April 1967

Apathy

Space Science in 1966

Dating

Assurance: Defined and Promised
Published monthly, except June and August by the Federation of Protestant Reformed Young People's Societies.

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Second Class Postage paid at Grand Rapids, Michigan
Subscription price $3.00
Mouths open and close with hippopotamus-like yawns as another day of school begins. Eyes are heavy with sleep; minds are dull with the thought of another day in school. When the months are not open yawning and sighing, they are moving incessantly chattering about last night’s television programs, the latest hits in pop music, or the latest sports spectaculars.

The teacher enters the room and prepares to begin the lesson, but for all the jabber he remains for a time inaudible. He begins by asking, “Let me see the hands of all those who have completed their assignments?”

Out of a class of thirty, ten hands are raised; the remainder show not a sign of remorse.

As the teacher walks to the seat of one who has not completed his assignment, the minds of others start to whirl in furitive attempt to concoct excuses and alibis.

“Well, Jerry,” the teacher begins, “where is your assignment.”

Non-chalantly Jerry replies, “My ma forgot to put it with my lunch.”

“Well, you are fifteen now and your mother still must pack up your things for school,” the teacher explodes.

Jerry shrugs his shoulders and smiles sheepishly. The teacher moves this time to a young lady.

“Pat, did you finish your assignment?”

“No,” Pat replies, “I went to a birthday party for my uncle last night, and I didn’t get to bed ’til after twelve o’clock.”

“It is more important to attend birthday parties than to finish the work you are supposed to do.” The teacher peevishly retorts.

Sweet excuse-finding apathy; deadly apathy.

Another week of school is over and now it is Sunday. From the back of the church auditorium people appear very attentive, but off to the side heads are nodding hypnotically as if agreeing with the preacher one hundred and fifty per cent. Another look reveals that these are young people set to sleep, i.e., knees propped against the bench in front of them. Three things throughout the sermon disturb them: a peppermint from a neighbor, the collection basket, and the doxology (and this not quite). Apathetic? Yes. Pathetic? Indeed.

When the incessant chatter of young voices stops, Young People’s Society begins. Prayer is offered; prayer is ended; talking begins. The president calls for the meeting to come to order so that the lessons from the Word of God may begin. He begins by asking very frankly, “How many of you have prepared for the lesson?” A few hands, precious few, are raised.

A bit peevish the president retorts, “How do you expect to learn God’s Word if you do not study it? I must prepare, I must study, and I must work. Why can’t you?”

Silence, absolute apathetic silence follows.

The Sunday evening was cold and clear. In the distance the windows of church shone brightly on the newly fallen snow. The evening service was over and a singspiration sponsored by the young people’s society followed. Sponsored by the young people? The audience was made up of primarily older people and young children. Where were the young people?

Ask them and the answers are varied:

“I had a special date, and I didn’t want to take her to our little, of, small singspiration.”
or

“I really don’t like to sing.”
or

“I had to go home and study because I didn’t study Friday or Saturday night; saw two basketball games instead.”
or

“If my girl and I go to the singspiration, we less time to park.”
or

“I just didn’t feel like it.”

Dangerous apathy? Yes. The devil’s subtle tool? It most certainly is! Is apathy destroying your spiritual life, covenant young people?

D. Huiskin
Why do we, as young people date? Do we date for fun or do we date with the reason of looking into the future? With either reason in mind the questions of who to go with and where to go on a date are very important. At this period of our lives we are looking for and meeting the person with whom we could very well spend the rest of our lives. They also could be the mother or father of our children. Around us we see unhappy marriages that were entered into without any thought to the religious background and Christian principles. We would do well to ask the Lord for guidance in looking for a mate.

One very important decision we face as Protestant Reformed Young People is, “May we date Christian young people from other denominations?” We might ask ourselves, “May we date him (or her) in order to witness?” The answer to this latter question is a simple “no” because this would only be rationalizing. There are many other ways to witness than by dating, and witnessing is not any easier by candlelight and soft music. We should be constantly witnessing by our speech and behavior.

A question which might also arise is, “As long as I go to our church and school activities, what difference does it make whom I date?” But it does make a difference for the danger, then, is not in the place you attend as much as it is in the person you are with. We have to face the fact that when it comes to dating, some young men and women will use any kind of bait to go out with that one certain person. The good date will not want to go to a show, a dance, or anything of this nature.

“I know I am not going to marry him so what does it matter if I go out with him?” is another excuse we might hear. You probably don’t intend to marry him now, but are you sure you will not in the future? Go out with him once; because he is lots of fun and good-looking, and then you may go with him again. First thing you know, you are in love. Then you will make more excuses to go out with him, for when the heart pull becomes really strong your cool, calm, good judgment seems to stop functioning. Before you realize what really is happening you may be married. Before you were married you may have talked a little about whose church to go to, but at that time, a subject like that didn’t seem important. You love him and you are married to him, but you are not truly happy. Why? Because there is friction in the home. You are living in two different worlds and can’t agree on some of the most important things of life. You have children, they grow up, and then the question arises of where to send them to school. Send them to our own Protestant Reformed Christian School, or to other schools.

A big question which is bound to arise in any discussion of this nature is, “Suppose there are no Protestant Reformed boys or girls to date, then what?” This question is especially prevalent for the young women because it seems that they are the ones who push the panic button first. Do they try to find someone from other churches? Do they wait for a Protestant Reformed mate to call even if it takes many years. (This question itself could make an article. By the way, if anyone would like to write an article on that subject, I am sure the Beacon Lights Staff would greatly appreciate
it.) Are they taking any steps to help promote a "Protestant Reformed date" by taking an active part in all church sponsored functions? Those girls who can wait ultimately realize that it is much better and safer to wait than to jump into a hasty marriage which could determine the church they will be members of for the rest of their lives.

To some girls this solution to wait for a Protestant Reformed mate is as far out as the Beatles. 'To this kind of girl it is an impossibility to wait. There are also many Protestant Reformed boys who just can not find the right girl for themselves in our own churches. Do they wait? What do these people do?

After they are sure that there exists no mate for them inside our own churches, then should they consider a mate outside of our churches? Once they begin to look for a mate outside of our churches they must be very careful. If this Protestant Reformed young person wants to get married and therefore wants to keep going with this one certain person, he or she will probably not talk about religion and important things on the first date. But, these things must come up quickly before love enters into the picture and that cool, calm judgment stops functioning.

Those who already have and those who will enter the Protestant Reformed Churches at the time of marriage are not necessarily weak and bad members. Some of these, who grew up in another denomination and are now members of our churches, put us, who grew up in our own churches, to shame because of their spiritual strength. We can be thankful for this. The question is how do we know before marriage, whether our mates-to-be from other churches will be strong members or whether they will weaken the whole church. An important talk must come to the surface before love emerges.

