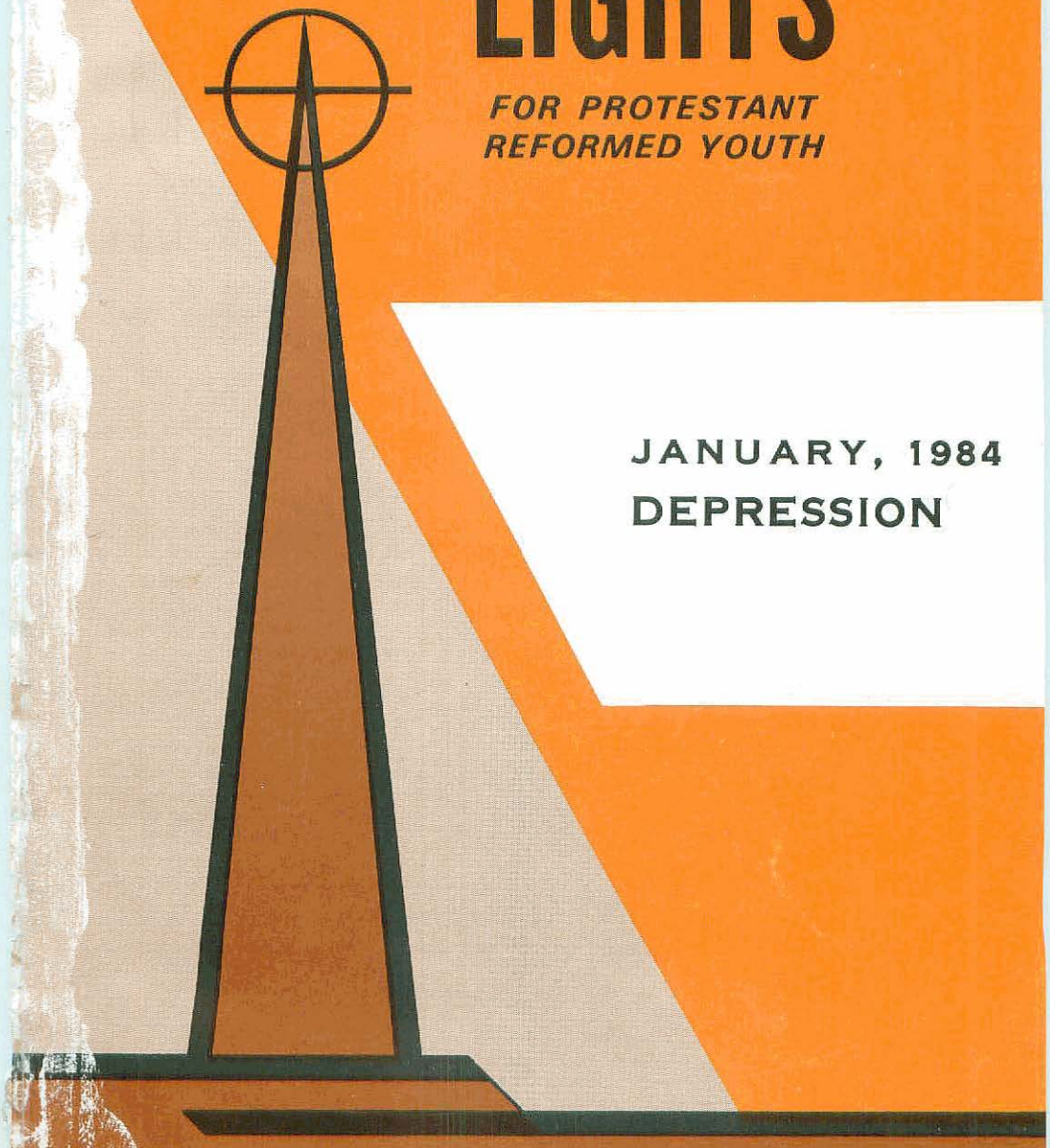
BEACON LIGHTS

FOR PROTESTANT REFORMED YOUTH



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DEPRESSION

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Editorial

Proverbs For Young Pilgrims
ON REPROOF

by Ed Lotterman

"As an earring of gold, and an ornament of fine gold, so is a wise reprover upon an obedient ear."
Proverbs 25:12

Young Pilgrim, the proverb speaks of jewels; jewels of great value. The value has been increased by the removal of the impurities in the gold. The proving of the gold has made it more precious. Not only are these ornaments now precious from the viewpoint of their worth, but also from the viewpoint of their endearment. These jewels are become objects which are dear to us. This is illustrated by how we use these jewels, that is, we adorn ourselves with them.

The proverb also speaks of a "wise reprover". Reproof is not necessarily an act of one in authority. Each of us must express our disapproval, for example, of an unjust deed or word by another who is perhaps our peer. However, the perspective of this proverb is from the view of authority. That this is true is evident from the mention made of "an obedient ear."

The scope of this proverb is, then, that even as an ornament would serve to add beauty to its bearer, so the word of wisdom given by method of reproof will grace the obedient hearer.

Notice, Young Pilgrim, the mutual benefit derived from this reproof. On the one hand the one who receives the reproof and responds in obedience benefits, for he has now made a positive development in, shall we say, his conduct. On the other hand, the one who reproved also benefits, for he sees fruit upon his word of wisdom. Together, the reprover and the obedient compliment each other.

Now the question is "What are the spiritual implications of all this?" In answer to this question we will attempt to look at two particular areas of authority in our lives.

You are concerned, Young Pilgrims, with the relationship you have with your parents, are you not? God has given to you parents to be an authority over you. Their reproof is a function of that authority. You must view the reproof they give as a valuable jewel which is precious to you.

By nature we despise reproof. We believe ourselves to be pretty good, rather mature for our young age, wise beyond our years. Who needs parents to tell us that we are wrong? Who do parents think they are anyway? Why do they always think they must belittle us? They never praise us, in fact, often they minimize our efforts.

