heaven. Any other way would be harmful. Any other way would not lead us to our eternal home.

Childlessness is difficult. It is very difficult. May the childless couple seek the grace humbly to submit to the Lord's will for them in this. For God's will is not arbitrary or foolish. It is perfect. May each receive grace to sing the words of Psalter 383, "My life in all its perfect plan was ordered ere my days began." □

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School Activities

Try as I would, my mind just couldn't help but stray a little before our Sunday morning church service on April 2. The night before, several in our congregation had taken part in the fourth annual night of ice skating and hockey at the Walker Ice Center, sponsored by the Hope Foundation, and when they walked into the auditorium with their families you could almost feel their sore calves and other assorted aches and pains. An hour of intense hockey or just plain skating will do that for you. It leaves little doubt that you are one year older than last year's game and your body wants you to know it.

The Hope Foundation does a good job with this fund-raiser and it seems to be as popular as ever. Thankfully, by the time the fifth annual evening rolls around next spring, those aches and pains will be long forgotten.

The Lynden PRC in Lynden, WA was the location this spring for Covenant Christian School's Annual School Program. On March 31 the student body and teachers presented a program entitled, "Daily Christian Joy."

This time of year all our church bulletins, or monthly newsletters, contain a seemingly growing list from our Christian schools looking for teachers. For whatever reason, there always seems to be a need.

But I was reminded recently by way of a newsletter from the Cov-

enant Christian School in Lynden, WA just how difficult this time may be for teachers, even those not actively looking to move. We may never know the real struggles that sometimes teachers have to go through to realize their calling before God as to where and even if they should teach. For all of us this is a good time to ask if we take time to bring this great need of our teachers before God in prayer. Do we seek to help our teachers in this burden that they carry every year? Are we speaking to them often, not just a word here or there, but often, to be a willing instrument used of God to help them in this situation? It is of utmost importance to the vitality of all our schools.

The PTA of the Free Christian School in Edgerton, MN met on March 24. Rev. D. Kleyn, pastor of the Edgerton, MN PRC, spoke to the parents and teachers on, "Small But Not to Be Despised."

Evangelism Activities

The Evangelism Committee of the First PRC in Holland, MI has had a busy spring. On the first Wednesday night of April they began their involvement in the preaching services at the Holland Mission on River Street. That will continue the first Wednesday of every month for the rest of the year (after which their council will review). First was reminded that it is extremely important to have congregational support for this work, and they were encouraged to attend the service and/or help out in other ways.

On March 24 and 25 First served also as host for their Second Annual Bible Conference, entitled, "Biblical Worship for Our Contemporary Age." Friday night Prof. D. Engelsma opened with the subject, "The Regulative Principle of Worship." The next morning Rev. B. Gritters spoke on "A Cri-

tique of Modern Forms of Worship," and Rev. C. Terpstra spoke on "The Believer's Active Participation in Worship."

Rev. G. VanBaren, one of our churches' emeriti pastors (which in this case does not mean retired), traveled to our Hope PRC in Redlands, CA in March to preach for them while their pastor filled a classical appointment in our vacant Hull, IA PRC. While he and his wife were there, he was also able to be part of Hope's yearly spring lecture. Rev. VanBaren spoke on the subject, "Hell: Temporal or Eternal?" Rev. VanBaren also was a guest speaker at Hope Christian School while there. He spoke to the students on the subject, "Resist the Devil."

Young People's Activities

The Young People's Society of the Hope PRC in Redlands, CA sponsored a program of musical numbers on March 17, and, thanks to a note accompanying the last bunch of bulletins from Hope, we can add that it was really a wonderful evening of praise to God. The special numbers were: eight flutes playing Psalter numbers together in harmony; Art Griess on his accordion (no program in Redlands would be complete without that!); the young people's society singing a couple of songs; a flute/french horn duet; a violin/piano duet; a piano solo; a vocal solo; a vocal duet by two grade school boys; and lots of audience singing of Psalter numbers.

