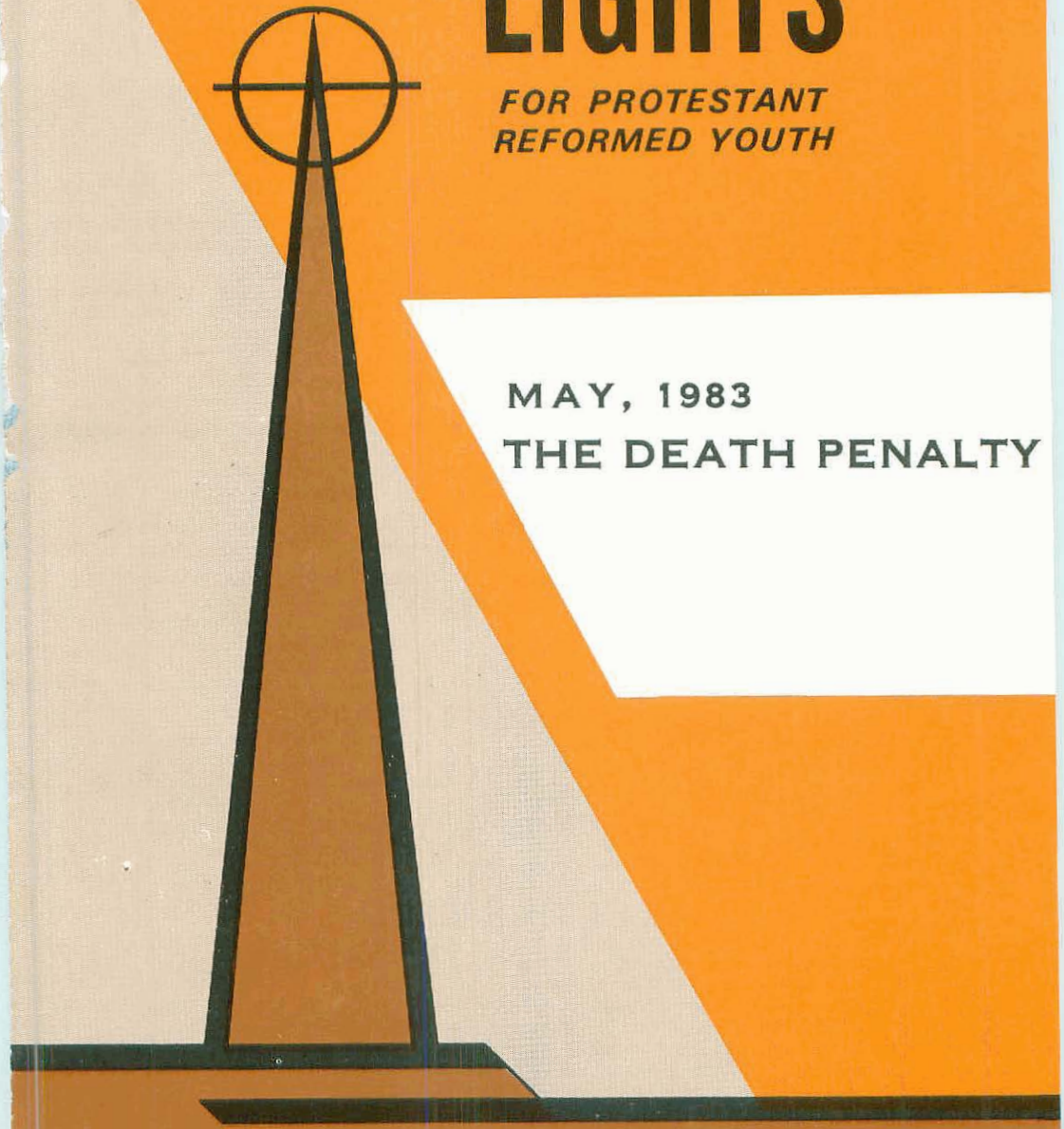
BEACON LIGHTS

FOR PROTESTANT REFORMED YOUTH



MAY, 1983

THE DEATH PENALTY

BEACON LIGHTS

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Editorial Comments

by Dave Moelker

We welcome to the "Current Events and Comments" department of our magazine Mr. John Kalsbeek Jr., who is a teacher at Adams Street Protestant Reformed Christian School and a member of Faith Protestant Reformed Church, Jenison, Michigan. He is no stranger to our pages and we welcome him as he contributes his first article entitled, "The Death Penalty".

*

In this month's Truth vs. Error, Rev. Harbach gives insight into preparation for giving an expression of the hope that is within us, to those who ask it of us. Make mental note of the passages he gives for use as proof texts. Rev. Harbach says this: "to do this, we must learn the truth, know it, and know it well, or we cannot give a reason for our hope, much less defend it." To make the idea which he conveys have more reality, try thinking of yourself on the mission field all alone, and you will begin to realize the pressing importance of study to show yourself approved.

*

The poem entitled, "The Miracles of Jesus" was written by a young lady from our Edmonton, Alberta congregation. She is in "Grade 7" as it is called in Canada. Her name is Rhoda Zylstra. We thank her for her fine poem.

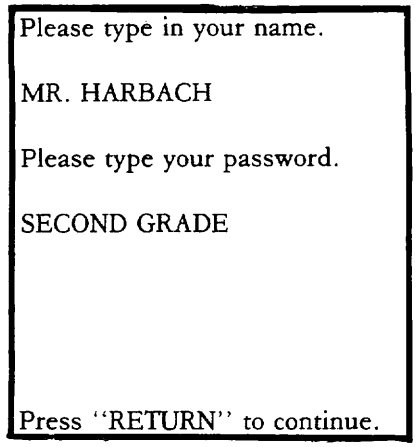
Editorial

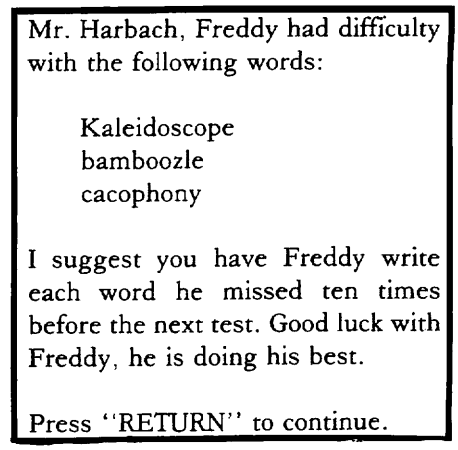
THE MIRACLE TOOL

by David Harbach

Please type your name. FREDDY Press "RETURN" to continue.	Freddy, you are now going to study your spelling words for this week. I will list them one at a time. You must type each word correctly. At the end of this lesson I will list the words you missed and also your score. Good luck! Do your best Freddy. Press "RETURN" to continue.