Parents?

Bah!

Wise reproof adorns an obedient ear.

When your parents would adorn your ears with wise reproof, it is your calling to respond in unwavering obedience. To continue in disobedience is to cast aside a valuable jewel. This would be disgraceful. But when you take the jewel and grace

yourself with its beauty in obedience, then both you and your parents benefit. You have been advanced and developed in Godly conduct. Furthermore, your obedience reflects, as a jewel, a positive fruit upon your parents labor. They also are advanced because their wise reproof is reflected in a Godly conduct in their Young Pilgrim.

And why shouldn't your parents know something about the struggles of young pilgrims? Remember that they too were once young! Moreover, even now they also are children of our Heavenly Father. Wayward children, too! And He comes to them with His Word.

A word of reproof.

The preaching is the second area in our lives which we should examine. Authoritative preaching must be based upon the Scriptures. And scripture "is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness: that the man of God may be perfect, throughly furnished unto all good works." II Tim. 3:16, 17. Reproof then is an essential ingredient in the preaching.

Explicit reprimand for our denial of doctrine is a **must** in the preaching. The sharp and piercing (Heb. 4:12) reproof effects an examination of self. It is not enough for us to hear, for example, how **others** would deny the truth of total depravity. What we must hear in the preaching is that we, **ourselves**, deny this fundamental truth! The truth devastates our self-esteem, does it not? By nature we do not want it! Yet, without this truth, salvation would not be wholly Divine and it would be impossible for us to walk in gratitude for such deliverance from our depravity!

But I fear sometimes that the preaching is not as sharp as it should b We hear about the apostacy of others. But, if through the preaching we are reproved for our sins of apostacy, it is mild. Agreed, for another example, that it is a shame that others allow women to be officebearers. But what does that have to do with the personal salvation of each individual believer in the congregation?

There must be wise reproof in tl preaching. It must adorn obedient ear. Instruction in obedience demands reproof! Only when we stand throughly reproved by the preaching do we understand sin and grace! Being brought to our knees in confession, receiving forgiveness of sins, we are comforted by the Word. Then follows the resolve to walk in new obedience.

In the way of obedience we receive all the benefits of salvation through our Lord Jesus Christ. He bestows these benefits upon us.

He adorns our ears with His wise reproof. He gives spiritual hearing and understanding. He gives obedience. We grow in His grace. As obedient children we give praise and honor and glory to His Name.

DEPRESSION

by Rev. James Slopsema

The statistics on depression are quite disturbing. More than 250,000 people are hospitalized in our country every year for depression. Another 200,000 are treated

every year for depression on an outpatient basis. It is estimated that anywhere from 8 million to 40 million people in the United States alone experience depression of some sort every year. And this includes every age group, also young people.

Along with this goes suicide. 15% of those treated for depression commit suicide and a great many more attempt it. About 5,000 teens and young adults take their life every year. These are the suicides that are reported. For every reported suicide it is estimated that there are 2 to 3 unreported suicides—suicides that have been covered up and therefore never officially reported. Furthermore, about 400,000 young people every year make unsuccessful attempts at suicide.

All this means that depression is a serious problem even among young people. And we do well to pay attention to it and if possible come to understand a little more about it.

Depression is often associated with what we sometimes call the blahs or the blues. We all have our ups and downs. There are certain days when we are down. We feel gloomy. Sometimes this can last for several days. And we say that we are depressed. Now this is certainly part of what is called depression. However, this is depression only in its mild form, its beginning stages. And most often this depression leaves after a while presenting us with no serious problems.

However, this mild form of depression can quite easily become more severe so that after a while a person is terrorized with fear, is no longer able to concentrate or perform his work. He is mentally, emotionally and to a degree physically incapacitated.

There are several classic symptoms of depression. A person suffering depression will have any number of these symptoms depending on the severity of his depression and the circumstances in which he finds himself. These symptoms can be divided into physical and emotional symptoms.

Some of the physical symptoms of depression are:

1.) Inability to sleep - Although some people suffering depression oversleep and wake up tired, it is usually more common that they can not sleep at all. If they do, they will wake up in the early hours of the morning and will not be able to get back to sleep.

2.) Lack of energy - Those suffering depression no longer have the energy and the drive they once had. They tire easily and find it difficult to keep on going.

3.) Loss of appetite - In the early stages of depression a person may eat constantly. But as depression worsens his appetite lessens so that he eats very little. He doesn't care for food and often will lose weight.

4.) Physical ailments - It is quite common for depressed people to suffer many physical ailments, some real and some imaginary. Some common problems are tiredness, weakness, aching, dizziness, chest pains, breathing trouble, headache, constipation, heartburn and sweating.

In addition to these physical symptoms there are a number of emotional symptoms such as:

1.) Gloominess - A depressed person has a cloud of gloom hanging over his head. He can find little if any joy in his life. Nothing makes him happy. He finds it impossible to smile and can not really understand how others around him can be happy.

2.) Crying spells - Quite often a person suffering depression will simply break down and cry. These crying spells are beyond his ability to control. They can come at any time and can last for several hours. As a person's depression deepens however usually these crying spells cease. There comes a point where the depressed person becomes emotionally numb. Then he can not cry.

3.) Loss of affection - As a person becomes emotionally numb he also loses any feelings for his loved ones. Feelings such as sympathy and love for others simply vanish. He no longer cares for his loved ones, for himself or for anything.

4.) Irritability - Quite often a depressed person is very irritable. He is almost impossible to live with. He flies off the handle at the least little thing. What he easily coped with in the past and ignored he can no longer tolerate.

5.) Anxiety, fear, worry - A person suffering depression is overwhelmed with worry. He has certain unresolved problems that he faces. Worry over these problems often brings on depression. But once depression sets in this worry occupies all his attention and energy. With his worry comes terrible fears. As a depressed person imagines all that can possibly go wrong and reflects on all that did go wrong, he soon is terrorized with agonizing fears. He is afraid of the future. He is afraid of what people will think of him. He is even afraid to meet people.

