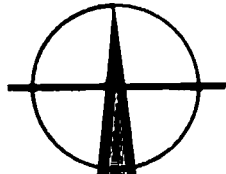


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*FOR PROTESTANT
REFORMED YOUTH*



November, 1973

The Witness

Pitfalls of Pride



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THE CALLING OF THE CHRISTIAN IN EVERYDAY LIFE

TOM DE VRIES*

How often have you conceived of your everyday, possibly hum-drum life, as a calling from God? Possibly never. For most of us the work-a-day week is routine. It seems not to be directly associated with God's work on this earth. Every day we get up at a particular time, grab a lunch, and books or tools, and are off to a day like many others. Is this a calling? Are we in this way fulfilling God's work on this earth?

Often the word calling is associated with a position in the church, such as minister, missionary, elder, or deacon; or possibly even extended to the work of a Christian school teacher. Generally it is not carried so far as to include the work of a laborer, clerk, farmer, mechanic, or student. This should never be so.

All God's children are called to the office of all-believers. Everyday life is included in this office. God's children have the calling to function in this world, and in eternity, as God's friend-servants. This then is calling of all the elect: the summons to be God's servants in the offices of prophet, priest, and king. No matter what our occupation might be, we fulfill these offices in our everyday work.

When the undersigned was a student in a Christian high school there was an organization called The Future Kingdom Workers. This name suggested that persons do not work in God's kingdom until they have chosen a particular occupation, and that even then only certain occupations could be considered "Kingdom Work." This could never be true. All God's children have the calling to work in His Kingdom in whatever capacity God has called them to.

In order to see how this is realized, we might look at the Heidelberg Catechism question and answer 32: "Why art thou called a Christian?" The answer tells us

1) that I may confess His Name, 2) that I may present myself a living sacrifice to Him, and 3) that I may fight against Satan and sin in this life.

Confessing God's Name in everyday life comes with difficulty. In some situations we often find ourselves to be the only Christian. So much easier it is to sit back unnoticed than to make our confession. Confessing that we are children of God need not be done in the pushy method of street-corner evangelists, but in a manner which can yet be seen by all. The Christian ought to be obvious at work or in school. He is recognized by the language he uses, the types of entertainment he condones, by his prayer at mealtimes, and possibly by his dress. He is honest when it comes to money matters and in all things never attempts to be anything less than straight-forward. It soon becomes apparent to all that this same person regards Sunday as the Sabbath and not simply as part of the weekend of worldly pleasure. He always stands prepared to explain these actions and to give confession of his salvation in Christ. These virtues are revealed as a reflection of the virtues of God who has called us from darkness into His Light.

In this instance we can take the example of Daniel, who being a young man in his teens, was called into a difficult position by God. All the pleasures of Babylon were offered to Daniel; however, "Daniel purposed in his heart that he would not defile himself with the portion of the king's meat nor with the wine which he drank." Rather Daniel confessed God's Name by eating pulse, rejecting that which had been dedicated to the Babylonian god. In Daniel's confession he was not ashamed. Never do God's children suffer shame in the confession of His Name.

We must be thankful to God for the calling which He has given. Our calling, be it laborer or highly regarded pastor, has come from God. It should be with joy that we awaken each morning and realize, that as we prepare for another day's work, we

*We wish to welcome Mr. DeVries as our new associate editor. He has taught in schools and is presently living in Loveland, Colorado.

are fulfilling God's mandate for us and for His Kingdom on this earth.

Our thankfulness can never include the idea of repayment. This would be impossible. Rather gratitude can be this alone: that we show forth His glorious praises. This is done by putting on the new man, walking in His righteousness, and declaring that God has delivered us from the power of sin and has redeemed us in the blood of Christ. Here also is an antithesis: we cannot serve God and mammon. So also in our calling we reject sin and hate darkness.

This is the third area of our calling according to the catechism: "That with a free and good conscience I may fight against sin and Satan in this life, and after-

wards reign with Him eternally over all creatures." We have no difficulty in recognizing sin. It is all about us; it is that old man with which we constantly struggle. We have heard the Ten Commandments over and over; we are warned of sin in our daily Scripture reading; it is preached on Sunday.

With "a free and good conscience" leaves us with no doubt as to the outcome of the fight. We are certain of the victory. We are assured that in our calling we represent the cause of Christ in our fight on this earth. We shall "reign with Him eternally over all creatures."

Be faithful and thankful to God for the calling which he has given on this earth.

CONTRIBUTION

BIRTH CONTROL: WHAT MUST WE SAY ABOUT IT?

DAVE ZANDSTRA

Many a young couple goes into marriage not realizing the full responsibility of the relationship. They look at marriage and see roses and sunshine and all things good.

What happens, then, when those young couples are faced with the question of having a child. Many say, we can't afford one: our financial means are too small. We have house payments, and car payments, and electric bills, and gas bills and all other kinds of bills. These needs must be met before we can rear one child, much less more children. Others say, we aren't psychologically able to have children: the husband or wife isn't mature enough to have them. Still others say, if our families are as large as those of our parents we will soon push ourselves off the earth. There simply isn't enough room for everyone to have six or more children. What will result is starvation and famine, sickness and disease. Crime will rise with the growing population. Overpopulation already is felt in many of the countries of the world.

What must we say concerning birth control then? Shall we use it, because certainly the above arguments seem to be cause for worry? As Christians, ought not

we to concern ourselves with such problems? I will attempt to answer these arguments for birth control from a Christian point of view, and show that these arguments are ill-based and grow out of a faith that has become dangerously dim; a faith that has grown so weak that birth control is the answer, not prayer and confidence that God will take care of our every need.