The first few dates with anyone should be to get acquainted. The idea of future companionship will slowly come to the surface as time goes on. Repeated dating is the only thing which should bring up the thought of marriage. One thing which in the future will greatly help the Protestant Reformed young people to seek mates from our own churches, is our own high school. It is at the high school age where most couples meet each other and it is here where they are introduced to movies and other amusements of the world. Our own high school would greatly reduce the introduction of these un-Christian "habits."

Another thing which would aid us Protestant Reformed young people in defending our faith, in the high schools and colleges we attend and before the date who is not a member of our Churches, is a more thorough acquaintance with and an ability to defend this truth as God has given it to our fathers and to us. We must have this acquaintance and ability before our dates, so that we can explain the difference between their beliefs and ours (good discussion for our Young People Society's after-recess). We must be able to defend our beliefs for we are the Church of tomorrow. We must stand immoveable. If we, as Young people of the Protestant Reformed Churches of America, cannot stand, will there exist Protestant Reformed Churches a generation from now?

SPACE SCIENCE IN 1966

RICK KAMINGA

Mr. Kaminga presented this essay in a panel discussion at a combined Junior and Senior Young People's Society meeting in First Protestant Reformed Church. Rick is a sophomore at East Christian High School in Grand Rapids.

In 1966 the world took great strides in the area of space science. Because of these spectacular achievements it is now forecasted that man will be on the moon before 1969. Man, in the eyes of the world, has performed many unbelievable things in space science. He is now doing things which were never imagined possible one hundred years ago. Man, it seems, is becoming successful in his effort to conquer God's universe and put all things in his power. However, we
as Christians know that God directs all things and that He has given man the power to perform these feats. All glory, therefore, must go to God, not to man. Let us remember this as we take a brief look at the events in space science in 1966.

The first feat of 1966 occurred in mid-February when it was announced that the Russians had made a soft landing on the moon. Luna 9, an unmanned vehicle, weighing 220 pounds, was successfully put down on the lunar surface without damage to it. It took close-up pictures of the lunar surface which proves that the lunar landscape is solid enough for man to land on and that there is no layer of dust on the moon.

On March 2 the Soviets announced that Venus 3 had crashed on the planet Venus, making it the first man-made object to strike another planet.

On March 16 Gemini 8 left the launch pad with Neil Armstrong and David Scott aboard. Things went smoothly at first. Gemini made a very successful rendezvous and docking with its target vehicle, Agena 8. However, near the end of the docking maneuver Gemini-Agena began to tumble. Armstrong undocked the vehicles and managed to stop the tumbling of Gemini 8. The ground control decided to bring Gemini 8 down as soon as possible. Armstrong and Scott came down in the Pacific near Okinawa unharmed.

In early June the United States launched Surveyor 1 on its mission to the moon. Surveyor was an overwhelming success. It made a soft landing on the moon only a few miles from its intended target, and took over 11,000 pictures of the lunar surface. Surveyor survived the lunar night (two weeks in a −250 degree temperature) and afterwards began operating again. U.S. scientists said the operation of Surveyor 1 was spectacular.

On June 3 Gemini 9 was launched from Cape Kennedy. Astronauts Stafford and Cernan encountered many problems throughout the flight. The lift-off had been slated for May 17 but trouble developed two times and it had to be postponed. Once they did get up, more problems arose. The docking with Agena couldn’t be made because part of the Agena had failed to separate. Instead Gemini 9 made three relatively successful rendezvous with Agena although the third one used up eleven hours and thirty extra pounds of fuel. Astronaut Cernan also ran into problems in his space walk. He experienced difficulty maneuvering in space and his walk was cut short by twenty minutes when his helmet visor became covered with moisture, obscuring his vision. The photographs taken by the astronauts were also below expectations. Despite all these failures and disappointments, Gemini 9 landed within four miles of the recovery ship U. S. S. Wasp, ending the mission in good fashion.

Gemini 10 was much more successful than Gemini 9. After leaving the earth on July 18, astronauts Young and Collins made a successful rendezvous and docking with the Agena target vehicle. The Agena shot them to a record altitude of 476 miles before bringing them down to their original orbit. Collins opened the hatch and shot some pictures of the stars. Collins later made a half-hour space walk and Gemini 10 came down on July 21, less than three miles from the recovery ship.

In mid-August the United States launched Lunar Orbiter 1 which was put into orbit around the moon. The orbit was lowered to twenty-five miles above the moon from which it took pictures of the moon and of the earth. The pictures were fuzzy due to problems with the camera.

On September 12 the mission of Gemini 11 began. It was a magnificent success. Conrad and Gordon docked with the Agena already in the first orbit. The astronauts took many spectacular photographs of the earth and of the space vehicle. They soared to an altitude of 850 miles, setting a new record. Richard Gordon’s space walk was rather unsuccessful and had to be cut short. Gemini 11 made its re-entry by computers. By the time it splashed down, Gemini 11 had set seven new records.

In mid-November Surveyor 2 was sent to the moon. It was a complete failure. Scientists lost control of the vehicle in its flight and it crashed on the moon without taking any pictures.

In November Lunar Orbiter 2 was sent up and put in a high orbit around the moon. From 28½ miles up Lunar Orbiter 2 took an excellent picture of the crater Copernicus.

The Gemini program was completed in mid-November with the flight of Gemini 12. Jim Lovell and Ed Aldrin docked with
Agena 12 in the third orbit. Aldrin later opened the hatch and stood up while he photographed the earth and stars for 2½ hours. Aldrin also made a 129 minute space walk during which he did not experience the difficulties encountered in previous flights.

With the successes of Gemini behind them, U. S. scientists’ goal is now to put a man on the moon in 1968.

As we have seen, man made spectacular advances in 1966 in his race for the moon. However, we as Christians know that this would have been impossible without God’s will and direction. While man sees only what he has done, in man’s achievements we see the amazing handiwork of God. These things are also of comfort to the church. While man boasts about how great his world is, and that it is getting better, we see that this world is becoming more and more corrupt all the time. In this we know that the end is near and we are comforted by the fact that Christ will soon come to take us into everlasting glory and perfection in heaven.