6.) Hopelessness - This is perhaps the worst part of depression. A person suffering depression feels as though there is no way out. As a person slowly descends into the depths of depression his whole life crumbles to pieces. He is not able to do his work any more. He is victimized by terrible fears and anxieties. He has tried everything he knows to escape and prevent what has happened and nothing works. Consequently he sees himself as a total failure. And there is no way out. Everything he has tried has failed! He is without hope!

What are the causes of depression?

Essentially all depression is caused by stess. Put a person under enough mental stress long enough and he will suffer depression. Everyone has a breaking point. And the breaking point in each person is different. But sooner or later everyone who carries a heavy burden of mental strain will fall victim to depression.

There are of course other factors considered. It is a scientific fac example that a depressed person chemical imbalances in the brain. And always a debate whether these chem imbalances bring on the depressic whether the depression brings on chemical imbalances. Furthermore, tain hormone changes in a person's b can contribute to depression, as, example, a woman immediately after birth. Certain medications also tend bring on depression as do overw physical exhaustion, physical sickness a host of other things. But these ar the major causes of depression. Th simply contributing factors that can t most part be overcome if everything el in a person's life is as it ought to be.

The main cause of depression excessive mental stress and strain.

And what causes severe men stress? This is caused by an inability cope properly with the pressures of life To be more accurate, severe mental stra is caused by an unbiblical approach to li

Let me demonstrate this.

Depression is often brought on by t crushing strain of guilt feelings. Feelin of guilt over past sins as well as prese inadequacies can cause terrible men strain so that a person falls into depression. But doesn't the Bible giv the key to overcoming feelings of gu Through proper confession and re ance all our sins are forgiven by Go Jesus' sake. If we follow the Biblical v of confession we are able to live a life fr of guilt feelings. To be burdened wi guilt arises from not following the Bibli way to forgiveness.

Depression is many times brought by worry. Worry over what may happen the future, worry over our ability to hand our present responsibilities, worry over what people think of us, worry over a ho of other things often bring people down t the despair of depression. However, t Bible tells us not to worry. To worry is

And the Bible gives us the key to ...come worry. The key to overcoming ...rry is to put our trust in the living God. ...th God there is no need to worry. He ...s promised to care for us, to avert all ...or turn it to our profit. A man who ...ries is a man who fails to trust the ...derful promises of God for His own. ...o has failed to go the Biblical way of ...th.

Furthermore, depression is some...es caused by a feeling of inadequacy. ...ressed people are people who often ...e very high and lofty ideals. But at the ...e time they feel totally inadequate to ...to these ideals. They have feelings ...riority. They feel as though the little ...t that they are able to accomplish is ...ardly worthwhile. They are dismal ...lures. And for this they even feel guilty. ...s sense of worthlessness in turn places ...errible mental strain on a person so that ... is on a collision course with depression.

However, this is a totally unbiblical ...ture of oneself—at least of a child of ...d. The Bible tells us that in Jesus ...rist we are new creatures. To each of us ...s been given marvelous gifts and ...ilities so that we are perfectly adapted ...perform the duties God has placed ...re us. And the place that God has ..., to each of us with its various duties ...y important and worthwhile. Our life ...portant for the glory of God and the ...e of the church and kingdom.

However, a person who suffers from ...ression seldom sees or understands ... He has an unbiblical view of himself ...d what his life ought to be. And this has ...lted in depression.

These are just a few examples of how ... unbiblical view of oneself or an ...iblical approach to life brings on ...pression.

There are many more aspects to ...pression that we are not able to treat in ... article of this size — what depression ...olves, what brings it on, how to escape ...pression once it has overtaken you. Depression is a very involved and complicated thing. And it is a terrible enemy.

But the key to understanding depression is the Bible. The Bible sets before us the way of joy and happiness. And that way of joy is faithfulness to God's Word. This is what we are told in Psalm 119:1, 2, "Blessed (happy) are the undefiled in the way, who walk in the law of the Lord. Blessed are they that keep his testimonies, and that seek him with the whole heart". The same idea is found in Proverbs 29:18, "But he that keepeth the law, happy is he".

It is possible at this point to become too simplistic. Let's not have too narrow a view of the law of God. The law has many different facets. It governs our duty towards God, our neighbor and even ourselves. And in each instance the law of God charges us to **love**. We are to love God, our neighbor and ourselves. Do this in the power of God's grace and you will find true joy and happiness in life. Turn from the law and you open yourself up to ravages of depression.

Let us conclude then with the charge to walk faithfully before God in all obedience to His commandments that as young people we may prevent and escape the terrible sufferings of depression.

Let us not despise those who do suffer depression. Their failings are in many instances our failings. Depressed people are not the only people who fail in some way to appraoch life's problems in a Biblical way. We all fail in many, many ways. The depressed person needs not our condemnation but our love and support!

And finally, if you at present are suffering depression, you more than likely will need some help to overcome it. The place to turn is your pastor. For above all the help you need is spiritual.

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FROM THE PASTOR'S STUDY

BY REV. G. LUBBERS

Honoring the Hoary Head

"Thou shalt rise up before the hoary head, and honor the face of the old man, and fear thy God. I am the LORD."

Leviticus 19:32

Hoary Head! Face of an old man!

A great mark of distinction in Israel.

Singled out for honor and esteem by those who are younger in the congregation of God. That is the place where our God is to be feared and obeyed. Give honor to those to whom honor is due, yes, honor in the very place where Jehovah is the I AM, the covenant, faithful God.

JAH is great in Zion. He is the LORD alone. And He has set the face of the "old man" in the midst of Israel, the church. He has established this as a precept of God's covenant in Israel by the mouth and pen of Moses, the man of God, with whom he speaks not as with a common prophet in visions and dreams, but face to face.