People who claim that they cannot afford a baby because of a untold number of bills that must be paid may be very correct in saying so. They may have bills and a great number of them. Many may be hard to meet. Such people ought to ask themselves, where is my faith? How strong is it? When is my burden too heavy to bear? Who can answer these questions? Does not Scripture say, with Jesus speaking these words in Matthew 6:25-34: "Therefore I say unto you, take no thought for your life, what ye shall drink, nor yet for your body, what ye shall put on . . . Behold the fowl of air, for they sow not neither do they reap or gather into barns; yet your heavenly Father feedeth them. Are ye not much better than they? . . . Whereof of God so clothe the grass, which today is, and tomorrow is cast into the oven, shall He not

much more clothe you. O ye of little faith? Therefore take no thought, saying, What shall we eat? or, What shall we drink? or, Wherewithal shall we be clothed? . . . for your heavenly Father knoweth that ye have need of all these things . . .”? As Christians, we therefore must conclude that Scripture knows no language of: “I can’t afford a child.” When we talk in this manner it is a sign of a weak faith, a faith that has grown dim.

People say we aren’t psychologically ready or mature enough to have children. How true it is, but very sad. One might wonder why. Today marriage is taken so lightly that one need not look far to see how true it is that a great number of young married couples aren’t mature enough to have children. Let us go one step further: What are they married for? How can they be married in the Lord and not desire to bring forth the covenant seed? If they aren’t mature enough to rear children they aren’t mature enough to be married.

Concerning those who are worried about overpopulation, looking at it from a human point of view they have every right to be worried. The earth is only so big and isn’t getting any bigger but its population is going steadily upward. Starvation and malnutrition are growing. Crime is rising

alarmingly. Again, what must we say about it? These things, my friend, are in the hand of God Almighty, He upholds all things that happen, even the rising population which causes us so much worry. Our concern is ill-founded when we can be assured that all things are governed by the Providence of God. God tells us that we shouldn’t worry about these things. He commands us to bring forth the covenant seed and raise them after the manner of our parents.

Must we then condemn birth control unequivocally? No, but then we must be very careful in what circumstances we use birth control. I believe Scripture finds room for birth control when for medical reasons it is dangerous for our wives to bear children. Then too, we must be very careful with what we call medical reasons.

Birth control, therefore, is a dangerous practice that has crept into our Christian circles. We must be very careful to detect when we use birth control; for selfish reasons and reasons which grow out of a weak faith are condemned by the Scriptures. And remember that it is a fearful thing to put our faith and trust in man’s reason and neglect the carefully planned counsel of God!

FEATURES

The Literary Framework Theory

MARCIA OPHOFF

Does it matter to you if the Bible tells us how the world was created or just that it was created? If it does, the following article should bring your spiritual temperature to the boiling point. The following theory was surreptitiously taught to me while I attended classes in a Christian college. Show your sensitivity to such attacks on your beliefs by searching for an answer that is scripturally sound, and then send your opinion or contribution to the **BEACON LIGHTS**.

While studying the story of creation recorded in Genesis 1-2, I found many differences between Genesis 1-2:4 and Genesis 2:4-25. For example, in Genesis 1-2:5 there

is (1) a statement of fact, “And God said, Let there be light.” (2) An orderly account of creation in a seven day sequence. (3) A sequence of creation beginning with light and ending with man, and (4) many repetitious phrases. Compare this to Genesis 2:4-25 here there is: (1) No statement of fact, but an explanation, see Genesis 2:4. (2) No mention of the days on which things were created. (3) No sequence from man’s creation to women, and (4) no set pattern of phrases.

Why are there these differences? What reasons could there be? Why would Moses write the same story in two styles? Perhaps Moses in writing the Pentateuch first

wrote the law and then wrote the reason for the law: namely creation and the fall. Accepting the above makes the differences understandable. If Moses did write Genesis after he wrote the law, creation would be seen in the light of Israel's redemption, the Exodus. Then the account of creation became a theological confession that God is Creator as well as Redeemer. If this is the purpose of the creation account, then it matters little how creation took place. It matters only that it did take place and God is Creator. Genesis 1-2:4 and Genesis 2:4-25 combine with their differences to become one theological confession written by Moses in a literary framework declaring God to be Creator.

Moses was influenced by the society he lived in and by the literature of his day, just the same as we are. The form Moses used to convey the creation account was the Jewish workweek he lived in, six days of work and one day of rest. Also the writings of Moses' contemporaries, the Babylonians, show similarities in form to Genesis,

"Both accounts of creation (that in Genesis and that in Enuma elish) mention a watery chaos The basic concept of heaven and earth is essentially the same . . . , and the sequence of creation acts is essentially the same: light, firmament, dry land, luminaries, and man, with God or the deities resting at the end of creation."

These similarities prove Moses was writing Genesis 1-2:4 in the literary form of his day. By comparing the creation account

to the Jewish work week and the Babylonian writings we realize we must distinguish between faith and form. We accept as faith that God is Creator but acknowledge the how of creation to be in a literary form.

Moses was not writing to make the study of biology, geology, botany, etc. unnecessary. He was writing a creed of faith that God is Creator. This is what we must believe, that God created the heavens and the earth. Genesis is not telling us how the world was created, don't make the "how" an article of faith. New facts on the "how" of our world are always being discovered. Accept God as creator and don't be concerned with scientific facts which may weaken your faith. Believe only the infallible, inspired Word of God.