Later that same day.





As a Protestant Reformed educator, I have seen and have also experienced the beginning of the use of the micro-computer in our schools. I have favored this event and I have already used the computer several times in the second grade. But this I know, our children must realize, from the very beginning of their instruction about the micro-computer, that man uses this tool in subtle ways for his own evil purposes. It is a tool made by man. Therefore, man will bring it into the service of sin and has now already. But as God's children, we must learn to use this tool, not for our own evil purposes, but for the purpose of bringing honor to God. Yes, as good stewards over the things that God gives to us, we must also use the computer to serve God, not ourselves. When the time comes that we can no longer use the computer to serve God, then we must at all costs abandon its use.

In order to use this tool properly to serve God, we need to be aware of its capabilities, uses, and as much as possible, man's intent for using his "miracle" tool. But an intelligent knowledge about the micro-computer is not enough. We need to be spiritually sensitive to its purpose and use. In short, we need to use our sanctified wisdom when using the micro-computer.

In this article, I desire to write about the subtlety with which man uses his "miracle" tool. I use the word miracle in this sense, the capability of a computer is remarkable and astonishing. Man is able to do so much in such a short period of time.

Right now, computers keep a complete list of your monthly bank transactions; print out your monthly bills for heating, electricity, water, etc.; run your car's ignition system; total your weekly food bill; can diagnose your medical problems and prescribe drugs to treat them; keep a complete list of all your traffic violations; typeset and print many of your magazines; and the list can go on and on. Let's face this certain fact, computers have a powerful influence on our lives today.

When we consider this powerful influence we may be inclined to say that it

is for the good, that is, for the good of all men. Therein lies a subtlety. Man, fallen man, has always and will always use everything he produces for the service of sin. "And God saw that the wickedness of man was great in the earth, and that every imagination of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually." Genesis 6:5. Whether it be the car, the radio, the T.V., the video game, or the computer, man will always use them for his own evil purposes. Do not be misled into thinking that man uses these things for the good of the nation, for the good of the church, for the good of us. Underlying the supposedly good intent is the subtle and deceitful purpose of man glorifying man, man lifting himself up to be, not like God, but God. But what does God hate? "An heart that deviseth wicked imaginations," Proverbs 6:18. When wicked man is confronted with this he will deny it. He will claim his intent was for the benefit of all mankind.

If you push the disagreement further, man will tell you that a computer is as subtle as a rock when it is turned off. Oh yes, you can bump into it accidently and hurt yourself, but that is your own fault. He will tell you that when the computer is turned on, it will only do what you tell it to do and nothing more. However, it is here that we may make a careful observation. When the computer is turned on it becomes alive and is subject to the subtlety of man. I use the word alive in two senses. Firstly, it is in active operation or use. The computer turned on can perform many tasks in our life faster than we can. As a result it saves man time so that he can busy himself in a more active leisure life. Secondly, the computer is something essential to the continued existence of something else. The computer has developed so rapidly, that our economy would suffer greatly without it. It is getting to the point in our country where we'll need a computer in order to live in society. Do you think that this will happen because man wants to perform some good?! On the contrary, this points out the fact that man has as his main goal the control of man's life, in the most subtle of ways. Man wants to rule over all men. Man wants to be his own God.

You can also understand how easily the error of common grace can be promulgated with man's use of the computer, not only because the computer can now print this wretched heresy but also because the devil seeks us to believe that man actually does good with the computer. But we say to this what the apostle Paul said to the sorcerer Elymas on Paphos, "O full of all subtilty and all mischief, thou child of the devil, thou enemy of all righteousness, wilt thou not cease to pervert the right ways of the Lord?"

How does this affect us? My fear is that we will be lulled to sleep by man's use of his "miracle" tool. So much good seems to be accomplished with the computer that we will go along with this vain thought, forgetting eventually man's real purpose. Then we become like Simeon and Levi who had instruments of cruelty in their habitation. Over against this, we need to be spiritually sensitive to the use of the computer. We need to depend on our faithful Covenant God, Who controls all things by His will, to give us His grace and wisdom. After all, does not God "turn the heart of the wicked to hate

his people, to deal subtilly with his servants." Psalm 105:25. For you understand that God in His providence has given the knowledge of the computer to man. Although man may claim he does tremendous feats of good with the computer and although his ultimate purpose is to serve his father the devil, our Father in heaven will preserve us from falling into the trap of believing that wicked men can do good with the computer. He will open our eyes of understanding so that we are watching spiritually. He will show us the subtle ways that man uses the computer. He will show us that man is trying to be God.

What do we need to do? "Neither yield ye your members as instruments of unrighteousness unto sin: but yield yourselves unto God, as those that are alive from the dead, and your members as instruments of righteousness unto God." Romans 6:13. Not only do we serve God, but all things that we use must serve God also.

THE BLESSEDNESS OF HEAVENLY CITIZENSHIP

We call your attention to the article *The Blessedness of Heavenly Citizenship* by Rev. John A. Heys. This is the first of a series which deals with the child of God's heavenly citizenship as it is dealt with by our Lord in the Beatitudes. Be sure to follow each installment of this thought provoking series.

by Rev. John A. Heys

As a senior citizen of the land in which I live, but also as one given a better citizenship in a better, that is, an heavenly kingdom, I would like to begin a series of messages to you young people whether your earthly citizenship is in the United States of America, Canada, Jamaica, Singapore, in the northern or southern hemispheres, in the orient or occident.