Put off your shoes from your f young reader!

The Hebrew speaks of the "face" o the hoary man, and of the "face" of t old man. There is much meaning to th term face in the Bible. The face is th mirror of the soul. On this face we see tha man is image-bearer of God. There are beautiful faces, and ugly, unkind faces, smiling faces and sad faces. There is the face of the man and woman who have lived in sin, drunkenness and debauchery. And then there is the face of a winsom and loving smile, and there is the face o those who repulse with a fierce grimac or stern and uninviting severity, so that their skin would crack if they attempted

smile.

Faces are a study of the life of the soul.

Yet, withal, ideally there should be in the face of a "man" dignity, rooted in godliness!

There is dignity which commands respect in the face of the hoary man. This is the hoary head of a man found in the way of righteousness. (Prov. 16:31) dignity of the godly old man; "but the ner being an hundred years old shall be rsed" (Isaiah 65:20b)

Yes, the hoary head is a crown of ry!

In those who fear the LORD.

Rise up before the face of such, young man, young woman!

Rise up! honor such!

* * * * * * *

Young men and women in Israel, rise up!

Give honor where honor is accorded by the LORD, thy God.

It is an ordinance in Israel in perpetual generations. Presently you will thus be honored when you grow old and receive the dignity of the face of the hoary. That is growing old graciously. No, you will then not be the "grand ol' man", the kindly grandmother of the world. You ill be qualitatively different. You will be ned with a hoary head on higher und. It will be a place, as a pillar in d's church. You will not sing the an-song of a worldly army general, who ice stood on the pinnacle of authority and ory, and who feels that his power is aning. You will not sing the elegy "old soldiers never die, they just fade away".

No, your place will be as a nail in the holy place of God's church. It is a place ooted in an ordinance in Israel forever.

Rise up, young people, give honor to e face of the hoary, and be blessed!

No, you must not simply be polite to e old people, and perform your "boy cout" deed, helping an aged man cross a sy street. Yes, do that, but do it on a higher plane. Work out your salvation with fear and trembling. Let it reflect your giving honor to your father and to your mother.

And live long on the earth!

Rising up before the face of the hoary is as far apart, as are the "poles" from the customs cultivated even by the heathen, e.g. the Egyptians, the Spartans, and the ancient Romans, and which custom is still followed in the East. The latter is not godliness but is idolatrous superstition. God is not in all the thoughts of such.

Rise up before the face of the hoary man where you meet the commandment, the covenant obligation of all God's people, who have been redeemed in the blood of the Lamb. Yes, then you will see dignity on this "face" of the old man. It is the dignity of the sceptre of God's throne established in righteousness.

Many years of toil and labor, the enduring the afflictions of Christ is mirrored on that face of the godly old man. It is the face of the man of God, who has seen the face of God, which face shines upon him. This gives him great peace, a peace which passes all understanding.

Yes, such a hoary head is an adornment of righteousness.

It is the crown of a fruitful life of godliness.

The face of the hoary and the face of the old man! It is the face of a "father" in Israel. Honor belongs to such. He is known in the gates, sitting among the wise. He is known and recognized in the gates of the city of God. They are not some has-been nobody, but have a God-assigned dignity, worthy of the highest respect.

Rise up before such a head!

Blessed are the youth, who do.

Yes, blessed in the church in the world. . . .

* * * * * * *

Fear thy God!

Tremble before Him in the beauty of holiness.

This is no mere advice on polite mannerisms. It is to bespeak deep reverence from the heart. God is not mocked.

Fear the LORD thy God. Yes, He is **thy** God. He has redeemed you with precious blood, with a great price. He is thy SAVIOR! He sent Jesus, His Son into this world. He sent him and condemned Him in our place to the death of the accursed under law. He has set us free. Let us walk in this liberty.

He places us in the midst of a crooked generation, which has no eye for the hoary head, nor are there really any "hoary saints" in their midst. Such have never caught the symbolic implication of the vision of the Ancient of days, sitting upon His holy Throne as portrayed to Daniel in the night visions upon his bed. They have never pondered in holy awe the scene of the Son of Man coming in the deep way of His being lifted on the Cross, to draw nigh unto "the Ancient of Days, whose garment was white as snow, and **hair of his head like** pure wool. . . ." (Dan. 7:9)

They have not reflected in childlike faith the Hoary Head of the Ancient of Days. Here is eternal and unchangeable dignity. Rise up before the face of God, stand at attention to Him who calls the stars by name, so that they in attention at His bidding, stand, by the greatness of His power!

Fear God, honor the kingly face of the "old man" in the church.

No they are not the same. The former is the basis of the latter. For Moses is told: Honor the face of the old man, and fear thy God. The former is the fruit of the latter. That is the great principle of the Fifth Commandment. To all things there is an end, but God's commandment is very wide. (Ps. 119:96) Is there an end to God's commandment? It is a principle, a leaven which permeates all truth!

Then you see the faces of the hoary in light of heaven, **sub specie eternitatis**! We see such as have stood in the battle of truth against error, not ashamed of the name of Jesus. Elders and ministers and parents and teachers who have grown grey in God's service. Yes, we see then a Moses, a Samuel, an Elijah, a John the Baptist in prison, a Paul with his battle-scarred body, bearing the "marks of the Lord Jesus."

They have not loved their life unto death.

They have their faces turned heaven-ward toward the face of God in Jesus Christ. Soon the battle is o're for them. They have their hope in the living God, their God, their Savior.

Their names are written in the book of life.

Rise up for such, and fear God!

Honor the face of the hoary head, young man, young woman!

Soon you will then join their ranks!

Here below and in glory above. . . .