If the literalists still need further proof, examine Psalm 105:31 and 34 compared to Exodus 11:12-13. Here as in Genesis "and God spoke" simply means God has all power.

The view of creation I have just explained is called the literary framework theory. In summary, this theory holds that God created the heavens and the earth because the infallible Word tells us this. It also defends the believer from scientific attack since it gives him a creed to cling to. If you are a thinking and conscientious Christian, creation becomes a beautiful article of faith when viewed in the light of the literary framework theory.

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1. Arnold B. Rhodes, *The Mighty Acts of God* (Richmond, Virginia, 1964), p. 29.

The Admonition of the Christian Brother

LEWIS BRUINSMA

Upon reading this title, the question may arise of what exactly is meant by "admonition." According to *Webster's Seventh New Collegiate Dictionary*, the meaning of admonition is "the counsel or warning against fault or oversight."

When we admonish a brother or sister in the Lord, we tell him to repent of a sin which he has committed. But when we come to this point we must be very, very careful. We must not go to that

brother or sister in a "holier than thou" attitude and tell him bluntly, "Repent or be damned!" This kind of attitude will only make the brother bitter and harden him in his sin. After all, we are no better than our erring brother. In ourselves, we are all totally depraved and hell-bound. Thank God for His grace and mercy towards us, His people, that He sent His only begotten Son, Christ Jesus, to die for us and remove our sins.

We must go to our erring brother out of the love of Christ Jesus, as His ambassadors, and explain his sin to our brother alone, showing him why he must repent of the sin. When we go to that brother to admonish him for a sin known only to a limited number of people (a secret sin), we may not then go and spread the brother's sin to the whole congregation. We call this kind of behavior "backbiting" or "wicked gossip," and then we ourselves become guilty of a great sin and should be severely admonished for it. This backbiting does not build up the brother spiritually, but rather tears his soul apart. Is it any wonder then if the brother does not repent but becomes very bitter and stubborn in his ways?

Good will, eagerness, and Christian charity should be ever foremost as we seek to correct each other.

When we admonish an erring brother, we should always desire a confession from him in private, so that the sin will not become public. An erring brother must still be admonished if he commits a public sin, a sin about which everyone knows, such

as adultery, but it has to be reported so that the consistory may begin laboring with the brother in the hope that there will be repentance and confession.

If repentance does not occur with the erring brother in regards to a secret sin, then we must take with us a witness to try to move our brother to repentance. If we have labored with a brother for a long time and repentance is still not achieved, then finally we must report both the sin and the brother to the consistory. It is then the consistory's responsibility to labor further with the brother.

In all of our admonishing, we must follow the principles found in Matthew 18 and we must pray that the brother will see his sin and repent. If as a result the brother does repent, there is definitely forgiveness from God, and so there must also be forgiveness from the brothers and sisters in the church. We must receive the brother back with all of the warmth and affection which the father in Jesus' Parable of the Prodigal Son gave to his wayward son. Then there will be true harmony and peace, and the love of Jesus in the hearts of His people.

The Theological Philosophy of Erasmus

RICHARD PETERSON

Desiderius Erasmus of Rotterdam became, in the opinion of many, one of the greatest evangelists of the Christian humanism. For it is often said by many that he laid the eggs which Luther and Calvin hatched. This is what I will briefly write about, that is, his theological philosophy.

Erasmus changed his prime directive in life after his meeting and correspondence with John Colet, who sought to bring the English students closer to the Christian truth by introducing the study of Greek in the cathedral schools, in 1499. As a result, Erasmus turned his studies from a mere intellectual form to that concentrated effort of spiritual revival within the Church by the means of his humanist writings and teachings.

Although many reforms were necessary within the Church, the most obvious was that of the preaching which he writes: "When the preacher 'preaches' of serious

matters the audience is fast asleep, but when he 'speaks' of old wives' stories they presently awake and prick up their ears and gape after it."¹ It is this matter which started Erasmus on the road to reform within the Church, for he had no inclination whatsoever to depart from the doctrine of the Church. Rather he aimed for the restoration and purification of the monastic orders and the abuses which resulted.

With these abuses firmly acknowledged within his mind he set forth to the library of Premonstratensian monastery of Parc, near Louvain. There he found the manuscripts of Valla called "Annotationes of the New Testament" and his critiques. After studying these notes he took upon himself the task of restoring the New Testament in its purity. That is, he translated the New Testament from the Greek into simple everyday terms which made it more up to date.

But his motivation behind this act was not that of a spiritual form but rather a philosophical endeavor. For he felt that every Christian should study the New Testament in its purity and original meaning to better understand the ancients, orators, poets, and philosophers, especially Plato. For this he received his degree in theology, 1506. This was the start of his new theological philosophy which was aimed against the old views of the Church which he writes: "It is a great and wilful conspiracy on the part of the conservatives to suffocate good learning and make the old ignorance triumph."²

To put Erasmus' theological philosophy in the proper light we will first look briefly at his true character that is brought out through his writings and not the false front that he put on to those who sympathized with his cause.

"My mind is such that I think nothing can rank higher than friendship in this life. nothing should be desired more ardently, nothing should be treasured more jealously."³ It was because of this view in relationship with his fellow man that he never took sides until he was forced to do so with Luther. When this event occurred he wrote the following: "There are those who sow the seeds of dissension between their townships in order to fleece the poor unkindered and to satisfy their gluttony."⁴ This he said even though he claimed that he never read any of Luther's works. As a result, he did everything within his power to stop any publication of Luther's works, and in general, all those who opposed his philosophy. This is brought out in his book, *The Praise of Folly*.