It is my purpose to write to you about your heavenly citizenship, and thus about a permanent citizenship in a kingdom that has no social, economic, political or international problems, or for that matter any problems at all. It is an everlasting kingdom that does not come to an end after some eighty to ninety years, with a citizenship that is never changed because one voluntarily chooses to have it altered, not by the sword of an invading force. What I would write about an earthly kingdom would soon be out of date, and even perhaps incorrect because of my limited knowledge of the facts and the limited

perspective I have of it. But what I write to you about the kingdom of heaven is factually correct, because it comes from God's infallible Word.

I have been asked to write to you on the Beatitudes which we find in Jesus' sermon on the kingdom, commonly called The Sermon on the Mount. You may do that. You may call it after the place where it was delivered, namely, on the side of a mountain. We do that when we speak of the Heidelberg Catechism and the Canons of Dordrecht. But we speak more richly of it when we call that sermon Jesus' Sermon on the Kingdom. And because the Beatitudes present to us the characteristics, the description of the citizens of that kingdom—of which the whole sermon in Matthew 5, 6 and 7 speaks—we ought to begin by getting that kingdom clearly before our minds. Then you will appreciate the more your citizenship in it, and more zealously look to find those earmarks and characteristics in your lives for assurance of citizenship in that kingdom.

Will you take note of the fact that in the very first Beatitude Jesus says, "Blessed are the poor in spirit: for theirs is the kingdom of heaven." And the last Beatitude expresses the same truth, "Blessed are they which are persecuted for righteousness' sake: for theirs is the kingdom of heaven." We do, when we deal with the Beatitudes deal with the kingdom of heaven. You cannot treat the Beatitudes without having that kingdom before your minds.

Now that kingdom has in Scripture two names that are similar and compliment each other, and yet therefore bring out in each instance a new facet of that kingdom. I mean that Jesus, in His sermon in which He deals so directly with this kingdom, calls it here in Matthew 5 the kingdom of heaven. And in the next chapter in verse 33 calls it the kingdom of God. Then in verse 21 of chapter 7 He reverts to calling it the kingdom of heaven. In each instance He refers to the same realm. And we ought to see the truth in each of these names.

We will begin with the name Kingdom of God, for we must see that it is the kingdom of heaven because it is the kingdom of God. Let us see that once. The first reason why it is called the kingdom of God is that it is the kingdom which He designed and built. In Hebrews 11:10 we read of the city "Whose builder and maker is God." It will be perfect, and will be a kingdom of heaven because He planned every detail, and because He built it in His wisdom and power. It will be as He planned it. Weak and sinful hands will not build it or put their silly ideas into it. And because He designed and built it, it is His possession. It is the kingdom that belongs to God; and He may do with it as He pleases and bring into it whom He will as well as keep out whom it pleases Him to keep out of it.

Further, and equally important is the fact that, it is the kingdom that exists for His glory. That we must never forget! We speak and sing so glibly and often lightly about how wonderful it will be for us to be there—and it will be, as I hope in a moment to show you—but we must never lose sight of the fact that it exists for God's glory. It is the only kingdom wherein everything and everyone points to God and extols Him for His greatness and goodness, a

kingdom wherein all rational, moral creatures live for Him and sing His praises. The life of every one will be God-centered and dedicated to His glory.

Remember that, young people! And examine yourselves to see whether there is a beginning of this in your lives. And to help you in this I will, the Lord willing, in future installments, call your attention to these Beatitudes which give the earmarks of that citizenship and will help you to look for signs of heavenly citizenship in your own lives.

What comes first in your lives? Is it sports? Money and material possessions? Honour before men? Social standing? Attraction and appeal to the opposite sex? To be something in the kingdom of the world to which you belong? Citizens in the kingdom of God love God and look forward to a life when they can serve Him perfectly in a life wholly consecrated to Him. And do you really want to be in such a kingdom? Then your desire to be in the kingdom of heaven is a spiritual desire, and you may appreciate the fact that it is the kingdom of heaven.

What does that name mean? Well, it is not called that because its location is in heaven. It is true that heaven is a temporary place for the souls of its citizens who have died, until that kingdom is fully come. But note that third Beatitude, "Blessed are the meek: for they shall inherit the earth." Turn also to Revelation 21:1-3, and you will find that the holy city, that kingdom, comes down from heaven and that when it is fully come heaven and earth will be one. For there shall be no more sea, that is, no more separation between that spiritual realm called heaven and the new spiritual earth that comes out of the purifying fire at Christ's return.

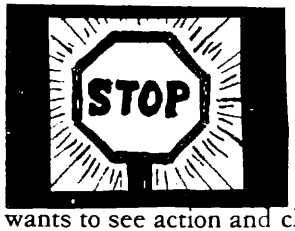
It is called the kingdom of heaven because it is characterized by heavenly virtues and beauty, heavenly blessedness and heavenly wonders. Read Revelation 21 and 22. Turn also back to Isaiah 11:1-9 and 65:25. I cannot take the space to quote it all to you, but read these passages. Then look at the Beatitudes and see what a wonderful people will be there in that kingdom. What a sphere of love to God and the neighbour is displayed in those beatitudes, as we hope to point out later in this series. Imagine no keys or locks, no police or courts! No doctors, nurses, ambulances, hospitals or medicines! For none of these will be needed there. No harsh words, bickering, arguing, fault-finding, revenge or even failure to speak to one another! Because all will be God-centered and wholly dedicated and consecrated to Him and His glory, all will work together so that He is served, praised and glorified.

The environment will be beautiful there in that kingdom. But the people will also be spiritually as well as physically beautiful. When man's flesh is pleased with an experience or object, man—even the unbeliever—will often say, "O, this is heavenly." No, it is not. But what is heavenly, and what is in the kingdom of heaven is delightful, enjoyable and blessed. Does not each Beatitude begin with the word blessed?

Let us then together examine ourselves to see whether we are citizens in that kingdom and how faithful we are as such citizens. Let us stand before this mirror which the King of that kingdom holds before us in the Beatitudes.

The Sorrows of Conception: THE BLESSING OF PATIENCE

by Mrs. H. Brands



Youth is a time characterized strongly by impatience. The average young person is impatient with almost everything: the imperfect world about him, government, his parents, his teachers, his church, his preachers, even himself. The youth wants to see action and change and see it NOW! In a discussion of patience, it would literally describe many youths to quote, "Give me patience and give me it NOW!"