Current Events

by Deane Wassink

Having discussed the fact that we are able to study the Word of God ourselves because we possess the office of believer we continue our discussion of Bible study. We begin with a brief discussion of what the Scriptures are. In the first place, the Scriptures are written by God through human instruments. The Spirit of God so

moved the apostles and prophets that they recorded the exact Word of God as God expressed it through their individual personalities and talents. In the second place, the Scriptures are the written record of the Word of God, Christ. From the first words of Genesis to the last words of Revelation, Christ is the content of the Scriptures. I do not mean that He is referred to again and again, though that may be true. I am referring to the truth of Christ as the Savior who died upon the cross to save His elect people and judge the wicked. That truth is the very essence of every passage in the Word of God. That cross constitutes the unity of the Scriptures.It is that unity of Scripture that lies at the foundation of our principles of the interpretation of Scripture.

The most basic rule of all the study of the Word of God is that **Scripture interprets Scripture**. All of the messages of Scripture are basically one message of Christ. There is not one part that contradicts another part. Therefore, we must study to learn what a particular passage is saying about Christ in light of the rest of the Scriptures. Perhaps we should first set our normal Bible study habits before our minds before we go into the way we ought to study. I would dare say that most of us, when we do study, exert ourselves to the point of reading the text over a couple of times, either privately or at family devotions, so that we can think about it as we are engaged in other activities. By the time we get to our society we have an idea of what the text says. I certainly admit that this preparation is better than none at all. However, we would not even treat our income tax forms that way. We struggle with all the fine print and even call an accountant if we have a question on our tax forms; but with the Word of God we give it a casual reading. Again, if I am told I'm going to have a tax audit by the I.R.S. I would be very very sure of my arguments before I tried to explain something to them. But, many are the textual arguments I have heard about spiritual truths prior to which little or no homework was even done. And, if you will permit another parallel, when dealing with money and especially taxes it carries no weight if I did something just because "so and so" told me it was legally proper. I had better be able to support my claim by pointing to the actual law or interpretation. Similarly, many are the abstract spiritual arguments in which we engage that pit the interpretation of this Reverend or that Professor or even that Assembly of the Church, against another without going to the source itself, God's Word. It is, after all, what God says, not what man says, that counts.

We apply that fundamental principle of Scripture interprets Scripture in the following ways.

1. We must take each word of the text one by one to see how and why they are used in our text. Oftentimes the most profound truths of God's Word are set forth in the simplest meanings and sentence structure. Therefore we do well to take the time needed to understand each word in the text.
2. We must take our text and study it in the light of the verses and chapters that closely surround it. Seldom does a word or a thought stand alone. Usually it is clarified and developed by its context.
3. We must take our text and examine it in the light of all the Scripture. If our text seems to stand in contradiction to another passage or teaching of Scripture we must not plead ignorance or claim that we have discovered an apparent contradiction. We must instead reexamine and reformulate our previous interpretation. The unity of the Scripture demands it of us. In that way the Word of God itself will resolve the problem.

MERCY FOR THE MERCIFUL

by Rev. John A. Heys

There seems to be an abrupt change when we come to this fifth Beatitude. The first four quite clearly deal with what goes on in the soul of the citizen of the kingdom of heaven. He is poor in spirit, mourns over sin, is meek and hungers and thirsts after righteousness. Now we read of him as being merciful. And indeed there is a difference here between this Beatitude and the four that preceded it. Although it is not an abrupt and unusual change, there is this difference that we deal here with an activity that is not simply in the soul but must have an outward deed to be complete.

A man can suffer shipwreck and be cast onto an island all by himself. There he can be poor in spirit, mourn, be meek and hunger and thirst even though there is no other person on the island with him. But he cannot be merciful, unless you mean mercy shown to a bird or turtle or the like. He must have a man with him to be merciful in the sense of this fifth Beatitude. He cannot show mercy to God, even though, if there is another human being there, he can show mercy before God. He cannot be merciful when all by himself.

Yet we make a mistake if we take the position that we have an abrupt, unexpected change here in the series of characteristics of the citizen of the kingdom of heaven. We can and must expect that Jesus, as the Son of God, has logic and reason for the order in which He presents a series of items. And what we have here, beginning in the fifth Beatitude, is the behaviour and conduct of the citizen of that kingdom of heaven as he faces man. The first four dealt with the inner conduct of his soul as he faces God. And only when he faces God as the poor in spirit, as one mourning over sin, one who is meek before the sovereign God, and hungers and thirsts after righteousness will we find him exercising the mercy Jesus has in mind in this fifth Beatitude. There is therefore a close connection between the first four and the last three Beatitudes. Our attitude toward God comes first and is basic. When it is right, our attitude toward the neighbour will also be one of righteousness. In a sense we have in these Beatitudes the same pattern that we have in the law of God. First our love to God is set forth, and then love to the neighbour is spelled out for us.

Consider then that mercy is an aspect of love, for it is love as it goes out to one in misery. Grace on the other hand is also an aspect of love, but now as it goes out to one who is undeserving. Mercy desires to deliver from the misery. Grace desires to give what is not deserved; and with God it is giving what is the opposite of what is deserved. And surely from both points of view we can never speak of being merciful to God, Who has no misery but is the God of all glory. And we cannot give Him what

He does not deserve, for all is His and He is worthy of all praise and thanksgiving.

To be sure the Arminian heresy, which speaks of free offer of salvation to all who hear the gospel, and preaches not of an atonement made by Christ on His cross, but of a possibility of atonement becoming ours, if only we fulfill the condition of believing and asking for it, also presents a God Who is to be pitied, and has the misery of seeing the greater part of those whom He wants to save still go lost. He suffers big disappointments; and we had better pity Him, have compassion for Him and see if we cannot, in mercy to Him, get a few more to lessen His disappointment!! His love is being spurned. And we in pity for Him, as well as for our own good, better accept His kind offer.