TRUTH vs. ERROR

by REV. ROBERT C. HARBACH

ASSURANCE: DEFINED AND PROMISED

From the age of the Puritans we have the following statement on Assurance. “Can true believers be infallibly assured that they are in the state of grace, and that they shall persevere therein unto salvation? Answer: Such as truly believe in Christ, and endeavor to walk in all good conscience before Him (1 John 2:3), may, without extraordinary revelation, by faith grounded upon the truth of God’s promises, and by the Spirit enabling them to discern in themselves those graces to which the promises of life are made (1 John 3:14, 18, 19, 21, 24; Heb. 5:11, 12), and bearing witness with their spirits that they are the children of God (Rom. 8:16), and be infallibly assured that they are in the estate of grace and shall persevere therein unto salvation” (1 John 5:13; II Tim. 1:12) – Westminster Larger Catechism, Q. 80.

From this twentieth century we have another statement. “Assurance is the believer’s full conviction that through the work of Christ alone, received by faith, he is in possession of a salvation in which he will be eternally kept. And this assurance rests only upon the Scripture promises to him who believes” (Scofield Reference Bible, note on Jude 1). There is quite a difference between the two statements. The products of this age are almost nothing to be compared to those of the Puritans and Reformers. The former statement is well balanced and rather comprehensive. The latter is meagre, and omits the work and witness of the Holy Spirit. The Puritan statement has assurance by faith and that on evidence. The Scofieldian statement has assurance by faith without evidence. This may serve to reveal how far this boasted age has gone from the
truth as held in the age of the Puritans. The Puritan statement is heart-searching and flesh-withering. The other statement pulls up and bolsters deceit and delusion.

Assurance is, specifically, of what? that the Word of God is infallible and plenarily inspired? That is not the meaning. Neither is it assurance that salvation is by grace alone. It is rather assurance that I am not a child of the devil, nor a child of Adam, merely, but a child of God. This assurance is no mere supposition, or strong wish; it rests on sure evidence supporting the reality. It is necessary to be enlightened with the doctrines of Scripture, but also to have the realization that the Lord has wrought a supernatural work in you to make you a new creature in Christ. Assurance is a knowledge which the Holy Spirit implants in your heart through the Word of God, and which teaches you that your faith is not a product of nature or self, but is "the faith of God's elect" (Titus 1:1), that your love for Christ is no sham, but true, and your manner of life that of a regenerated person.

As the Westminster Larger Catechism has it, assurance of the saints is "by the Spirit enabling them to discern in themselves those graces to which the promises of life are made." The Westminster, then, insists that the promises are particular. They are made only to faith and every saving good. Assurance of everlasting life is ours when the Holy Spirit enables us to discern in ourselves those Christian graces. How does He do that? In the introduction to His Sermon on the Mount, the Lord gives a description of the character of the elect. They are there described as the only class of people who are blessed. Their character is described in such detail that they may be identified to us. "Blessed are the poor in spirit." They are blessed poor because they have come to know that "in me, that is, in my flesh, there dwelleth no good thing" (Rom. 7:18). I realize this when I believe that I owe the Lord ten thousand talents and have nothing to pay. I am spiritually bankrupt. I must come to the Fountain of living waters without money and without price. I come to know that first, last and always, I am without strength, as David confessed, "poor and needy" (Ps. 86:1). This means that I have been saved from the Laodicean self-sufficiency which imagines, "I am rich . . . and have need of nothing."

"Blessed are they that mourn." This is the deepened sense of the foregoing, namely, that I am a spiritually poverty-stricken pauper in myself and before God. That realization is expressed in this next "blessed." Happy the mourners! They mourn over their paucity of spirit! They cry, O "my leanness! my leanness! woe unto me!" (Isa. 24:16). "I know," says the Christian, "that I am a product of grace, yet I am grieved that there is not the growth in grace or the spiritual fruit evident in me that I could desire. I make a wretched return for the love the Lord has shown me. When I would do good, evil is present with me. I am a believer, but I see unbelief in myself. I am one of those blessed poor, but there are still swellings of pride in me. My sovereign Lord has given me divine amnesty—how else would I enjoy peace and reconciliation with him—yet there are surgings of rebellion in me. A blessed man, yet I still cry, O wretched man!

"Blessed are the meek." Meekness is strength in control and yielded up to the service of God. It is pliability, but more, heart-melting submission to the will of God. It is the opposite of self-will. All these beatitudes identifying the elect are opposite to the characteristics pleasing and popular to the world. Opulent Laodiceans will not make the poor in spirit to feel at home. The cry, "my leanness!" or "O wretched man that I am!" will be scorned by the sophisticated self-righteous. The meek will never be popular in a self-assertive world. There are "elevated" brethren who will look down on us because we are not yet completely "out of Romans 7 and living in Romans 8." According to the Nihilistic philosophy, godliness is both a sign of weakness and a naïve failure to stand on one's own feet. When then social graces, not soteric graces become the rage in the world, we become suspicious of it. Civil disobedience (anarchism), not evangelical obedience, is the attraction of the hour. When modernists, liberals and other left-wing extremists, pretend to admire the Sermon on the Mount, they attempt to palm off on us one of the most absurd and hypocritical lies we ever heard.

Consider one more beatitude. "Blessed are they which are persecuted for righteous-
ness sake . . . Blessed are ye when men shall revile you . . . for My sake.” Persecution which comes for righteousness sake is antagonism which does not come for wrongdoing or for giving offence. It comes for holiness and righteousness of life. If men are persecuted because they are morose, haughty, slandering, and self-centered, they cannot claim the high status in which this beatitude puts truly blessed men. The world hates consistent Christian conduct because it condemns them. Especially those you might deem your brethren, but because they are really only worldly, empty professors will breathe their fire at you and belch their sulphuric smoke in your face. You will not be surprised at an enmity which stems, deleterious root and branch, from the beginning (Gen. 3:15). Humility, meekness and righteousness are marks of election openly detested and disavowed by the antichristian world. The Lord was saying, “Blessed are the tender lambs at which the vicious dogs snap.”

What a standard by which to judge myself! It deflates my pride, it topples my Ego, it cuts me right down to the dust. Then let everyone genuinely interested in enjoying the comforting grace of assurance search his own heart as to whether the marks of these “blessed” are present. Do you “mourn” lack of conformity to the image of Christ, the littleness of your faith, the coldness of your zeal, the weakness of your love? Are you “meek,” i.e., have you thrown down the weapons of your warfare against God and taken Christ’s yoke upon you? Have you yielded up your members as instruments of righteousness to God? Have you presented your body a living sacrifice to Him? Do you hunger and thirst after righteousness? Do attendance on the means of grace and personal study of Scripture reveal such hunger and thirst? Are you “merciful?” Do you know the meaning of “I will have mercy and not sacrifice” and of “Mercy rejoiced against judgment”? Are you “pure in heart,” i.e., “casting down imaginations, and every high thing that exalteth itself against the knowledge of God, and bringing into captivity every thought to the obedience of Christ”? If not, then you are not “the light of the world” (Matt. 5:14), but “great darkness” (6:23)! If not, you may neither profess nor regard yourself as a blessed subject of Christ’s kingdom.