What is patience? It is the ability to endure under stress. It is contentment, real contentment, with the path that one must walk. It is being able to suffer long without rebelling or murmuring. It is having genuine satisfaction in the way God gives us to walk. It is meeting God's STOP signs and being willing to stop or meeting God's GO signs and not demurring but going.

Only a Christian can have true patience. The unbeliever can have an external form of self-control or tolerance or Stoicism, but he cannot have true patience. When he meets obstacles and suffering, what basis can an unbeliever have to be satisfied, to be sure that this difficult way is good for him?

But the believer, trusting the God of Providence Who is his Father, knows God's way is the best way, the best way *for him*. Knowing this as a truth, the believer also grows in experience of trusting his Father. Gradually he learns that his ways are not God's ways, but God's ways are best. Bit by bit he learns that God's wisdom far surpasses his own wisdom and that God in wisdom is sanctifying him through the trials in life, constantly drawing him to Himself. Thus he gradually learns to quit trying to decide for himself what is best, to trust God alone, and ultimately even to thank God for the trials He sends.

This process of learning endurance in trials demands trials to be learned. How can one claim to endure suffering if there has never been any suffering? It is an impossibility! And therefore, if we would be patient we must accept what suffering our Father's hand sends us.

Why is patience itself a blessing? Wouldn't we be better off skipping all the suffering without learning patience?

The blessing of patience lies in that it means we have learned to look away

from ourselves as planners of our lives and to look instead to God. Remember, *the blessing* is always fellowship with God. And patience is the day-by-day leaning on God, the trusting of God to know how to perfect this fellowship. Patience is blessing because it is the deepening of this fellowship which is all that really counts.

THE BLESSING OF EXPERIENCE

No Christian in his spiritual infancy can possibly know the fullness and wonder and richness of the faithfulness of our God in Christ. It takes experience to learn His faithfulness.

Experience in God's faithfulness is one of the great blessings received through suffering. Ahead of time we are afraid of suffering but through the experiences we find God always with us, always working all things for our good. As this happens over and over, we learn that this is His pattern, that *always* He works our good—our *spiritual* good—in whatever He sends us. We learn His faithfulness!

What sort of experiences in God's faithfulness does suffering send us?

#1. Through suffering, we experience most fully the fact of forgiveness of sins. It is God's work in us, this forgiveness of sins, and as we suffer we experience that it really is so, that we are forgiven and our suffering is not God's wrath but His love. Logic would say that as we suffer we experience God's wrath, but experience and Scripture answer that it is not so; we experience God's forgiveness. (See Romans 5:1-9)

#2. Through suffering we experience most fully God's love. Again, how strange! Shouldn't we best experience God's love through the good things of life—good food, friends, warmth, nice weather, enough money, health? We want to think so, but the Bible and experience say otherwise. In suffering we most fully experience God's love and nearness.

An example may make this clear. Look at children for awhile. Watch them. When left alone with no discipline, even though they may be in the same room with a parent or working side by side with Mama, they grow restless, get more and more unruly, and eventually defy their parents. However, if the parent keeps an eye on them, warns them from time to time, and when necessary follows these warnings with firm discipline in love, then their restless defiance of the parent changes and they realize their need of her and her love. When disciplined, a child does not run from the parent but turns to that same parent who disciplined in order to find comfort and love. Discipline leads to experience of love.

So also in our suffering. When God lets us go our own ways, we quickly fall into sin and disregard of His law. When, however, He sends us suffering, we return to Him and experience the fullness of His love. He never leaves us alone but sustains us and draws us to Himself.

What a blessing! The Bible says, "We glory in tribulations also: knowing that tribulation worketh patience, and patience, experience. . ."

FROM THE PASTOR'S STUDY

BY REV. G. LUBBERS

Walking Worthily of the Gospel of Christ

"Only let your conversation be as becometh the Gospel of Christ. . .striving together for the faith of the Gospel. Phil. 1:27

Satan is the great false-prophet, the great accuser of the brethren. He directs all his hellish attempts against the truth of the Gospel of Christ. He does not will that Christ shall be preached from the pulpits. He is the arch-foe, disguised as an angel of light; he "uses" the revelation of God, corrupting it to his own Satanic ends. He would bewilder and discomfit the saints, so that they do not hear the glad refrain and key-note of the Gospel: Comfort ye, comfort ye my people saith, your God.

Satan *hates* the Gospel; he *fears* the Gospel. He hates the pure preaching of the Gospel by which the Holy Spirit works faith in the hearts of all the believers, elected unto everlasting life and unto a walk of true godliness from the heart. He knows that faith clings to the Gospel of the Cross alone. Yes, he knows that such faith conquers the world and all the hosts of hell, Satan included. By such faith the saints resist Satan and he flees from the saints, who boast alone in the Cross. The banners of Jehovah's victories are for such who trust alone in Christ crucified. Before that Gospel of the Cross, Satan is helpless as a conquered foe, who has been stripped naked and who have been

made an open sham at Calvary, where the veil was rent in the temple from top to bottom!

Of this Gospel we must not be ashamed at all!

For this Gospel we must earnestly contend as for the faith once delivered to the saints. What a blessed contention this is; it is a holy warfare, calling for a united front of all the citizens of heaven's kingdom, living members of the church in the world. That is the very marrow of the Gospel which we must contend for: That it must ever be a contending, a striving unitedly for the Gospel of Christ.

Glorious battle this! It must be fought with open vigor, and we must meet the enemy in the fray with undaunted courage.

Paul is in prison while he writes to the Phillippians. He is in prison for the sake of a great cause. He is set there for the apology, for the defense of the Gospel. Two years he is in prison, and all that had befallen him through the long incarceration at Antioch, the ship-wrecked voyage to Rome, and his being held a prisoner awaiting his trial before Nero together with the seemingly long delay, had all worked for the "furtherance of the Gospel". He is bound but the Gospel, the Word of God is not bound; it has its free and triumphant course! Such a life of Paul can only be understood when we consider that for Paul "to live is Christ, and to die gain".