In this writing he calls all those men who do acts which he detests the most foolish of all men. It is from this time forth he sets himself upon a pedestal in regards to his theology and all else is heresy. This is brought out more clearly when he says, "I am sure I am the only person that both can and have made it good."⁵ That man judges wisdom by foolishness in such a degree that there is scarcely anyone to be found that is subject to many errors. Also, men that write against each other in regards to theology do it in their vain attempt to obtain fame. And that they will obtain fame by those

things which are written because they are received by the common man with delight. This is expressed by Erasmus when he states: "Praises that proceed from the mouths of men that praise themselves are lies."⁶ But why is it Erasmus has found himself one of the most wise among men and all others fools? This he answers by saying: "Nature, so providently ordering it, lest this mischief of wisdom should spread further annoying mankind."⁷ This has become his authoritative basis for his writings later on in life.

After studying the Scripture in his attempt to achieve the true meaning of them that men may return once again to the simple teachings of Christ, he came across such texts as Jeremiah 10, Solomon 15, 7 and 1, and I Corinthians 1. It is from these texts that he concludes the following: "All Christian religion seems to have a kind of alliance with folly and in no respect to have any accord with wisdom."⁸ In answer to this statement made by Erasmus I Corinthians 1:18 will put his attempt of simplification and generalization of Scriptures and of his understanding in the proper light. "For the preaching of the cross is to them that perish, foolishness; but unto us which are saved, it is the power of God." So now one will ask, were all of Erasmus' labors a vain attempt to understand the Scriptures, and if this is so then Erasmus had no part in the Reformation in this respect. The answer to this question can be found in I Corinthians 1:21. "For after that in the wisdom of God the world by wisdom knew not God, it pleased by the foolishness (referring to how the world saw it) of preaching to save them that believe." The thing that makes his view on the Christian religion so striking is that these texts, I Corinthians 1:18 and 21, were the same ones that he used to prove his point. It was in this same manner he interpreted all of Scripture and developed his Theological Philosophy. But he was in no means ashamed of these views for he often said, "You see how much I have comprehended in a little."⁹ But what about those times Erasmus came across a place in Scripture which seemed contrary to the doctrine of Christ or the divinity of His nature? To this he would answer and say the apostles have made the mistake and not I. To prove

this he would use 1 John 4:1. "Beloved, believe not every spirit, but try the spirits whether they are of God: Because many false prophets are gone out into the world." However, if this be the case, in Galatians 1:12 it tells us that the Scriptures are not of man but are of Jesus Christ. And if this be true, which it is, then Erasmus himself is denying the divinity of Christ and His nature, that is, He is the Word, John 1. Well, so much for Erasmus, for this paper is about this Theological Philosophy and also of the statement so commonly said, "Erasmus laid the eggs which Luther and Calvin hatched." With this in mind we shall examine his views on religion and what he felt it should be.

Erasmus felt that Christ can be either a god or a bad influence on man depending on how he sees Him. This is why it is so necessary for man to understand the simple teachings of Christ, and that His purpose here on earth was to set an example to all men on how they should walk. Only by this means could man see that which is good and model his life after it. It was this form of thinking that Erasmus shows in *Julius Exclusus* through the sanction of Peter who voices Erasmus' views of man's salvation and not his own. "Well then, did you win many for Christ by the holiness of your life?"¹⁰ This was the question that was asked of Julius, pope of the Roman Catholic church at this time. In this question put to Julius it is implying that Christ died for "all men" and that man is capable of choosing and doing godly things according to how he sees fit. This is a direct denial of Ephesians 2:8 and 9, "For by grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: It is the gift of God: Not of works, lest any man should boast." It is at this point Erasmus would say, yes, but it is up to man whether or not he accepts those gifts or not. With this in mind he developed his version of 'free will' and appealed to the people as a humanist. "I have an idea that the people at any rate can be cured."¹¹

It was at this time Luther wrote to Erasmus and wanted to know just where he stood, for it was Erasmus' nature to take sides for the one with whom he could be most secure. It was through this correspondence that Luther wrote, *The Bondage of the Will*,

which said that the human will is bond to sin and is not free like Erasmus maintained. "As it is written, There is none righteous, no, not none: There is none that understandeth, there is none that seeketh after God" (Romans 3:10 and 11). This is the state of the natural man apart from the grace of God which Erasmus denied on the basis of John 15:7, Matthew 19:16-20, and Mark 10. But as Luther pointed out this is the state of the believer in relationship to God only after he has been totally and completely ingrafted into Christ which is the work of God and in no way of ourselves.

After this series of correspondence Erasmus did not admit to himself his error but rather wrote the following: "Holy Scriptures contain secrets into which God does not want us to penetrate too deeply, because if we attempt to do so, increasing darkness envelopes us, so that we might come to recognize in this manner both the infathomable majesty of divine wisdom and the feebleness of the human mind."¹² The irony of this whole matter is that Erasmus could not understand something so plainly brought out in Scripture throughout but could fully comprehend the Trinity. "The mystery of the Trinity was so clearly expressed that a mathematician could not chalk it out more plainly."¹³ As a result, Erasmus went back within the fold of the Roman church, from which he claims he had never been apostate, and worked for material reforms rather than spiritual. His encounter with Luther and some of the other reformers left a bad taste in his mouth and continued his belief that their followers were inspired by the devil for he could tell it by the expression upon their faces.