Applying the judgment of this standard, the question is not whether you measure up fully, with all this spiritual fruit completely developed. It never is in this life. The question is, are these evidences of grace at all present? It is not, are you sinlessly perfect, but is it your desire to be? It is not, do you mourn over sin in your members as you ought, but do you know by experience anything about the plague of your heart and its desperate wickedness? It is not, are you as meek as Moses, or Jesus, but is the principle of the thing implanted in your heart? It is not, have you grown in grace remarkably, but do you have grace at all in your soul? That can have no growth which has no existence. That is the question on which we must be sure (II Peter 1:10). We do this when we search for and find the spiritual evidences “to which the promises of life are made.”

This assurance is the opposite of carnal security, as well as doubt and unbelief. But as our form for the administration of the Lord’s Supper shows, it is not opposite to self-examination. We would not want to carry self-examination to such an extreme that we become self-centered, too introspective, or “introvert.” But there is a place for personal heart-searching, proving yourself, your own faith, testing your motives in the light of Scripture. Are you not interested whether “the root of the word is found in you” (Job 19:28, Heb.)? The look within is necessary because the work of regeneration is the good work God begins “in you.” As outlined above, we may determine whether that work has been begun in us. If so, the Lord will perfect it to the day of Jesus Christ.

BEACON LIGHTS

SPECIAL REMINDER

All applications for scholarships from the Protestant Reformed Scholarship Fund must be sent by May 1, 1967.

CRITIQUE

The copy for “Critique” was not received; next month Miss A. Lubbers will continue her series on “Protestant Reformed Christian Instruction.”

THE EDITOR

Seven
"THE OTHER SIDE OF THE COIN"

"... For they verily for a few days chastened us after their pleasure." Hebrews 12:10

There are two sides to every story. Thus goes the adage. Many are such common proverbs which contain much truth in their very simplicity and homeliness. There are two parts in every covenant. Thus we read in the liturgical form for Baptism of infants. And there are two sides to the commandment of the Lord, "Children obey your parents in the Lord; for this is just." Ephesians 6:1.

Even Jesus spoke to the Pharisees in his day of "doing the one without neglecting the other." In a sinful world this is the very thing which becomes impossible since the very foundations are being destroyed. Hence, we have strikes in industry, revolution in the world of nations, rebellion against authority, and tyranny on the part of kings! They all prate as being "benefactors" of those who are ruled, which in reality they govern with utmost ruthlessness. Above this vanity of vanities the world never rises. In the place of judgment there is iniquity. This is vanity and a great vexation of spirit. It is one of the evils under the sun concerning which the Preacher speaks. It is when a child becomes a king, and a Rehoboam says, "My little finger shall be thicker than my father's loins. And now whereas my father did lade you with a heavy yoke, I will add to your yoke: my father hath chastised you with whips, but I will chastise you with scorpions." 1 Kings 12:10, 11.

Such conduct on the part of those who rule is a universal evil under the sun.

Yes, we see this in the home. Sometimes this is even in a Christian home. It is then discipline not for the benefit of the child, to correct him in the fear and nurture of the Lord, but simply for "their pleasure." It is not from love, but because the parents are piqued by their child's conduct, and they simply administer chastisement in a fit of resentment. The writer to the Hebrews recognizes this cruel fact. No, in the church we do not then start a protest march against parental cruelty. We maintain the foundations, remembering that we must bear patiently "since it pleases God to rule us" by such parents with weaknesses. We remember that no discipline is far worse than bad or imperfect discipline. Thus, we keep the course because we have the guiding star of the law of God, and we would come to the haven of rest, and finally arrive at the perfection to come.

This all points up that there is another side to the coin.

Such is the plain teaching of Scripture.

This is an evil which besets all who are in authority. Only when the king-priestly function is evident in the church do we, in principle, rise above this evil. Then there is a being touched with the feeling of the infirmity of the people. This was the prime requisite of a high-priest who must "have compassion on the ignorant, and on them that are out of the way; for that he himself also is compassed with infirmity." Hebrews 5:1-3.
Paul writes to the church at Ephesus, “Ye, fathers, provoke not your children to wrath.” This same injunction is also meant for all who are in authority: teachers, kings, minister, elders, consistories, Classes and Synods. The danger is not imaginary that the nearer one is to the one who errs and is weak, that the more we are “emotionally involved” and, if in any place of ruling, we punish for “our pleasure.”

That is the other side of the coin!

The sad part is that then the chastisement of the “Father of spirits” is absent, which tends to salvation and life. Many a stern disciplinarian is a mere brute! The love of Christ is absent, the tender compassion of a fellow sinner who is placed in office is lacking.

It is interesting to hear how this was officially acknowledged and confessed in the Westminster Catechism’s instruction on the Fifth Commandment of the Decalogue. After articulating carefully what is the honor and respect the inferiors owe to their superiors in Questions 127, 128, the Catechism asks the following Questions:

Q. 129 — “What is required of superiors towards their inferiors?”

A. It is required of superiors, according to that power they receive from God, and that relation wherein they stand, to love, pray for, and bless their inferiors; to instruct, counsel, and admonish them, countenancing, commending, and rewarding such as do well; and discountenancing, reproving, and chastising such as do ill; protecting them and providing them with all things necessary for soul and body: and by grave, wise, holy and exemplary carriage, to procure glory to God, honour to themselves, and so to preserve that authority which God hath put upon them.” (Col. 3:19; Titus 2:4; 1 Sam. 12:23; Job 1:5; 1 Kings 8:55, 56; 11:18, 7:7; Deut. 6:6; Eph. 6:4; 1 Peter 3:7; 1 Peter 2:14; 1 Tim. 5:8; Titus 2:15)

Q. 130 — “What are the sins of superiors?”

A. The sins of superiors are, besides the neglect of the duties required of them, an inordinate seeking of themselves, their own glory, ease, profit and pleasure; commanding things unlawful, or not in the power of inferiors to perform; counseling, encouraging, or favouring them in that which is evil; dissuading, discouraging, or discountenancing them in that which is good; correcting them unduly; careless exposing or leaving them to wrong, temptation or danger; provoking them to wrath; or any way dishonouring themselves, or lessening their authority, by an unjust, indiscreet, rigorous or remiss behavior.” (Ezek. 34:2-4; Phil. 2:21; John 5:44; 6:18; Isaiah 56:10, 11; Deut. 17:17; Daniel 3:4-6; Acts 4:17; 18; 1 Peter 2:18-20; Gen. 38:11, 26; Deut. 25:3; 1 Kings 12:13-16)

No, my youthful reader, this is not the only side of the coin; it is the other side of the coin. It means that we must do the one without neglecting the other. All error begins as one-sidedness and does not take into account the other side of the story.