And now Paul passes on the charge to the Philippians: only let your conversation be such as becometh the Gospel! (Phil. 1:27)

This requires that the church conduct herself as spiritual athletes in the arena of God. The church must fight this battle in confession and walk with united front. They must "strive together for the Gospel of Christ". They must not have word-strife, divisional questions and fleshly debates, but they must be of one mind, of one heart, having one united goal. They must act like athletes on a team in the sports-arena. Each must not do his own little thing. Play according to the rules is the watch-word of the hour. Execute the basics as they were drafted on the drawing board of Christ, to withstand all the wiles of the Devil, and to quench all the fiery darts of the Wicked One. With him and with the hosts of hell we have our battle. And our hope and defense in which we fight and emerge is: contending together for the *Gospel*, the glad-tidings of the forgiveness of sins in Christ.

Luctor et emergo!

I strive and I emerge victoriously!

For this battle for the Gospel, young people, you must be prepared. Even while you are preparing you are already in the battle, be it not yet in the forefront of it. You have leaders whose word and example you must follow. Do not be wise in your own conceits. Beware of "youthful lusts", the snap judgments of youth. Do not try to be a leader of the band, while you are still nothing but learning the basic notes and scales in the music. It takes a long time to become an accomplished choir-master! Few excel to such places of influence in the church. Too many generals and there is no army!

So prepare for the battle, young people!

And then be faithful in the study of the Scriptures. Read your Bible diligently. Go to the congregation each Sunday very diligently to learn God's word of the Gospel and the fulfilment of a Christian walk in thankfulness according to the new man in Christ. Do this unitedly, young people. Learn to be a phalanx strong, striving together for the Gospel of Christ.

Hold that line. Remain in your battle formation. Do not be terrified. Let courage reign within your breast. Have the heart of a soldier of God; do not be a coward who breaks rank. Endure hardship as a soldier of Christ. For the prize of the battle is the pearl of great price for which a man will sell his all. And so strive "together" with united step in this spiritual battle.

Study the Confessions. Know more than just which the *Three Forms of Unity* are. Know them well! Study them personally, and investigate them thoroughly. Otherwise you will not be taking the place in the forefront of the army when these elders, parents, teachers, preachers have gone to their reward.

For this conduct of battle is "becoming" to you. It must be a citizen's conduct worthy of those who will inherit the kingdom of God and of Christ. You must be worthy to stand before the Son of Man. Unless we suffer with him we shall not be glorified together with Him. We must be such that one day the glory of Christ shall be seen in us the church. Paul was such an example as a battle-warrior for the Gospel of Christ. Look at him there in prison. He is a prisoner of Jesus Christ. No ordinary "jail-bird" he. He will not love his life unto death. He will die the death of all the prophets!

Yes, we made confession of faith. We did not simply say that we believed that Jesus died for us. Yes, that too, thank God! But we promised and confessed all that is implied in acknowledging the "doctrine contained in the Old and New Testaments and in the Articles of the Christian faith and taught here in this Christian Church to be the true and complete doctrine of salvation". We also resolved at that time with a holy resolution "by the grace of God to adhere to this doctrine; to reject all heresies repugnant thereto and to lead a new and godly life."

Priorities! Ground-rules of the battle. In this unity of the faith we stand together, young people. You desire a life's companion, do you not? A wife? A husband? A bosom friend? A friend with whom to share your secrets? Be sure that he will stand with you in this united battle against unbelief and Satan's lie; that He will stand with you striving with you for the Gospel of Christ.

Yes, priority! Rules laid down by the Chief Captain of our Salvation. Seek ye first the kingdom of God and His righteousness and all these things will be added unto you. Trust and obey. There is no other way! It is the narrow way which leads to life.

Few find this narrow way.

Many go on the road of doctrinal indifference. And doctrinal indifference is fighting Satan's battle. He does not desire clear-cut preaching along Reformed lines of interpretation. Beware of false prophets.

Zero in, in all your discussions and reading of the Bible, on the Message of

the Gospel. Remember that you are reading a "testament" of God's covenant words to the heirs of the promise.

Claim these gospel promises by a true faith.

And do this unitedly, striving together for the Gospel of Christ, and then the victory is yours!

CURRENT EVENTS AND COMMENTS

THE DEATH PENALTY

by John Kalsbeek Jr.

Thou shalt not kill. Ex. 20:13

Whoso sheddeth man's blood, by man shall his blood be shed: for in the image of God made he man. Gen. 9:6

And he that killeth any man shall surely be put to death. Lev. 24:17

Whoso killeth any person, the murderer shall be put to death by the mouth of witnesses: but one witness shall not testify against any person to cause him to die. Moreover ye shall take no satisfaction for the life of a murderer, which is guilty of death: but he shall be surely put to death. Num. 35:30-31

For rulers are not a terror to good works, but to the evil. Wilt thou then not be afraid of the power? Do that which is good, and thou shalt have praise of the same. For he is the minister of God to thee for good. But if thou do that which is evil, be afraid, for he beareth not the sword in vain: for he is the minister of God, a revenger to execute wrath upon him that doeth evil. Rom. 13:3-4

The cover story of the January 24, 1983 *Time* magazine is an in depth study of the Death Penalty question.

On both sides of the question emotions peak and tempers spark and flare. Rational arguments are marshalled in support of the Death Penalty and against it.

For years the pendulum of justice has been swinging away from the

execution of the murderer but today it seems like it's reached its apogee and is starting to swing the other way.

It's no wonder that the death penalty is opposed. Godless man in his struggle against God and God's law would also oppose the Scriptural principles laid down in regard to the murderer. To execute a murderer is, in their words, just another murder. It's an exercise in barbarianism and not an acceptable measure in a civilized society.

With their approach to the death penalty question they take the sword power of justice out of the hand of those in authority. They can do this because they do not recognize that authority to exist. Furthermore, those who oppose the death penalty are in principle opposed to justice. They are not at all concerned that the penalty fit the crime nor are they led by Scriptural principles. The Bible, they say, does not speak to today's world and to today's situation. The directive that "whoso sheddeth man's blood, by man shall his blood be shed: for in the image of God made he man" is to them some literary relic of the distant and foggy past.

It's not important to them that man, the creature who was created in the image of God, is murdered and that God is thus dishonored by that vile deed. Although God, (God's honor, God's word, God's law, and God's justice) demands that the murderer be put to death, they refuse to submit to the divine directive and ordinance. Instead they ridicule, mock, scoff, and the murderer lives, often to be freed by sympathetic juries and judges.