But if you know the God of Scripture, Who Himself declared in Isaiah 46:10, "My counsel shall stand, and I will do all my pleasure", and His Son said—and He cannot lie—"It is finished". That is quite different from "I have made it possible, and now you must make it real by accepting it". And He moved Paul to write, "Blotting out the handwriting of ordinances which was against us. . . ." Colossians 2:14. It was then an accomplished fact and not a possible blessedness. I began a moment ago to say that if you know that God, you will realize that He is not to be pitied, and can have no mercy shown to Him.

The mercy of which Jesus speaks is the mercy shown to man. Jesus' parable of The Good Samaritan—which ought to be called the parable Of The Merciful Samaritan—reveals to us what mercy does. It has compassion upon men in misery and not only desires to relieve them but does what it can to ease the grief and pain. This mercy is shown to believers but also to unbelievers. In that parable the Samaritan did not first inquire about the nationality, the religious convictions of the wounded man; and neither must we. When there is a need, fill it. When you can help, do so.

Negatively this mercy means that the citizen of the kingdom of heaven will not reach out to hurt his neighbour, and will not rejoice in his misfortunes, even though he knows that all the woes upon the wicked are the visitation of God's wrath upon sin. Positively a man with that mercy will take the time, use his money, go out of his way to help all whose misery he sees and knows.

But perhaps you say "Then there is a blessing for those that are outside of Christ. Then God does bless the wicked. For many ungodly, unbelieving people do marvellous deeds, spends great sums of money to help alleviate misery." That is true. The unbelieving nurse in the hospital can be so concerned and do so much to relieve pain. In disasters men will give, and give and give some more to help their neighbours, and even people on the other side of the earth. And so it seems, the text teaches that there are blessings for the unbelievers who will show mercy to their fellow men. There is it seems, a "common grace" besides the saving grace of God!

Let me therefore at once call your attention to the fact that in the Beatitudes Jesus speaks of a very special mercy, one that all men cannot exercise and do not have. One that is peculiar only to believers. One that unbelievers cannot show to their neighbours. How can I say that when Jesus simply says, "Blessed are the merciful" and makes no futher qualification. Well, young people, there is an hard and fast rule of Scripture-interpretation that demands this position. As I pointed out before, these virtues mentioned in the Beatitudes all belong to the same person. They all are poor in spirit; all mourn over sin; are meek and hunger and thirst after righteousness. Now, we may not take the fifth Beatitude out of that context. It is a mercy shown by those who hunger and thirst after righteousness. It is not the mercy that parents have for their

children in natural life. It is not the mercy that children have for their parents because they are their flesh and blood.

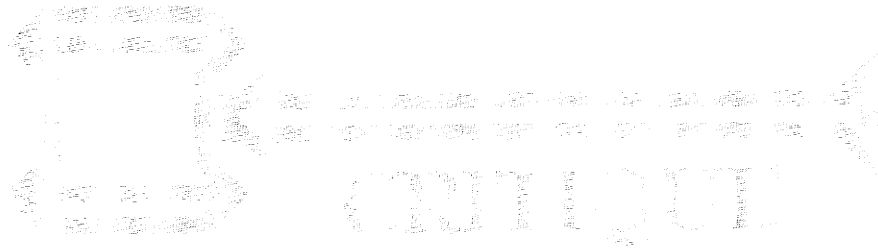
Only that mercy receives the blessing of God's mercy that is an aspect of love for God, and not one that is an aspect of a natural love of man for man. It is the result of seeing the neighbour as a creature of God and not simply another man, and as a creature God placed next to us in order that we may serve Him with an helping hand. It is doing what is right in God's sight. It is doing that righteousness for which the citizen of the kingdom of heaven hungers and thirsts. If he has no mercy for his fellow men, he is not sincere when he says that he hungers and thirsts after righteousness. It is not merely pity for the neighbour but a work of love toward God.

The mercy of the unbeliever is due to a miserable feeling he has in himself when he sees his neighbour in misery. But the mercy of the believer, although it too is due to a misery he feels when he sees his neighbor in trouble, is more. It is also due to the fact that it hurts him to think even of failing to serve God by relieving that misery of his neighbour when it is in his power to do so. And THAT is what makes it a good work, a work of love toward God. For it is an act of serving God and not merely helping mankind. The unbeliever so often performs his work of mercy in open evidence of his hatred against God. He curses and swears, questions God's love, or denies it to be God's visitation upon sin, ascribing it to fate, Mother Nature, and the like and so denies God. That surely cannot please God, and cannot by God be called a good work. It is not merely a question of what we do to serve mankind. It is a question of whether we serve our fellow man because we want to serve the Living God. It is not merely a question of whether we love our neighbour, but of whether we love him in a love toward God.

That such "shall obtain mercy" means that God has compassion on them and desires to bring them out of their miseries—for we are all under the curse by nature—as soon as possible. I say "as soon as possible" not because there are things that limit God and keep Him from doing for a time what He wants to do, but because He has an eternal, unchangeable counsel according to which all things happen. Let me explain that to you young people.

Certainly this mercy of God is shown us when we die. O yes, death comes in the mercy of God. We can see that when by death He ends the excruciating pains of one suffering terminal cancer. But it is just as true when a healthy, strong young man or woman dies in what we call an accident. Then He takes His own out of this vale of tears and sorrows and into heavenly glory. Paul teaches that when in Philippians 1:21-23 he states that "to die is gain", and that to be with Christ "is far better." But you see, that moment of death in that "accident" was no accident as far as God is concerned. It was planned to happen at exactly that moment, in that way and at that place. Before that moment it was impossible because of God's eternal determination, not because He is limited by any creature or circumstance.

But there is more. In mercy, in tender compassion for us He sent His Son into our world of suffering, showed no pity upon Him as He poured out the punishment of our sins until they were all paid for in full, raised Him from the dead, took Him up to His right hand in heavenly glory to work all things together for our good, so that at death we will obtain mercy that delivers us once and for all from all the curse. And then when His Son appears at the end of time we, in that mercy, obtain bodies that are incorruptible, undefiled, have all our tears wiped away and begin everlasting joy and happiness.