Two sides to the coin: those ruling and those who are governed!

In the world those ruling are tyrannical benefactors. But amongst you it shall not be thus, but he that is greatest among you, let him be as the younger; and he that is chief as he that doth serve! Luke 22:26.

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**CURRENT EVENTS AND COMMENTS**

Not long ago, Dr. Donald Wilson, Professor of Physical Anthropology at Calvin College, addressed an assembly at East Christian High School here in Grand Rapids. I was privileged to obtain a tape of his message, from which the information in this article is taken.

By digging up and examining fossils, he attempts to reconstruct the history of man. Dr. Wilson spoke particularly about the age and origin of man. Concerning the age of man, he had this to say:

I would say that the general conclusion of Reformed theologians in the study of Biblical chronology is that the Bible is basically silent on the age of man.

What does nature say?

The conclusion that we come to is that the age of man is certainly to be calculated in terms of tens of thousands of years, and with high probability, in terms of hundreds of thousands of years. We really don’t know how old man is. Scripture is basically silent, nature is

BEACON LIGHTS
seeming to indicate that man is very, very old.

First of all, I do not believe that the general conclusion of Reformed theologians is that the Bible is basically silent on the age of man. Studies of Biblical chronology have been made, notably by Ussher, and these would seem to indicate that the age of man can be calculated to within a few years, say a thousand at the outside. These studies place the age of man at approximately six thousand years, a far cry from Dr. Wilson's tens or hundreds of thousands of years.

Secondly, because he believes in double revelation, there is room in his theory for conflict between his understanding of Scripture and his understanding of nature. He believes that there are two separate revelations: that of Scripture and that of nature. Hence, there is room for differences of opinion concerning the age of man. However, it is the teaching of Scripture and our Confessions that nature and Scripture are two aspects of one revelation, leaving no room for contradiction in God or His revelation. Since our understanding of nature is always subject to Scripture, man cannot be tens of thousands of years old.

Concerning the origin of man, Dr. Wilson emphasized that in the light of Scripture we must hold that man was the result of a direct act of God, and that man was unique in his relationship to God and to nature. The following is a rather lengthy quotation containing a large part of what Dr. Wilson said about the origin of man.

What is the specific interpretation of Genesis 2:7, "And God formed man of the dust of the ground"? What is the meaning of this? It has been traditionally interpreted to mean that now you have dust, now you have ground, now you have man... that this was a direct act. Scripture does not specify directly what is the origin of Adam. It merely indicates what the material was that God made Adam from.

You have a choice here: either you believe in special creation, traditionally conceived, or you believe in atheistic evolution. This is a false choice that is sometimes given to you. These are not the only possible choices for you to make. It's like saying, "Are you a member of the John Birch Society, or are you a Communist?", implying that you are either one or the other... This is a false dichotomy. There are other positions than the John Birch Society and the Communist Party. And let us not ever present the options to people in such a way that they have to choose between false options. Let me just talk about many of the options available in Genesis 1.

People say that you either believe that the days of Genesis 1 are either 24-hour periods of time of creation... or that they are long periods of time. I would like to suggest to you that they were neither of these things... Let me give you another view: that they were not days of creation at all, but they were days of revelation. The story would go something like this: That one day God takes Moses out, and He says, "Moses, I want to tell you how creation occurred. I said, 'Let there be light, and there was light, and I saw this light, that it was good.' And this ends the lecture for today." So Moses goes home, and he writes down, "And God said, 'Let there be light, and there was light; and God saw the light, that it was good.' This is the first day. The next day, God takes Moses out again and says, "Let me tell you how I separated the waters above from the waters below." Moses wrote this down, and he said, "This is the second day... and on through the sixth day.

And so Genesis 1 constitutes then the class notes of a course taught by God himself, with one student, Moses. The days of Genesis 1 do not represent days of creation, but they represent days in the life of Moses, days of revelation in which God revealed His creation to Moses.

Dr. Wilson said that this was not his view, but that it was a possible explanation of Genesis 1. He said, "There are a number of real good Christians who hold to this particular view." The word "day" could also mean a section of a story, similar to a stanza, or an epic, a view which is "very consistent with basic principles of interpretation of the Reformed faith."

Dr. Wilson continued:

What are our options concerning the origin of man? One particular view is that when God created, he created all species separate, basically as they look today. There is also another view which holds to the belief that God brought man's
body through an evolutionary process, and that sometime in human history God placed into that body a human soul, thus constituting man.

Another view:

That God took an existing primate form, and by a miraculous conception, Adam and Eve were conceived in such a way that they were born constituting man and woman.

Another view:

That when God created, He created all species separate, and that at the time everything came through a total evolutionary development, so that man originally looked like an amoeba... When God created, He created a whole series of amoeba-like forms in such a way that one had the potential of becoming a man, while another had the potential of becoming something else. Here you believe in total separate development and a total evolutionary process as well. Here you have special creation in its most traditional form, as well as having total evolutionary development at the same time.

The problem that we are facing is not an easy problem... I do work in a Reformed frame of reference. I am committed to the Bible as the Word of God... But we have a number of problems.

We do not know whether the days in Genesis refer to 24-hour periods of time, 24-hour periods of revelation, long periods of time, or whether they refer to aspects of a story. We do not know the details of the age of Adam, the origin of Adam, the date of the flood, the universality of the flood.

The only thing we want to impress upon you is that we are working in terms of two revelations; that God has revealed Himself to man in Scripture and in nature.

The important thing for us to know is not what specific view you hold to, but an appreciation of the kinds of views you can hold to within the terms of a Reformed frame of reference. You need a particular open-mindedness. Let us be sure about that 90% of the things we do agree on, and let us be open-minded about that 10% of the things we disagree on.

It must be emphasized that although Dr. Wilson said that he did not hold to these views or options, he did say that they were possible views that could be held in a Reformed frame of reference. This is contrary to the idea of the antithesis and to Scripture itself, which is very plain on the matter of creation.

The options themselves are so un-Scriptural that they do not warrant criticism, but I would like to make a comment on one subject which I believe is very crucial to our understanding of the Genesis narrative. I refer to his statement that to believe either in special creation or in atheistic evolution (all evolution is atheistic) is a false dichotomy. Dr. Wilson here uses a false analogy, saying that belief in special creation is in relation to belief in evolution as membership in the John Birch Society is in relation to membership in the Communist Party. But there is no common ground of comparison between Scriptural creation and evolution, John Birchers, and Communists. Scripture stands on a level by itself, and cannot be used in a relationship of this kind. This only seeks to destroy the sharp line of the antithesis and to try to create a common meeting ground between Scripture and atheism.