It was because of this bitterness toward the reformers that Erasmus set forth to condemn those people within the Roman church. Some of these groups which he condemned followed after the reformers but were afraid to leave the church and did not take their stand for the truth strong enough to be excommunicated while others still continued in their own folly. Erasmus wanted to reach a compromise between these two groups within the church. For example, he condemned all those cardinals who called themselves successors of the apostles when they did not even have a perfect knowledge of the Old and New

Testament. Also he condemns all those men who try to understand such divine things as the creation, original sin, and the virgin birth.

Erasmus' reforms were by no means limited to his church but also to the state and people. To the state he condemns all those "wicked" princes for using the flock of Christ (all men) for their own selfish needs and desires through war. And that they murdered Him — Christ — by the evil example of their lives through pestilence. To the people, he condemns them for performing pilgrimages to the Holy Land to pay for their sins but he does not, however, condemn indulgences. If there is a difference between the two I fail to see it. And lastly he condemns all those who change Holy Writ according to their own pleasure and purpose. Yet with all this so-called divine inspiration which Erasmus claimed he had he still refers to the law of God as the law of Good Works.

Those men who say that Erasmus laid the eggs which Luther and Calvin hatched is a direct attempt to belittle their works of reform, only through the grace of God, and to give the initial work of reformation to a man who did everything he dared to prevent such acts. All those things which Erasmus had done during the reformation was a direct result from his own egotistic and vain nature. However, we must give credit where credit is due in reference to those men who did hatch and are hatching those eggs which Erasmus laid. That credit must go to those men who were and are responsible for bringing heresy into the reformed churches. The reasons why I use the present tense is because Erasmus' Theological Philosophy can be plainly seen in Explo '72 and Key '73, and all those churches who back such movements. Such common beliefs as: "Accept" Christ as your personal Saviour and you will have eternal life. Or, Since I have accepted Christ my life is better. I have given up drugs and now get high on Him by the Spirit. Such concepts of the Christ Luther and Calvin never knew but Erasmus did. I am sure that you can think of many more examples, but the fact remains those churches who call themselves reformed and hold to such heresy do not have anything

whatsoever to back those beliefs when it comes to the Word of God.

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1. Desiderius Erasmus, *The Praise of Folly* (The University of Michigan Press, 1966 — translated by John Wilson), p. 75.
 2. John Huiyinga, *Erasmus and the Age of the Reformation* (New York: Harper and Row Publishing, 1957), p. 137.
 3. *Ibid.*, p. 12.
 4. *Ibid.*, p. 154.
 5. *Erasmus*, p. 22.
 6. *Ibid.*, p. 9.
 7. *Ibid.*, p. 38.
 8. *Ibid.*, p. 143.
 9. Desiderius Erasmus, *The Praise of Folly* (The University of Michigan Press, 1966 — translated by John Wilson), p. 119.
 10. Paul Pascal, translation, *The Julius Exclusus of Erasmus* (London: Indian University Press, 1968), p. 50.
 11. *Ibid.*, p. 90.
 12. Ernst F. Winter, translator and editor, *Erasmus — Luther Discourse on Free Will* (New York: Frederick Ungar Publishing Company, Inc., 1961), p. 8.
 13. *Erasmus*, p. 108.

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FORMER MEMBERS OF YOUNG PEOPLE'S SOCIETIES AND PARENTS

The Federation Board is very interested in any information you might be able to give us about the PRYP Federation, especially from the years 1940 to 1952.

We would like to know about Conventions, outings, officers, meetings, and members, and almost anything else you can tell us about our past history.

Please send your replies to:

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Grand Rapids, MI 49504



FROM THE PASTOR'S STUDY

REV. M. KAMPS

The Witness

What does it mean to be a witness? One who wishes to be a witness must have first-hand information. If one has second or third-hand information, then his witness will be unreliable. Let me use an example: If John, who has never met Jim, gives you a long account of what Jim said or did, you may be assured that you are not getting the facts. We have all at one time or another experienced this fact of life. Second and third-hand "facts" are usually questionable. This is true, because, when information is relayed from one person to another, to still another, there is occasion for misunderstanding, forgetting, for making interpretation which are passed along as the original facts, all of which constitute distortion of the truth. A witness must know of what he speaks. He must be an eye-witness of the event and he must be able to say that he heard that which he says was spoken. Such a witness you can trust.

The apostles were true witnesses. They spoke of what they saw and heard. The apostle John was a witness. He wrote to the church about the Word of Life, Christ Jesus. Look at his credentials to be a witness: "That which was from the be-

ginning, which we have heard, which we have seen with our eyes, which we have looked upon, and our hands have handled, of the Word of Life. For the life was manifested, and we have seen it, and we bear witness . . . that which we have seen and heard declare we unto you . . ." (1 John 1:1-3). Such a witness knows what he is talking about and speaks with authority. You must trust that what he says is the truth. Not to believe him would be foolishness.

But I don't want to call your attention now to John's witness. After all, the apostle John is not The Witness; but he is a witness among many witnesses.

The Witness is He of whom the apostle witnessed. The witness is Christ Jesus. His witness is true! All the church is built upon the foundation of His witness. The believer puts all his hope and confidence in the testimony of Christ, who is the revelation of God.