So Simple, Yet So Demanding

by Ben Wigger

There are times in my life when I get that awful feeling down in the pit of my stomach that I really have no idea at all of what it means to be a Christian and to live a Christian life. It is almost as if all of us who call ourselves Christians are living a contradiction. The life of a Christian seems so simple on the one hand, yet so demanding on the other. So easy, yet so hard.

Today there are so many people who go about calling themselves born-again, Bible believing Christians. In fact, it seems to be quite fashionable to be a Christian. We see everyone from sports figures to entertainers going about claiming to be followers of Christ. It all seems so easy, anyone can do it, anyone can say they are a Christian; but are they?

A Christian, quite simply, is one who puts all of his faith in Jesus Christ and acknowledges Him to be his Lord and Saviour. But by putting all of his faith in Christ, he has made the greatest commitment of his entire life.

One of the very basic differences between a believer and a non-believer is the fact that one has placed all of his faith in Christ while the other has not. Think for a moment of the difference between Judas Iscariot and Jesus' other disciples. They believed that Jesus was the promised Messiah; Judas was not ready to make that confession.

But as you or any other sincere Christian knows, there is a great deal more than just making a verbal commitment to being a Christian. Once we get beyond that part of it, we come to the part which deals with our actions. Perhaps the primary difference between a Christian and a non-christian is that one has accepted God's authority and rule over his life, while the other has not.

That is what separates us from the unsaved, our willingness through God's grace to put our faith in Christ, and our willingness through God's grace to accept His authority and rule over our lives.

The struggle in any Christian's life, and how he expresses that Christianity on this earth, is going to be to decide who is in charge. Who is going to make the rules, who is going to have the final say, whose will is going to prevail?

Accepting God's authority and rule, making His will supreme, is the thing that without God's grace, we are prone to resist.

From a human point of view, who wouldn't want all of the benefits of being a Christian? You have the forgiveness of sin, peace of mind, and eternal life. But in order to enjoy all of these benefits you

have to do more than just profess yourself a Christian, you have to live your life here in such a way that reflects God's authority in your life.

We have to fight against that problem all of our lives. Being a Christian is so much more than paying simple lip service to Christ. We have to sacrifice all, if need be, to be given the right to call ourselves His disciples.

Man has, since the very beginning when Adam fell, refused to accept the fact that God is in charge. We always turn our backs on the Word and what it demands, and do things in our own way. By our very nature it is impossible for us to be disciples of Christ. We would simply refuse to acknowledge that God is Lord over all of creation, including ourselves.

This is exactly why we should return thanks to our Heavenly Father Who has given grace that we can become His disciples. For it should be quite clear to all of us, by the testimony of our own flesh, that we could never do it by ourselves.

If we intend to call ourselves disciples of Christ, we must be aware of what is required of us in order to do so.

To be called one of Christ's disciples we have to be willing to give up all that we have. Luke 14:33 "So likewise whosoever he be of you that forsaketh not all that he hath, he cannot be my disciple." Simply put, our allegiance to Him must be greater than our allegiance to any of our worldly goods. To deny Him first place among our possessions is to worship the creature more than the Creator and that is idolatry.

Our allegiance to Christ must be greater than our allegiance to any person. Matthew 10:37 "He that loveth father or mother more than me is not worthy of me: and he that loveth son or daughter more than me is not worthy of me." To be devoted to someone more than to Christ is to again place the creature above the Creator. God cannot accept a place in this world that is less than first.

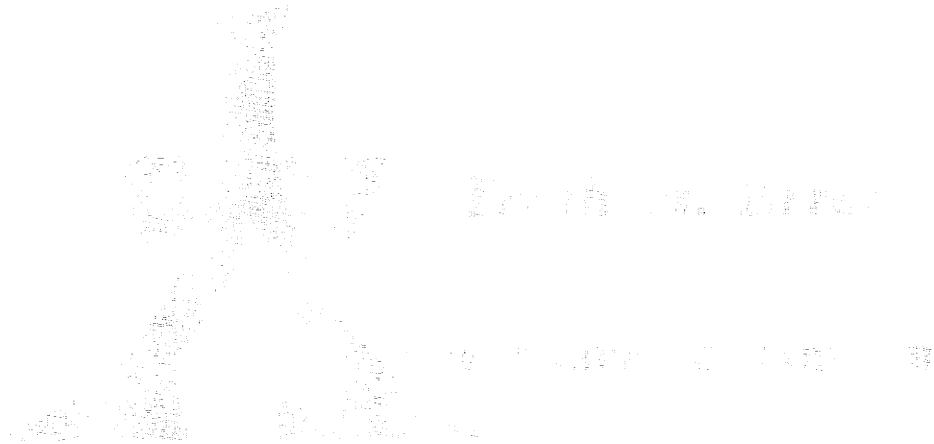
And our allegiance to Christ must be stronger than our allegiance to life itself. Luke 14:26 "If any man come to me and hate not his father and mother and wife and children and brethren and sisters, yea and his own life also he cannot be my disciple". If the time ever comes when we are forced to choose between Him and death, or the world and life, death must be chosen over life.

There are times when one almost has to ask, is God demanding too much from me? Give up everything, everyone, and even my life if need be; it sure seems like He is asking more than we can possibly give. But the answer has to be "No". For God is the Lord God Almighty, the Creator of heaven and earth. God cannot accept anything less, it is the only kind of commitment that is compatible with Himself and all of His perfections.

Being a Christian is so simple on the one hand, even a small child can believe in Jesus as His Saviour. Yet being a Christian is so demanding on the other that men have spent their entire lives in the study of that same wonderful story of Salvation without ever exhausting the riches that it contains. While it involves the simple placing of one's faith on the Lord, it also involves the greatest commitment one can ever make.

How do we measure up to the demands and requirements of discipleship? When we work or play, when we are at school or home, when we date, when we listen to the radio or watch T.V., when we drive around in our cars, or spend Sunday in God's house, are we doing all things with these things in mind?