That governments were instituted by God to bear the sword power and to execute vengence on the evil doer is but another ridiculous notion that arises out of the distant eons. What does God have to do with government anyway? Government is rather of the people, by the people and for the people in our democratic system. God has no part in it and thus His directives, if indeed He does exist, should be ignored.

And so wicked man in the corruption of his depravity and sin destroys the very foundation of all society. The fear of authority has been obliterated. The fear of justice and the death penalty is no longer a deterrent and the U.S. homicide rate has more than doubled in the last twenty years.

God's authority is despised and society suffers the anguish of more and more murder. God is not mocked. God punishes sin with more sin.

This increase in the homicide rate has not gone unnoticed. The news media religiously describes in graphic language the latest homicides. The court trials become spectacles of interest that create headlines and sell newspapers. Fear is now a preeminent emotion that controls our actions as never before. No one in his right mind, especially if he were white, would be foolish enough to drive through a black ghetto during the night. That would be like taking your life in your hands. Hardened criminals are gently tapped on the knuckles and released back into society or else freed because of a technicality. And the crime rates keep going up.

Our criminal justice system is on the rocks of anarchy and the shoals of chaos and suddenly people are becoming concerned—even alarmed.

That concern is a purely selfish and self-centered concern. We might be next. Before that happens let's demonstrate our resolve and execute a few on Death Row. So a Gallup poll taken last fall indicated that 72% of Americans now favor capital punishment. According to William Bailey, a Cleveland State University sociologist as quoted by *Time* magazine, "People are frightened and upset by crime in the street. Nothing seems to be done to solve the problem, so the feeling grows that if we can't cure murderers, something we can do is kill them."

As the pendulum begins its downward swing again, the number of executions will probably grow.

The desire for the death penalty, however, is not properly motivated. It is not rooted in a desire that God's name is vindicated and that His law was correct all along. God is not in their thoughts. The arguments given in favor of the death penalty are not based on Scriptural principles. They are instead rationalistic and humanistic in nature. Man's wisdom is sought while true Godly wisdom is ignored.

Polls are conducted to discover the feelings of the people. Psychologists and sociologists are consulted and statistics are generated to show the dire need to execute killers again. But Peter describes them as ". . .wells without water, clouds that are carried with a tempest; to whom the mist of darkness is reserved for ever." II Peter 2:17

They have forsaken God's law. They despise His Word. Their efforts to control the murderer apart from Godly principles is and will be an effort in futility. They are unable to escape from the morass they themselves have created.

As the day of the man of sin approaches, iniquity shall more and more abound and the foolishness of human wisdom will become more and more evident.

The death penalty should be used to execute murderers because God says "he that killeth any man shall surely be put to death." Lev. 24:17. Whether the death penalty is a deterrent to other would-be murderers is a moot question. God says "by man shall his blood be shed." Execution of murderers in obedience to God ordained ordinances in honor of His Sovereign Majesty will have the desired effect.

God ordained governments need not fear to use the sword power they have been given. When they use the death penalty, no matter what form is used, they are ". . .the minister of God, a revenger to execute wrath upon him that doeth evil." Rom. 13:4 When they refuse to use the sword power given to them they will be accountable before the Judge of judges, the Supreme Ruler of heaven and earth.

As lawlessness and injustice increases in the world around us and its cup of iniquity is filled let us look to the hills from whence cometh our help. Let us cast our longing eyes on high to our eternal home and pray that our Lord Jesus Christ will return quickly on the clouds of heaven to deliver us from this sinful chaotic world in which we live.

REV. ROBERT C. HARBACH

III. Earnestly Contend For The Faith

I Peter 3:15

I. With a Necessary Antidote
II. In a Continual Preparation
III. By a Gracious Manner

Sanctify Him in your heart. This means separate Him in your conceptions from all that is not God, from all that is human, imperfect, finite, temporal, changeable, evil. This in itself is to think and act apologetically, in the best sense of the term, that is, not according to man's supposed independent mind and will, but in harmony with God's will and dependent on His revelation in scripture. For to do any less than commanded here is to profane God's name and to desecrate His temple ((II Cor. 6:16) and become guilty of idolatry. Peter's meaning is, regard God as He really is in your whole intelligent, volitional and affectionate nature. It means, worship God, who is Spirit, in spirit and in truth. "In thy heart" means with all the powers of your being, and not superficially, for that would be to dishonor Him and profane His holy name. Failure to worship God as commanded here would mean that we would lift up His name into vanity, in worship add insult to injury, and it would make our praying self-adulation and our speaking babbling.

To be fearless defenders of the Christian hope, "fear not their fear, neither be troubled" (disturbed). Don't let them scare you! (v. 14). The fear of God is the antidote for the fear of man. Moses' parents sanctified the Lord in their hearts, making Him their fear so that they "were not afraid of the king's commandment." Moses himself did likewise so that he "forsook Egypt, not fearing the wrath of the king." The fear of God annihilated the fear of the

Babylonian tyrant and his fiery furnace so that the three Hebrew youths stood uncompromisingly for the true God. The fear of God drove out of Daniel's mind the fear of persecution and the horror of the lions' den. They all thought it unnecessary to have the approval of the world, but utterly necessary to have the favor of God.

As Christians we possess a living hope (1:3). This is no imaginary, groundless hope. Reason can, and must, be given for it, and it can, and must, be defended. It cannot and must not be hidden. When called upon, we must be prepared to state the grounds of our hope in Christ and defend them. We ought to do this by pointing out to men that unless they, too, as we do, stand on the Christian position and the ground of the Bible, they "have no hope" (Eph. 2:12). Not groundless is our hope, no airy dream, no mere possibility, nor probability; no, for our hope is based on "the word of the truth of the gospel" (Col 1:5) and therefore it stands on the rock! In this connection use I Thess. 2:13 in your defense.

As we have shown, all our thoughts are to be held captive for the obedience of Christ; yet the truth is not to be held captive, nor can be; it must be declared, testified, proclaimed. If we did not do this it would be evidence that we neither possess the truth, nor that it possesses us.