To what or of whom is Christ a witness? In the apostle John's gospel narrative chapter 3:32 we read that He that is from heaven testifies of what *He hath seen and heard!* What did Christ see and hear? And

of what does He testify? In answer to these questions we can say, negatively, Christ did not testify about what He saw and heard of His first thirty years on earth. He does not speak of His earthly family. Of Mary and Joseph and their other children He doesn't speak, though we may be sure He saw and heard much. Jesus' testimony isn't about the community and society in general.

Positively, you know of whom Christ is the witness. Of God! The eternal, almighty, thrice Holy God of heaven and earth. But is that possible? Can a man be a witness of God, whom no man hath seen at any time (John 1:18). They have neither heard the voice of God nor seen His shape. Can a man, the finite creature, speak with authority of things heavenly and spiritual? Can one testify, be a witness, to things which eye hath *not* seen, *nor* ear heard, neither hath entered into the heart of man? Yes it is possible, but possible only for God to send such a witness. If one is to be the witness of God, He must be more than a mere man, more than even a sinless man. He will have had to have beheld God face to face.

The apostle John in his gospel narrative writes of those things which reveal to us the divinity of Jesus of Nazareth. It is exactly according to His divinity that Jesus hath seen and heard and come down from heaven. Jesus is not of the earth and does not testify of things earthly. But He is from heaven, and declares things which are heavenly, the divine. Jesus, the Son of God and exactly because He is the Son, is the witness, who testifies concerning God, whom no mere man hath seen at any time.

The eternal Son beheld the Father eternally. The Father spoke, as the ever speaking God, of Himself, of His will and counsel. God the Father eternally revealed Himself to the Son. The Son saw and heard eternally! In fact the Word God speaks eternally of Himself is the living personal Son. "In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with (toward or facing) God, and the Word was God" (John 1:1). No wonder, Jesus could say, "I am the truth." What did Jesus, the Son of God, see and hear? Our answer can only be partially complete. But we can say this much at least. First, that He must lay

down His life for His sheep, for this was His Father's will. Secondly, of all which God had given to Christ, in eternal election, Christ should lose nothing but should raise it up again at the last day. He came to do His Father's will. What was His Father's will? What more did Jesus tell us of His Father's immutable, sovereign will? Jesus' testimony to the will of God does not cease with His death. He continues to speak as the risen Lord. It is the glorified Christ that we hear speaking to us in the writings of the apostles. Before His death Jesus said there were many things of which He could not speak because the church was unable to bear them. But after the Spirit is poured out upon the church, Christ continues to speak. He gives witness to that which He hath seen and heard of God. You ask, "What more did He see and hear there?" Jesus testifies, first of all, that we were chosen in Him before the foundation of the world. Secondly, he declares that it was God's purpose in election to make the ungodly holy and to be without blame. Thirdly, that we, who were not sons, might receive the adoption to be the children of God. All of which salvation is to the praise of the glory of God's grace. No man may boast before God. And in the fourth place, Jesus testifies of God that it is God's eternal purpose according to His good pleasure to "gather together in one all things in Christ, both which are in heaven, and which are on earth; even in Him" (Eph. 1:10). What God purposes will also certainly be realized, for He worketh all things after the counsel of His own will. Our God is not impotent to achieve His will and purpose. Our God doesn't offer salvation; He saves! The Witness is the Christ of Scripture who mightily accomplishes all the Father's will and purpose.

A wonderful and amazing testimony Christ gives! Too wonderful for the flesh. A testimony only Christ could give, for He alone is the eternal Son of God, who hath seen and heard those things, which the eyes of mere men cannot see, and He hath heard the things which the ears of mere men cannot hear.

Jesus declared God to us (John 1:18). He declared God to be the sovereign God, who saves whom He wills to save and them

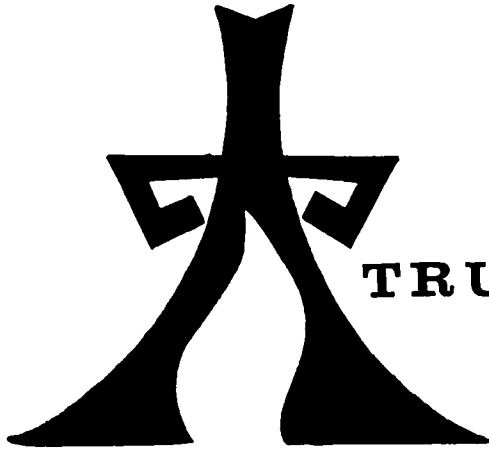
alone. God loves and saves only those whom He chose in Christ, that is the testimony of the Witness. And the Father bears witness that the witness of His Son is true (John 5:37).

This witness we as young people of the Protestant Reformed Church have been privileged to hear. A rare privilege in this day of apostasy. You consider it a privilege, don't you?

Do you believe the testimony of the witness? He that believeth in the Son hath

everlasting life! A few believe by the power of God's grace. All our believing is the expression of the life freely given.

He that believes the testimony of the Witness is aware of the fact that Jesus speaks of him, when He says to God: "For I have given unto them the words which thou gavest me; and *they have received them*, and have known surely that I came out from thee, and *they have believed* that thou didst send me."



TRUTH vs. ERROR

Mercy

God . . . delighteth in Mercy.

REV. ROBT. C. HARBACH

— Micah

In *the Pilgrim's Progress* we meet that beautiful young woman, Mercy, for the first time as she calls on Christiana of a "sunshiny morning." This section of the pilgrimage might be titled, A Morning Call and What Came of It. Christiana, in line with her calling as a Christian witness, prevailed with this lovely person to fall in love with her own salvation. May you and I be so wonderfully used of the Lord!