I would like to ask a question on one other matter. Dr. Wilson consistently used the term "special creation," implying that there is "non-special" or "ordinary" creation. What is the distinction between "special creation" and "creation"? Such a concept of special creation is foreign to Scripture. Is not all of God's creation special?

Why did I present this speech to you? In order to give you a specific example of the work of science with its aim of destroying the Bible. So often one can hear talk of vague theories, but I feel that this brings things down to a concrete level. And this is not true only here in Grand Rapids, but occurrences such as this are becoming more common all over.

In conclusion, especially we as young people should know that whenever we stand on strict Scriptural interpretation, no one can sway our views. Let us "be ready always to give an answer to every man that asketh you a reason of the hope that is in you with meekness and fear."

MARK HOEKSEMA
OPEN FORUM

Dear Mark,

In response to your question in the March issue of Beacon Lights I have the following comments and suggestions to make.

I believe that the lack of attendance of singspirations is due primarily to the fact that such short notice is given. Lately a notice appeared in the bulletin of First Church informing people of a singspiration to be held that same Sunday night in Southeast Church. No other notice was given. Many people who would ordinarily have gone did not because of previous engagements which they did not care to break. The result: a very poor turnout for a very worthwhile singspiration.

Another problem is the lack of special numbers. Right now our singspirations usually have no more than one special number. At singspirations outside of our Protestant Reformed community, there is a ratio of approximately one special number to every four songs. If there were more special numbers the audience would not become tired of singing. People look forward to hearing these special numbers, and more interest in singspirations would necessarily follow.

The problem of publicity could be solved by setting up a regular schedule of singspirations. People could figure on a singspiration on a certain Sunday night of every month. On this night they would make no other arrangements but to attend the singspiration.

The problem of the lack of special numbers could plainly be solved by having more special numbers. There is certainly no lack of musical talent in our churches, and it should not be too hard to find people who are willing to perform at a singspiration.

I would like to conclude this letter with a twofold appeal. First, I would like to ask the sponsors of our singspirations to publicize them much more than they have in the past. Secondly, let each one of our young people give his wholehearted support to our singspirations.

Yours in Christ,
CHARLES KREGEL, Jr.

NEWS

from, for, and about our churches

GEORGIA HENDRICKS

The correct address of Rog Kamphuis is:
SP/4 Roger A. Kamphuis US55329461
Btry A., 4th Bn 28th Arty.
Fort Sill, Okla. 73503

Address of Mike Engelsma:
Pvt. Michael Engelsma US54957097
Co. D, 43rd Engr. Bn. (Const.)
Fort Benning, Georgia 31905

Our young men express their appreciation for cards and letters that are sent them. Let’s continue to remember them!

The Martha Society of Doon has been sending boxes of baked goods to the members of their congregation in military service. These boxes are greatly appreciated. Surely more of our young men would like to receive one too. Let’s go to it girls!

Jaylen Stellinga (Doon) stationed in Vietnam, wrote that he often finds himself under fire and in danger. Let’s not forget Jay and all the others in our prayers.
CALLS

Randolph, Wisconsin, has made a trio consisting of Revs. M. Schipper, D. Engelman, and C. Hanko, from which they hope to call in the near future.

Rev. J. Heys has accepted the call from our Holland, Michigan congregation.

BIRTHS

Daughters were born to Mr. and Mrs. C. Westra (Southeast) and Mr. and Mrs. R. Miedema (Hudsonville) and a son to Mr. and Mrs. John Blankespoor (Doon).

ILLNESSES

Rev. Schipper has been able to return to teaching catechism classes, leading the societies, and preaching for at least one service.

Mrs. H. Stellinga (Doon) was hospitalized due to complications resulting from a burn.

LECTURES AND SPECIAL EVENTS:

In spite of inclement weather, the lecture presented by Prof. H. C. Hoeksema on March 16, on Limited Atonement, was fairly well attended.

The Beacon Lights sponsored an Easter Singspiration, March 26 at First Church.


The Young People’s Society (Loveland) sponsored a Singspiration, Sunday evening, Feb. 19. The collection received has been put into a fund for the purchase of new seats in the church auditorium.

TEACHER NEEDED

The Free Christian School of Edgerton, Minnesota is in need of a teacher for grades 1-4 for the 1967-68 school term.

Please send applications to:

ALLEN HENDRICKS
R.R. II
JASPER, MINNESOTA 56144

HELPS FOR BIBLE STUDY ON THE JAMES 3

REV. J. HEYS

(Continued from last month)

3) And Jesus says that not what enters the mouth but that which comes out and is expressed by that tongue defiles the man!

(b) But the tongue corrupts the whole existence of mankind.

1) The teacher can and often does corrupt the masses and sets the wheel of society and of nations in ways of gross evil.

2) And in this connection bear in mind that the tongue of the false teacher sets in course, starts the wheels turning of the whole scheme of doctrine and walk of life of the church.

a) With their tongues teachers make big boasts but have not the courage to go all the way that their doctrines lead.

(b) But the fire has been kindled—by a little flame of departure—and the whole course of that denomination’s or congregation’s existence is determined; and those taught dare to take the next step until there is a big fire, a world of iniquity in the church and the whole course of nature is defiled.

(c) From past history and current church life give examples of this power of an evil tongue to kindle fires that defile churches.

C. It is set on fire of hell.

(1) It was the serpent’s tongue as used by the chief inhabitant of hell that kindled the spark that produced the fire that destroyed the whole world and made it
a world of iniquity instead of one of righteousness and corrupted the whole
to death or existence of man!
(a) It is not literally set on fire out of hell, for it is not literal fire.
(b) And Satan is not yet in hell.
(c) But he is the chief potential inhabitant of hell, and the tongue is set on fire
by him and through his servants who likewise belong in hell.
(2) This is still the case today and explains why that tongue cannot be tamed.
(3) It is set on fire of hell because it is the heart's sounding-board.
(a) Man's heart is his spiritual control-center out of which are all the issues of
his life.
(b) Perfection consists in having a clean heart, that is, one that loves God.
(c) Having such a heart a man will be able to control not only his tongue but
all his members in the way of God's commandments.
(d) But our hearts were kindled with hatred of God through Satan's words
expressed by the serpent's tongue, and the tongue reveals this.
1) The tongue is attached directly to the heart spiritually.
2) Since that heart is set on fire with hatred of God, the tongue is a fire
kindled by hell.