Be ready always to make defense of your hope to every man who asks you a reason concerning the hope. Christians are called to defend their hope in the gospel to those who call on them to give an account of it. The word *answer* is, in the original, *apology*. We understand the word in the sense in which Christ himself, Stephen, the apostles and Paul made their apologies, their defense of the faith and of the whole cause of Christ before the Sanhedrin; yes, and in the sense of Calvin's dedication of his *Institutes* to King Francis of France, which was a defense of the Protestants and their reformed faith against their persecutors and a remonstrance against all Romish detractors. These are examples of what Peter is talking about in his command to defend the faith and hope of the gospel. These all testified that the hope of eternal life is no mirage, but based on the solid foundation of certain truth; that the Christian faith and life are reasonable, the only reasonable service (Rom. 12:1-2); and that to reject this hope and doctrine is to become a fool and a madman. We must be Christian apologetes like them. Tell men how you once held a deceptive hope; how you were made ashamed of it; how it always puts those who hold it to shame; how then, when destitute of hope you, led in faith based on the rock of truth, lay hold on the hope of the gospel. Tell them they must, as you do, receive the Bible as the only divine revelation from heaven. Show them how reasonable it is, on this foundation, to ground their hope on Christ and His truth, and how unreasonable it is to do otherwise. Use Matt. 7:24-27. It is reasonable to ground hope and faith on the holy scriptures because "all scripture is God-breathed" (II Tim. 3:16), which means that scripture is the breathing of God. Scripture is the living word of the living God. The Word of God is the very life and breath of God, of the God who cannot be deceived and cannot deceive.

To do this, we must learn the truth, know it, and know it well, or we cannot give a reason for our hope, much less, defend it. We had better study the Word of God all the time. "The heart of the wise *studieth* to answer" (Prov. 15:28). Only in this way may we be prepared to answer when called on to state and defend our hope, so to "put to silence the ignorance of foolish men" (I Pet. 2:15). Always our prayer must be, "Uphold me according to Thy word, and let me not be ashamed of my hope" (Ps. 119:116).

Our apologetical approach, then, must be to confront men with the call to examine themselves in the light of eternity whether they have any hope at all; whether, if they have a hope, it is the hope of the gospel. Men who profess no faith must be told that then they can have no hope. Tell them that if they have no solid hope for eternity, it is surely because they have never believed the gospel.

We see fron the Old Testament as well as the New that we are obligated to prepare ourselves by study of scripture to become witnesses to Christ. As already noted, Prov. 15:28 adds to I Pet. 3:15 *how* we are to "be always ready to answer every man that asketh you . . ." We ready (prepare) ourselves by studying how to answer, how to defend the faith. But there are scripture passages which at first glance may seem the opposite to this idea of preparation and study. Take the following: "But when they deliver you up, take no thought (no anxious thought, i.e., don't worry about) how or what ye shall speak, for it shall be given you in that same hour what ye shall speak; for it is not ye that speak, but the Spirit of your Father which speaketh in you" (Mt. 10:19-20). And this: "But when they shall lead you and deliver you up, take no (anxious) thought beforehand what ye shall speak, neither do ye premeditate; but whatever shall be given you in that hour, that speak ye; for it is not ye that speak, but the Holy Ghost" (Mk. 13:11). And this: "Settle it, therefore, in your hearts not to meditate before what ye shall answer (make defense for yourselves); for I will give you a mouth and wisdom which all your adversaries shall not be able to gainsay nor resist" (Lk. 21:14-15). But reading these verses in their context will show that they refer not to normal circumstances under which we can and must study, but they refer to times of persecution when as Christians we may be threatened with man's judgment and death. In such emergencies by the operation of the Holy Spirit in our hearts we will receive from Him exactly what to say. We've seen how these promises were all fulfilled when Stephen and the apostles made their defense of the cause of Christ before the council of the Sanhedrin, and Paul also before kings. Paul further testified that it was the Lord who strengthened him to present his case and marshall his arguments in cogent apologies (defenses). II Tim. 4:16-17. Thus "the preparation of the heart in man and the answer of the tongue are from the Lord" (Prov. 16:1). So these verses may not be appealed to in order to teach that there is no need to prepare ourselves in study for witnessing in defense of the faith before men. It is wrong to assume that we may in some mystical way depend on the Holy Spirit to guide us on the spur of the moment without a bother to seek competent instruction and persist in

faithful study. This is wrong, too, because it is a kind of arrogance, sinful presumption and failure to submit to the lordship of Christ (as Peter enjoins in I Pet. 3:15).

In Phil. 1:7, 17, what Paul is saying is that just as all we Christians are appointed to afflictions (I Thess. 3:3), so he is appointed for the defense (apologia) of the gospel. He was chosen, foreordained and appointed a defender of the faith before the world was, separated to it from his mother's womb, called and sent to his task personally by Christ, set apart for it by the church, and beginning his ministry immediately by defending the gospel in preaching, disputing and earnestly contending for the faith. The Philippian believers in love to Paul and his gospel joined his cause, faced the issue with him in also becoming defenders of the gospel. Paul always recalled this fellowship of theirs in furthering the gospel (v. 4) with joy and a prayer of gratitude. He deemed it right to think of them all in this way because they all shared God's grace with him whether in imprisonment or in defense (apologia) and confirmation of the gospel (v. 7). Paul was the great Christian missionary apologist and the Philippian believers were won to Christ to become co-apologists with their missionary. They experienced the same conflict that they saw him engaged in (1:30). They, too, immediately upon their conversion were found faithfully and earnestly contending for the faith. They saw that not only the ministers but every believer is called upon to be a contending, defending witness to Christ. Peter reminds us as to how we are to do all this—in meekness and fear. "The servant of the Lord must not strive, but in meekness instruct those who oppose themselves" (II Tim. 2:25). Contend earnestly for the faith in gentleness toward men and in reverence toward God.

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Suggestions for Further Study

1. Read the Westminster Confession of Faith, Chap. I, Of the Holy Scripture.
2. Read in Calvin's *Institutes*, the *Dedication.*
3. Read A. W. Pink's "The Doctrine of Sanctification," chapter: *Its Procuror.*

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ADMONISHING ONE ANOTHER FOR GOD'S SAKE

by Bernie Kamps

Blessed young people shall we consider our duty of admonishing one another using Scripture as our guide? What does it exhort us to do?