But Mercy comes to Christiana's home with Mrs. Timorous, which reveals a connection with such other questionable company, too, as Mrs. Light-mind and Mrs. Know-nothing. Now, just why is it that one with such a sweet personality is apparently conversant with the Lightminds and their modern set? For certainly they are of the world, but Mercy is not of the world. Mercy knows better than "to company with fornicators, nor with the covetous, or extor-

tioners or idolaters." Yet she knows how impossible it is to be absolutely altogether separate from the people of this world, "for then must ye needs go out of this world." Mercy is in the world, but not of the world. Mercy is of God, and He says, "I will have Mercy on whom I have mercy." For by nature, the name of this charming Mercy was not Mercy, but Lo-ruhamah, Not-having-obtained-mercy. But then, by grace, she became Ruhamah, Mercy (Hos. 1:6; 2:1, 23), as the Lord promised, I will have mercy upon her that had not obtained mercy. Then it could be said of her, "Blessed are the merciful, for they shall obtain mercy." "So then, it is not of him that willeth, nor of him that runneth, but of God that showeth Mercy. Therefore hath He Mercy on whom He will, and whom He will He hardeneth." This is the answer: God's sovereign predestination according to which He

ordains vessels of wrath to destruction, and elects vessels of mercy unto glory.

Well, then, when Mercy, who was a lily among thorns, saw that Christiana was taking her last farewell of her country to be gone on to a Better Country, she purposed to have more talk with her. So she chose to go with Christiana in the hope she should "find truth and life in what she shall say." Nor would she listen to the dissuasions of Mrs. Timorous, who advised to cut it short and leave Christiana. Mercy was determined to go with her and help her on her way. She knew that was in the line of the promised Messiah, Prince Emmanuel. The Lord had promised concerning Him, "My Mercy shall not depart away from him, as I took it from Saul," or "as I kept it from being near Saul" (Heb.). He, Saul, never had mercy; it was never even near him. Mercy, in actuality, is not near, but far from such acquaintances as she had known, as Hate-good, Mrs. Love-the-flesh, Love-gain, Money-love and Mr. Hold-the-world. No, Mercy hungers with all her heart to be in the company of people in whom she finds "Truth and Life."

Here then is one who is a lovely creaturely reflection of God, fulfilling the divine imperative, "Be ye merciful as your Father is merciful" (Luke 6:36). For "mercy is natural and essential to God . . . it is his nature and essence" (John Gill, *Body of Divinity*, p. 85). "Of mercy it must be said that it is an attribute of God in the absolute sense of the word. God is rich in mercy, not because of or through any revelation to us, but absolutely and in himself" (H. Hoeksema, *Reformed Dogmatics*, p. 115). "But though mercy is natural and essential to God, it is not naturally and necessarily bore (sic) towards and exercised on every object in misery. For then all would share in it that are in misery, even all wicked men and devils; whereas, it is certain they do not; but it is guided in exercise of it by the love of God; . . . He loves whom He pleases, and is gracious to whom He will be gracious! . . . and is governed and influenced by His sovereign will; who 'hath mercy on whom He will have mercy,' Rom. 9:15, 18." Mercy is displayed *only in* and through *Christ*; God out of *Christ* is a consuming fire. It is only in Him (*Christ*, that) God proclaims

His name, 'a God gracious and merciful.' *He* is the mercy-seat, and throne of grace, at which men obtain mercy and find grace. *He* is the channel through which it flows, and through whom it, in its effects, is conveyed to the sons of men. They are right who cast themselves not on the absolute (abstract) mercy of God *out of Christ*, but upon his mercy is displayed in him" (Gill, *ibid.*, p. 87, ital. and paren. added). "The mercy which is 'in common to all men,' of what avail is it to any man?" (Charles H. Spurgeon). A so called 'common mercy' is no avail to any man. "The mercy of God is special and distinguishing, and yet . . . it is not limited to any family or nation, but is enjoyed by all that love and fear the Lord in every nation, Acts 10:34, 35" (Gill, *ibid.*, p. 88).

Where Paul said God "included all under sin, that He might have mercy upon all" (Rom. 11:32), "he is . . . lauding the grace of God towards *all of us* who attain unto salvation (ie., the election and beloved of v. 28, RCH). Most certainly nothing was less in the mind of the apostle than an extension of the mercy of God to all men. His sole object was to prostrate all glorying of the flesh, that we may clearly understand that no man will ever be saved but he whom God saves by grace alone" (John Calvin in *Calvin's Calvinism*, p. 89).

The idea of a general or common mercy was to John Calvin a very wild idea running loose. He says of one who held it, "Pighius, like a wild beast escaped from his cage, rushes forth, bounding over all fences in his way, uttering such sentiments as these: 'The mercy of God is extended to every one, for God wishes all men to be saved; (Pighius has many followers today in so called Reformed circles, doesn't he? RCH) and for that end He stands and knocks at the door of our heart, desiring to enter. Therefore, those were elected before the foundation of the world, by whom He knew foreknew He should be received. But God hardens no one, excepting by His forbearance, in the same manner as too fond parents ruin their children by excessive indulgence.' Just as if anyone, by such puerile dreams as these, could escape the force of all those things which the apostle plainly declares in direct contradiction to such sentiments! . . . Paul positively asserts that, out

of the twins, while they were yet in the womb of their mother, the one was *chosen* and the other *rejected!* and that, too, without any respect to the works of either, present or future . . . but solely by the good pleasure of God that calleth! . . . the apostle testifies that 'it is not of him that willeth, nor of him that runneth, but of God that showeth mercy,' who hardeneth whom He will, and hath mercy on whom He will! . . . the same apostle avers, 'that God showeth forth His power in the vessels

of wrath,' in order 'that He might make known the riches of His grace on the vessels of mercy!' Paul undeniably here testifies that all those of Israel who were saved were saved according to God's free election; and that, therefore, 'the election obtained it; the rest were blinded' (Rom. 11:7)." (Calvin, *ibid.*, p. 152-3.)