(4) It cannot be subdued.
(1) Wild beasts have been subdued in one way or another—the word is subdued
rather than been tamed.
(2) The tongue no man can subdue.
(a) It is an unruly evil from the negative point of view and a death-bearing
poison receptacle from the positive point of view.
(b) It cannot be subdued because it is set on fire of hell.
1) We are spiritually dead and not simply sick, weak or partially paralyzed.
2) Satan is a powerful enemy for whom we are no match.
3) Although God can and does subdue that tongue by regeneration, the
statement stands that no man can subdue it.
(c) Even in the regenerated child of God the tongue still wags without control.
1) We will bless God therewith, but we will still continue to curse men.
2) That which you will not find in nature, namely, a well bringing forth
both bitter and sweet water and a fig tree bearing olive berries, you will
find in the regenerated child of God.
   a) These things ought not so to be.
   b) But that they are there indicates regeneration, for the uncontrolled
tongue of the unregenerated brings forth only bitter water and
cursings.

   a. James delves more deeply into the previous matter.
      (1) This is not a new and unrelated subject.
         (a) This is evident from verse 14 where he speaks of the boasting (rather than
glorying as in the translation) of the evil tongue of a would-be teacher.
         (b) His question likewise of, "Who is a wise man . . .?" links the two matters
together by presenting the perfect man as a wise man with understanding.
(2) It is the requirement which God must give us, if we are to control our tongue
and cease from being many teachers.
   (a) We must have a wise and understanding heart.
      1) A wise heart is one that is able to choose what is right in God's sight.
      2) An understanding heart is one that knows the will of God and is
experienced in that knowledge so that it can choose the good.
      3) This wisdom and understanding must be in the heart, if the tongue is
to be controlled. See also 2, c, (3), (a) above.
   (b) And God must give us that heart through regeneration.
      1) It is the life and wisdom from above of which Jesus spoke to Nicodemus

Fourteen
in John 3:3 where we ought to read, "Except a man be born from above . . . ."

a) There is one from below wherewith we are born; and this one is devilish, that is from out of the mind of the devil, characterized by his thought and will, and sensual, that is, minding the fleshly, sinful ambitions of the soul of the natural man.

b) But the one above is from Him Who is above at God's right hand.

2) And this God must give us, as is plain from the fact that it is from above stored where we cannot reach it but can be and is dispensed by God in Christ.

b. The wisdom which God gives us, exactly because He gives it is:

(1) Pure (chaste, holy, sacred) for it comes from out of a pure fountain. What is that fountain?

(2) Peaceable, not contentious. (Remember that the many teachers were exactly contentious, ready at a moment's notice to speak up and give their mind and opinion and criticize all others. One such an opinionated "teacher" can cause a lot of trouble in a church (congregation) or in a society. What then, when there are many such "teachers"? No wonder James speaks of envying, strife and every evil work. And how evident that he is not yet off that subject.

(3) Gentle and easy to be entreated, that is, pliant and easily persuaded. Discuss in regard to what? Doctrine? Ready to compromise? Look the other way when there is sin and false doctrine in the congregation? If not, what then? Compare also with 1 Corinthians 13:4-7.

(4) Full of mercy and good fruits as contrasted with bitter envyings and strife. What is the implication of the fact that the wisdom from above is full of mercy and of good works?

(5) Without partiality and without hypocrisy, that is, not bigoted, not unfair and not talking out of both sides of the mouth, not deceptive.

c. And he presents the indispensable requirement of righteousness.

(1) Our conversation is our entire walk of life and not simply our speech.

(a) Literally it is our turning up and down. Even the English word has the idea of turning in it as also suggested in the similar word conversion.

(b) Unless all of our activity is right our conversation is not a "good" conversation, verse 13, nor is it righteousness, verse 18.

(2) Righteousness is sown in peace by peacemakers.

(a) Again the underlying idea reverts to the first verse of many teachers who sow strife and by their tongues become troublemakers rather than peacemakers and stir up in the congregation "confusion and every evil work, and allow the church no moment of peace. What a world of fire and iniquity the tongue is!"

(b) For the peacemaker is one who is meek.

1) Meekness is not weakness but strength of character. Jesus was the meekest of men and yet likewise the strongest in spiritual character, The Righteous One and The Peacemaker.

2) Meekness, as in the third beatitude is the strength to commit all to God Who will recompense and Whose alone may vengeance be. With such you cannot further strife in the church, and such will not be many teachers. The wisdom from above will produce this meekness.

(c) When the wise man with his meekness sows peace, the harvest will be righteousness.

1) You cannot please God and walk right before His face by an uncontrolled tongue that moves you to be swift to speak and to stir up strife, confusion and every evil.

2) But a wise man will be meek with that wisdom that is pure, peaceable, etc. and sow that which is right in God's sight.

a) Do not consider yourself wise, if your tongue is not controlled by a
meek heart, and if you are ready to add yourself to the list of many teachers.

b) But do not deceive yourself either to consider yourself righteous. See also James 1:20.

c) Be slow to speak except in regard to crying unto God for such wisdom and meekness that you may have the fruit of righteousness in your life.

JAMES 4
by REV. DAVID ENGELSMA

A. Verses 1-10: War in the Church — its cause and corrective.

1. Verse 1.

a. Explanation:
James now turns his attention to the “wars and fightings” that racked the churches of his time. These were not conflicts of the churches with unbelieving enemies but were conflicts within the churches between brother and brother. “Wars” are distinguished from “fightings” as the overall and large-scale battle is distinguished from the many, smaller skirmishes of which the battle is made up. James asks what the origin is of this wretched condition of the churches. Ultimately, the origin is hell, as verse 15 of chapter 3 indicates. For that “wisdom” of men in the church which makes internal strife in the church is “not from above” but is “devilish,” that is, it is a hellish “wisdom.” But the origin within the fighting people themselves is their “lusts.” The word lusts is literally pleasures. It is the same word as that used in the Parable of the Sower (Luke 8:14: “pleasures of this life”). It appears again in verse 3 of this chapter, where our version again renders it, “lusts.” Lusts are sinful desires; “pleasures” describes these sinful desires from the viewpoint of their aim, namely, giving pleasure to me. “Pleasures” are not only the desires in a man that we call sensual and refer chiefly to the sexual desire but they are all sinful desires. All lusts in a man aim at pleasing him; they make him the center of the universe. Thus, they lead to war in the church. Men seek themselves instead of seeking the welfare of the brother.

b. Questions:
1) Does James include in the “wars and fightings” the internal conflict that sometimes becomes necessary in the church because of heresy?
2) What does Galatians 5:15 indicate is the natural end of “wars and fightings” that continue in a church?
3) What does Philippians 2:1-11 indicate is the opposite of the miserable spectacle presented in James 4:1?