Mission Activities

Rev. Moore was recently informed by the Ministry of Interior in Ghana that the mission has been given approval for a quota of two missionary families. This does not include the volunteers, who will continue to go to Ghana on a temporary basis as have John and

Mr. Wigger is a member of the Protestant Reformed Church of Hudsonville, Michigan.

Judy Bouma. This means that we could have two ministers of the PRC in America working in Ghana in the future. The next step is for Rev. Moore and Jan to be approved under the quota to be the mission-

ary there. The Moores will then be considered residents of Ghana. Give God thanks for this positive development.

Food For Thought
 "Without a Sabbath, no worship: without worship, no religion; and without religion, no permanent freedom."

— Charles Forbes Mantalembert

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ANNOUNCEMENTS

75th Anniversary Celebration Committee

The 75th Anniversary Celebration is just a few months away and we have over 1,100 individuals attending from all over the country and world. Are you one of those planning to attend?

The celebration will bring us many activities. For one of them we will need your support. During the week of the celebration we will be collecting, D.V., items to send to Myanmar. As you are packing for the convention we would like you prayerfully to consider bringing along some items to donate to the saints in Myanmar. There will be a collection box at the registration and a drop-off area at the beginning of the week.

During the week there will be a designated time each day for any interested individuals to help pack the donations. The packed boxes will be sent to the Rev. Kortering's home in Singapore for storage. The Korterings will then be able to deliver the donated items in suitcases with people entering Myanmar. Since Myanmar is under an oppressive government it is impossible safely to ship directly to their country. Although this may seem like a complicated, lengthy process, it is one of the few ways to guarantee the donations will be used by those for whom they are intended.

Please read the list carefully, keeping several things in mind. First, it is extremely important that *no* medications contain ibuprofen, since many of the Asian race are allergic to it. Secondly, unfortunately, no used clothing may be sent, since the government has a law banning used clothing from entering the country. Third, socks are not needed because it is a hot climate and most people wear sandals. Fourth, the people must walk some distance for bathing and find it difficult to carry large bottles and tubes. Finally, any money collected for this cause will be used to pay for the shipping of the donations. If there is money left over, this money will be spent at the International Aid store in which additional items will be purchased and added to the boxed donations. Also, for those who are not attending the celebration, contributions are still welcome. We ask that you send your contribution to David Ondersma, c/o Myanmar at 3521 North Lakeshore Dr., Holland, MI 49424. Checks can be written to Protestant Reformed Churches in America.

Thank you for prayerfully considering helping the saints in a country that does not allow its citizens the freedoms we enjoy by the grace of God.

The following items are some suggestions of things to donate:

Vitamins — children and adults	Bar soap
Tylenol	Shampoo (small bottles)
Pepto-Bismol	Baby powder
Diarrhea Medicine — children and adult	Bath Towels (light weight)
Antiseptic cream	Paper — writing tablets of any kind
Band-Aids	Crayons
Toothbrushes — children and adults	Ball-point pens
Toothpaste (small tubes)	Small children's toys

Even though the registration deadline has passed, there is still time to reserve your place. By sending in your registration form *immediately* you can still reserve your place. We do ask that everyone who plans to attend the Celebration fill out a registration form so we can obtain an accurate count of those attending. Registration forms should be available in your churches or you may contact us at 1-800-527-8243 and request one.

Western Conference

Theme:

"The Love of God"

Speakers:

Rev. Garrett Eriks
Rev. Thomas Miersma

Dates:

August 4, 5, 6

Place:

Spokane, Washington

Friday night:

***The Love of God
and the Sinner***

Rev. Miersma

Saturday morning:

***The Love of God
and Salvation***

Rev. Eriks

Saturday morning:

***The Love of God
and Affliction***

Rev. Miersma

Saturday afternoon or evening:

Walking in the Love of God

Rev. Eriks

RESOLUTION OF SYMPATHY

The Mary-Martha Society of Hope Protestant Reformed Church in Redlands express their deepest sympathy to fellow member Laurie Jabaay in the recent loss of her dear husband,

JAMES D. JABAAY,

whom the Lord took suddenly to glory on March 30, 2000. We also extend our sincere sympathy to our members Jeanne Jabaay, his mother; sister, Janine Meelker; and sister-in-law, Michelle Buitter. In our deepest sorrows may they and we all find great comfort and hope in the Word of God: "The Lord is my light and my salvation: whom shall I fear? The Lord is the strength of my life: of whom shall I be afraid? ... Wait on the Lord: be of good courage, and he shall strengthen thine heart: wait, I say, on the Lord" (Psalm 27:1, 14).