The house of Mercy is built on the foundation of election, and to all in that house God is "the Father of mercies" (II Cor. 1:3).



DONNA VAN UFFELEN

Pitfalls of Pride

Pride.

What is it and how is it expressed? How do others react to the quality of pride in a man? In the place of pride, what quality *should* we possess?

We all know the definition of *pride* as "a high opinion of one's own worth," or "conceit." This definition does not give us a very impressive idea of the term, does it? Yet, shown in different ways and in varying degrees, we all have a certain amount of pride in our souls. Because the exhibition of pride, or vanity, is considered to be in bad taste, many of us have found various ways to disguise it, even through a type of modesty which is merely a cover-up for feelings of superiority. Vanity can be shown in manner of dress, or the quality and number of accessories worn. It is a quality evident in those people who do not want to put out much effort for a particular type of work, yet they try to get into the public eye by doing a little "extra special" deed on the side line. Pride is also exhibited in a person who complains that life is bitter and he has always been treated badly by others, that if he had had a chance, a better opportunity or education, he might be worth something.

Pride and vanity are shown in many ways, more in some than in others, but always as bitter enemies. It is difficult to put up with someone who can not accept criticism, one who likes to make the accomplishments of another look like his own, and one who knows just how to make alibis for himself when he makes a mistake. Pride is a childish and immature thing which often has its roots in childhood when a child has parents who give him everything he wants and who boast about him to others. By doing this, parents lead their children into stumbling into the pit of pride, a pit out of which it is very difficult to climb. This pride also leads to injury. A proud person is often sensitive to what others think of him, he is easily hurt or offended; a vain man looks at life to find out what he can get out of it, rather than what contribution he can make to it.

These expressions of pride sound quite familiar, don't they? How many of us can say that we do not have a streak of pride in us? Some of us may be deeper in the pit than others, but who has not been there? And, how can we get out?

In Luke 14, we read a parable which Jesus told to His disciples. Jesus was always

teaching His disciples to be humble men, and here He tells them, and us, about the prayers of the Pharisee and the Publican. The Pharisee is the proud man who prays, "God, I thank thee that I am not as other men are, extortioners, unjust, adulterers, or even as this publican. I fast twice a week. I give tithes of all that I possess." And the Publican, in humility, smites himself on the breast saying, "God be merciful to me a sinner." The lesson which is taught us here is in verse 14, "everyone that exalteth himself shall be abased; and he that humbleth himself shall be exalted."

The pathway to greatness is one of self-denial. The mark for true greatness which Jesus presents is "he that would be great, let him be your servant." We must forget ourselves and submit ourselves humbly to God. We must strive for greatness in Christ's Kingdom and these feelings of pride, vanity, and superiority will fade in the light of Him who is the meek and lowly One.

True humility is a quality which is difficult to exercise; but, this humility is the tool that is required to climb out from the depths of pride.

CURRENT EVENTS AND COMMENTS

Thanks To Be Given

RACHEL LUBBERS

The dried leaves have all blown away and the trees now stand bare against the cold clouded sky. The flowers in all their beauty are gone and the grass no longer grows. The powerful heat of the radiant sun has cooled greatly so that the air remains chilled the whole day long. The clouds of rain have all passed and clouds of snow have moved in. Creation has lost its joyful song of birth and a sad, melancholy song now fills this season of change. As we watch this wonder in creation we submit our thanks and gratitude to our Maker who has given and made all things.

Our thanks does not come to a stop here though, it walks with us into eternity! As we again reach Thanksgiving Day we take special time to remind ourselves of the significance of giving thanks. We must show endless joy for Christ and His suffering so that our happiness will be evident in our service to God and that we may be shown to be a people through Him. We rejoice together as we see a new generation grow up in the church as the older generations pass away. We show appreciation for the privilege of educating our youth in schools of our faith.

Again we remind ourselves of many forgotten blessings, blessings of food in plenty

while others die in the streets from gross starvation. We also have shelter and warmth far greater than we need while many live, never realizing the meaning of either one. We are given so much more than one would dare to ask for that we often lose our appreciation.

A complete Thanksgiving does not end here, however. It reaches out into the world of rejoicing for the great gift of happiness and along with that also the deep pressing sorrow that we are given. We give thanks for sickness which at time steals away our health and for the rising mountains of struggles after which comes blessed peace. And again we offer our thankfulness for the power of death as well as the power of life. For all this we give sincere praise always to our Lord for having taught us what true thankfulness and Christian understanding means for all of these things.

This overwhelming gratitude in return for all of these gifts is what develops enthusiasm and happiness in people! Thankfulness does not stifle participation or create a desire to push our duties on to another man. Rather, where there is thankfulness there is response — response!

Are you thankful? Really thankful?