2. Verses 2, 3.

a. Explanation:
The roots and causes of the open warfare in the churches are now described. These roots are the sinful minds and wills of the fighting people. There is, first of all, the evil desire to please and advance oneself (“Ye lust,” vs. 2). Warfare in the church begins here. This points to the fact that the underlying trouble in a church torn by “wars and fightings” is pride, the pride of the members. This makes it understandable that James in verse 6 utters the warning that God resists the proud and that in verse 10 he admonishes the fighters in the church to humble themselves. The root of the warfare also includes that the lusting individuals “kill and desire to have.” The word translated “desire to have” is a word that could be rendered “envy.” One who desires to please and advance himself murders and envies other men, that is, he envies them and thus murders them inwardly. For he begrudges them what they have that he lacks; he resents their getting in the way of his advancement; in the absolute
sense of the word, he “desires to have.” To the self-centered and self-seeking man, all other men in the church are so many barriers in his way which must be removed. The Heidelberg Catechism stresses that envy is secret murder in Lord’s Day 40. The inevitable result is wars and fightings. Open warfare is the child spawned by pride and mothered by envy. In the church of Jesus Christ, it is and must be dealt with as a bastard.

b. Questions:
1) To what does James refer when he mentions “asking” in verses 2 and 3?
2) How is it to be harmonized that the foolish fighters “ask not” (vs. 2) and yet “ask” (vs. 3)?
3) James shows that some dare to “ask” while they are killing their brothers. What does Jesus say about this in Matthew 5:23, 24?
4) What does Lord’s Day 40 of the Catechism say is the positive calling of the believer with regard to his brother?

3. Verses 4-6.

a. Explanation:
In a stinging rebuke, James calls the people to whom he writes, “Adulteresses” (the words “Ye adulterers” in the A. V. are not in the original). These are the people who are waging wars, according to verses 1-3, and whom James has before addressed as “My brethren” and even “my beloved brethren” (see James 3:12 and 2:5). They are the members of the churches of Jesus Christ. But James now addresses them in accordance with a great evil they have made themselves guilty of. Inasmuch as they are friends of the world, they are adulteresses and are rightly called such. If, therefore, it be true of you or me personally that we “will be a friend of the world,” we too are included in the address: “Adulteresses.” James does not mean literal, physical adultery; as in verse 2 he did not mean literal murder. Rather, he refers to spiritual adultery which consists of their living in a relationship of love with the world who are married to God. The Church is the wife of God; when a church or a member of the church becomes unfaithful to God, in not loving Him, and loves the world instead, that church or that individual commits adultery (against God). James explains what the adultery is when he talks about “the friendship of the world.” By “the friendship of the world” is meant the friendship that a man, on his part, wants to make and actually does make with the world. Correspondingly, “enmity with God” refers to the hatred and opposition which that man directs towards God. What James intends to deny (and what we always like to suppose is possible) is that a man can be a friend of God and a friend of the world at the same time. The people addressed by James were “double-minded” (literally, “doublesouled,” vs. 8); they tried to be disciples of Christ and friends of the world at the same time (see Matt. 6:24). By insisting that a friend of the world sets himself forth as an enemy of God, James hopes to startle these people out of friendship with the world.

The question then is: What, if anything, does this have to do with the murderous envy and the wars that rage in the churches? Does James only mean to say that besides being envious of and hostile to each other, these people were also conforming to the world about them? Or, is there a connection between warfare within the church and friendship with the world? There is a definite connection. As verses 5 and 6 show, James is still dealing, in verse 4, with the basic problem of warfare and strife in the church. The sin of friendship with the world, however, is connected with that basic problem. First, the same unspiritual attitude that leads to wars in the church also leads to a craving for the friendship, the pleasures and treasures, and the regard of the world. Secondly, the wars in the church are rooted, we saw, in self-seeking, in the desire to advance and aggrandize oneself. But this is the basic principle of the world. One who stirs up wars and fightings in the church is a man who reveals himself as one with the world as
far as the world's basic principle is concerned, namely, "Seek Yourself." He has adopted the world's standards. It comes as no surprise that he uses the world's methods of killing, fighting and warring.

Verse 5 is a difficult verse to understand. No doubt, our version translates the text incorrectly. It contains two major mistakes: 1) The second part of the text, “The spirit that dwelleth in us lusteth to envy,” is not a quotation from Scripture, as the King James Version has it. 2) The "spirit" in the second part of the text is not man's spirit but the Holy Spirit of Jesus Christ. We must read verse 5 as two, distinct questions, thus: "Or do you suppose that the Scripture speaks vainly? Does the Spirit that He (God) caused to dwell in you long enviously?" These are rhetorical questions, of course, to which the obvious answer is "No!" When read this way, verse 5 becomes understandable in its connection with the preceding verses. James has said, "Whoever wills to be a friend of the world, displays himself as an enemy of God" (vs. 4). This is strong language; this is a sharp accusation. To show that the statement is nevertheless accurate, since based on the teaching of Scripture, James immediately puts the question to his readers, "Or do you think that Scripture speaks vainly?" The second question of verse 5 relates directly to the warfare in the churches. This warfare is rooted in envy. James now asks: "Is this envy the work of the Holy Spirit that God sent in you? Does He produce envy?" These two questions bring home to the consciousness of James' audience that they are walking in a way of disobedience to the Scripture and of rebellion against the Holy Spirit, that is, a way of opposition to the rule of the Lord Jesus.

In verse 6, James answers his question of verse 5 about the work of the Spirit. The Spirit does not work envy; on the contrary ("But") He gives more grace. Then, he quotes Proverbs 3:34. By this quotation, James indicates that the fundamental trouble in the strife-ridden churches was pride and that the greatest need was the need for humility. A question is: What is meant when James says that the Spirit gives more grace? Some say that "more" is the equivalent of "abundant." But if we take the phrase, "He gives more grace," in connection with the phrase, "He gives grace to the humble," we see the meaning to be that the Spirit gives grace to a man so that he becomes humble and then the Spirit continues to give more grace, grace of growth in humility, grace of resisting pride and envy, grace of all the benefits of salvation. But the point is that the fighting, world-loving people addressed by James are in a bad way, since their walk reveals that they are not at the present time ruled by the Spirit of the Lord Jesus Christ.

b. Questions:
1) What is the "world" of verse 4? (See John 17:9, 14; 1 John 2:15-17)
2) In 1924, the Christian Reformed Church declared that the world is the object of God's "common grace," that the worldlings have sin restrained in their hearts by the Spirit and that these worldlings can perform deeds of civic righteousness — does this declaration foster and even demand friendship with the world, contrary to James' warning? If it does, how does it do so? Does this declaration also promote "enmity with God?"

(To be continued in next month's issue)