Paul exhorted the church of Thessalonica to admonish one another. II Thessalonians 3:13-15: "But ye, brethren, be not weary in well doing. And if any man obey not our word by this epistle, note that man, and have no company with him, that he may be ashamed. Yet count him not as an enemy, but admonish him as a brother."

As we begin to look at our responsibility of admonishing, may we first consider who we are in order to gain the proper perspective of ourselves. We are all sinners, guilty of eternal damnation in need of the Redeemer. May we know that by nature we are Phariseeistic and given to exalting ourselves above our fellow brethren. To find fault comes very easy. Does this mean then, that we cannot admonish because we are no better than our brother? Let us look at the reason for admonishing. Matthew 18:15 "Moreover if thy brother shall trespass against thee, go and tell him his fault between thee and him alone: if he shall hear thee, thou hast gained thy brother." Gained thy brother! God has used you as a means of causing a sinner to confess his sin before our Just and Holy God. This is no small matter. God's name may never be blasphemed by one of us walking in ways of sin, unrepented.

Therefore, because we earnestly love our brother we must admonish and thereby gain him. Admonishing is very difficult and does not come easy. It is so convenient to look the other way when a brother or sister in the Lord walks in the way of sin. So often we know of wrong-doing amongst ourselves, but we wash our hands of the duty of admonishing by convincing ourselves that it is only hearsay and we can't act on gossip, or let the family or church handle these matters. *We* are the church and when one member suffers the whole body suffers. If we do not admonish we become spiritually insensitive to sin and become spiritually weaker ourselves by becoming tolerant. Sin is not isolated

only to the person committing it, but has its effects on all of us.

We must truly care for one another as we do a loved one very dear to our heart. We must pursue each other's spiritual interest and try to gain a brother for God's sake. May we understand clearly that God's honor may not be transgressed. So often we are concerned with man. We wonder how the sin will affect the family, or his job, whether or not it will be embarrassing, what will his parents say? Let us concern ourselves with Almighty God's honor and glory! Have we trespassed against Him? Is God mocked by our open unrepented sins? Do we give occasion for the world to scoff and cry, "Hypocrites?" Can the world say they confess God, but live in unrepented sins, so much for their confession of straight and narrow and sorrow for sin.

Young people let us look at ourselves and see the lack of admonishing in our midst. I know it is difficult. At times we may be laughed at or even given a label of being a "200 percenter." But if we come confessing our own sinfulness, confessing earnestly that except by God's grace, we too would be walking in the same sin and confess our own need of help in the future, it will come easier.

Let us remember always that we stumble uphill to the cross, arm and arm, shoulder to shoulder, helping one another. When one of us becomes weary, strays and stumbles for a time, in need of a guiding hand and an encouraging word, when one is stronger for a time he must help, knowing he will need help soon himself.

This is one reason why we must remain members of the organized church, the body of believers here on this earth. We cannot experience God's bountiful grace through fellowship and admonishing of the saints if we leave the church and become religious islands to ourselves. The three marks of the true church cannot be exercised (preaching, Christian discipline and administering of the sacraments) when you are alone, apart from fellow believers.

Admonishing one another is usually seen from the negative point of view, warning someone that he or she is walking in ways of sin. Now let us look at the very positive viewpoint of encouraging each other to partake of the many spiritual activities available to us. Attending the preaching of the Word of God each Lord's Day gives the child of God a desire to know more of his Savior and God. This is the reason we have societies, discussion groups, singspirations and lectures. We desire to sing praise to our Lord and King and discuss among ourselves Scriptural truths that apply to our pilgrimage in this life. It is with godly joy and pleasure that we fellowship one with the other. We are uplifted and our burdens made lighter, sharing the knowledge of God. We get to know one another's weaknesses and can encourage our fellow saints to that end. We all need encouragement to attend these various spiritual functions. Personally we know that by nature we struggle with spiritual laziness and our own man of sin interferes with our desires of things heavenly.

Physical exercise comes much easier than spiritual exercise. That is why it isn't as difficult to engage in all our sports and various hobbies as it is to study God's word. We naturally crave things earthly and hate to labor with things of

the Kingdom. It is for this reason that we must admonish and encourage the fellow brother and sister in Christ. Romans 15:14 "And I myself also am persuaded of you, my brethren, that ye also are full of goodness, filled with all knowledge, able also to admonish one another."

And in Gal. 6:1, 2 "Brethren, if a man be overtaken in a fault, ye which are spiritual, restore such an one in the spirit of meekness; considering thyself, lest thou also be tempted. Bear ye one another's burdens, and so fulfil the law of Christ."

In ourselves we do not have the discipline to honor the Lord God in all things. If we look within ourselves or to others for the desire to worship God as He has been revealed in His word, we will never find it. The Holy Spirit instills within us a new heart which causes us to serve God aright.

Admonishing is only a means to gain the brother. God turns the sinner's heart, the Holy Spirit through our conscience causes us to confess and repent before the Lord.

Let us all make a concerted effort to care for one another's spiritual welfare. May we search our own hearts and know that we are spiritually weak and in need of our Redeemer, the Worthy Lamb who was slain for our sakes. Shall we all examine ourselves, confess our sins, acknowledge the need and welcome the help of the brother and sister for Christ's sake. Hebrews 13:1 "Let brotherly love continue."

THE MIRACLES OF JESUS

by Rhoda Zylstra

Jesus many miracles did,
He healed the blind; He raised the dead.
Paralytics walked; deaf men could hear,
Possessed men no more the pain did sear.

He raised Lazarus up after some days,
And the lepers—on them His hand He lays.
He healed a Roman officer's ear.
He made a deaf and dumb man hear.

He cursed a fig tree when it bore no figs,
He made some demons go into pigs.
Twice He made a catch of fish,
Big, as much as you could wish.

He calmed a storm, He walked on the sea.
He made fresh water wine to be.
He healed many people, too many to count.
He fed the five thousand men on the mount.

Bentness, brokenness in body and soul,
They came to Jesus. He made them whole.
For Jesus came His people to save,
and in result, much love He gave.

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