Rev. Arie denHartog, President
Jeanne Karsemeyer, Secretary

RESOLUTION OF SYMPATHY

The council and congregation of Georgetown PRC express their Christian sympathy to elder Roger Berens, his wife, Kathy, and family in the death of his mother,

MRS. DOROTHY BERENS.

May the Lord's rich mercy and grace sustain them in their sorrow, and may they be comforted in the words of our Lord Jesus Christ in John 14:1-3: "Let not your heart be troubled: ye believe in God, believe also in me. In my Father's house are many mansions: if it were not so, I would have told you. I go to prepare a place for you. And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again, and receive you unto myself; that where I am, there ye may be also."

Rev. R. VanOverloop, Pres.
David M. Ondersma, Clerk

NOTICE

The program committee for the 75th Anniversary of the Protestant Reformed Churches is in need of Young People's Convention photos from 1959 to the present. We also need 50th Anniversary celebration photos. Please send pictures to Steve Ophoff, 1480 Rothbury, N.E. Grand Rapids, MI 49505.

CALL TO SYNOD!!

Synod 1999 appointed Georgetown Protestant Reformed Church, Hudsonville, MI the calling church for the 2000 synod.

The consistory hereby notifies our churches that the 2000 Synod of the Protestant Reformed Churches in America will convene, the Lord willing, on Tuesday, June 13, 2000 at 9:00 A.M. in the Georgetown Protestant Reformed Church, Hudsonville, Michigan.

The Pre-Synodical Service will be held on Monday evening, June 12, at 7:30 P.M. Rev. Cammenga, president of the 1999 synod, will preach the sermon. Synodical delegates are requested to meet with the consistory before the service.

Delegates in need of lodging should contact Mr. Dave Ondersma, 3521 N. LakeShore Dr., Holland, MI 49424. Phone: (616) 994-0263.

Consistory of
Georgetown PRC
David Ondersma, Clerk.

RESOLUTION OF SYMPATHY

The Men's Society of Hope Protestant Reformed Church extend their Christian sympathy to our fellow member and president, John Buitter, in the death of his sister-in-law,

MRS. NEAL BUITTER,

and his brother-in-law,

MR. MARVIN KOERNER.

"Our soul waiteth for the Lord; he is our help and our shield. For our heart shall rejoice in him, because we have trusted his holy name. Let thy mercy, O Lord, be upon us, according as we hope in thee" (Psalm 33:20-22).

Lou Elzinga, Vice-President
Harry Rutgers, Secretary

RESOLUTION OF SYMPATHY

The consistory and congregation of Randolph PRC express their Christian sympathy to Mrs. Joan Buitter, Mrs. Rena Regnerus, and Mrs. Connie Vroom and their families in the death of their sister,

HILDA ZANDSTRA.

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

Pastor Steven Key, President
Gary Buteyn, Clerk

RESOLUTION OF SYMPATHY

The consistory and congregation of Randolph PRC extend their condolences to the Buitter families in the death of

MRS. NEAL BUITTER,

Bill's sister-in-law. "And we know that all things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are the called according to his purpose" (Romans 8:28).

Pastor Steven Key, President
Gary Buteyn, Clerk

RESOLUTION OF SYMPATHY

The consistory and congregation of Randolph PRC express their heartfelt sympathies to the Buitter family in the tragic death of Bill and Joan's son-in-law,

JIM JABAAY.

We are reminded of the words of Psalm 46:10, "Be still, and know that I am God." May the grieving families find their hope and comfort in our heavenly Father who gives us the victory over death through our Lord Jesus Christ (1 Cor. 15:57).

Pastor Steven Key, President
Gary Buteyn, Clerk