Anyone can say that they are a Christian, but of course not everyone is. Only those who really do place their faith in Him as their Lord and Saviour and live their lives to reflect the new life of Christ are Christians. Pray, young people, that God will give unto each of us grace sufficient so we can serve Him as true disciples should and must.



VII. Earnestly Contend For The Faith

THINGS IN COMMON

What do believers and unbelievers alike have in common? As to the facts, they have every (fact) thing in common. But as to interpretation of the facts, they have nothing in common. As to the facts, which stand objectively before them in the creation, believers and unbelievers alike: 1. compute according to the same rules of arithmetic; 2. think, speak, read and write by means of the same alphabet and language; 3. listen to the same music (Beethoven); 4. read the same books (the Bible, Bunyan, Dickens); 5. look on the same world round about; 6. see everywhere the same manifestation of God (Rom. 1:20); 7. hear the same preaching of the whole counsel of God (Rom. 10:12, 18; I Cor. 1:18-25); 8. eat and drink the same foods and liquids; 9. marry and give in marriage; 10. work in the field and at the mill (Matt. 24:40f). But as to interpretation, believers and unbelievers interpret each and every thing in antithesis to one another. Their thinking is in opposition to one another. The one knows numbers are creaturely, finite, quantitative signs; the other thinks them ancient human discoveries dug from the mines of the infinite universe. The one knows language to be a divine innate gift conferred at man's creation; the other suppose it a product of the long process of evolution. The one hears the sounds of nature as notes of praise the creature sings to its Creator; the other hears them and classifies them according to system deemed dictated by nature itself. The one reads the Bible as the only and unique revelation of God; the other conceives of the Bible as being on the same level with any other book. The one looking on the world sees it as a book inscribed with characters divine; the other sees it as something that was "always there." The one seeing the creation, worships the Creator; the other seeing the order of nature serves the creature rather than the Creator (Rom. 1:25). The one does the ordinary things of life: eating and drinking, raising a family, working at an occupation, in the fear of God and conscious of the coming general judg-

ment; the other does these things not necessarily in immorality, but as oblivious to the wrath to come (Mt. 24:32-44). Marriage is viewed by the one as a divine institution, but by the other as a development in society out of custom or tradition. Both view the same elm tree, but the one cannot possibly see it except as environed by God and His creation, while the other looks at it as an independent entity "because it is (somehow) there." Both feel and acknowledge the same fact of cold, but the one faces the fact as a creature of God (Ps. 147:17), while the other regards it as a proof that "anything can happen."

We see that God has drawn a line between truth and error, separating them on opposite sides. The believer stands on the one side, the unbeliever on the other. The one stands in the light; the other gropes in darkness. True, the latter in his darkness does catch from across the line feeble flickerings of occasional sparks of natural light (knowledge), which enable him, for example, to know the difference between right and wrong. Believers to a degree share that moral judgment with the unbeliever. But he with his natural knowledge of things forges a path of would-be independence upward and outward from his miry bog of error and darkness. Here believer and unbeliever part. The latter regards his rebellious line of independence as extending upward infinitely. Thus he denies the reality of total depravity, while he himself, a living demonstration of man's depravity, cannot escape bending and forcing down his so called independence in unrighteousness. So that his line upward from his position in falsehood, like an expiring rocket, takes a sudden and irreversible zoom and curve downward. Rom. 1:18. Therefore, he cannot even shake his fist in God's face (Rev.16:10-11) except in utter dependence on God (Acts 17:28a)!

So then, the natural Man's knowledge, embracing, it may be, a far greater volume of facts than held by the spiritual man, is true as far as it goes, only he butts his head against the stone wall of his own dependency, which he stubbornly denies, at the same time denying the source of his knowledge, from God. (Ps. 94:10; Job 34:11; Isa. 28:26). "Further, this light, such as it is, man . . . holds" down (suppresses it) in unrighteousness, that is, holds it away in thought from its context in reality, away from God and His creation. In these assumptions of his own independence, his denials of the source of truth, his abstracting knowledge off into unrighteousness (sin), he pollutes what little truth filters through his own frame of reference. But even polluted truth is spotted with vestiges and glints of natural light. But that is not a mark or proof of common grace. It is rather a proof that the common darkness of sin cannot entirely extinguish natural light. God does not leave men who are in the darkness with no evidence of His existence and truth. (Ps. 139; Rom. 1:18, 19, 25). Even the liar has to face the truth, see it, understand it and admit it. In order to be a liar he cannot do otherwise. Truth is inescapable, even to those who in thought annihilate it. Loving the darkness, hating the light, and for that reason, refusing to come to the light (Jn. 3:19, 20), they, doing all this, show that they know that the light is objectively real and indestructible. Actually, they can do no more against the light than to withdraw from it and wish it were extinct.

So although the natural man marvels at the wonders of astronomy and the wheeling galaxies of space, he concludes that they are all the result of a ponderous evolutionary process continuing for billions of years. He himself accomplishes some wonders — he makes cobalt bombs and lands on the moon. He accomplishes these things by barging into God's workshop, as though he were the owner, and appropriates God's own tools. He acquires knowledge and truth by inconsistently reaching over the fence from his

yard of darkness, falsehood and supposed independence into his Maker's yard to "borrow" His books (mathematics, physics) and tools (logic, nature, scripture). But he understands them from the point of view of the Lie and employs them in the service of the Lie!

MAN IN THE RENEWED STATE

Mankind fell in Adam from original righteousness into sin, misery and death. That sin took the character of rebellion against the marriage covenant (cp. the philosophy of the ERA, NOW, the women's liberation movement) and of suicidal, anarchistic rebellion of mankind against itself. It all began when Eve, and Adam, assumed the Lord and His command to be in the minority, viewing authority to lay in a 3 to 1 majority against Him. How could they so blindly do this? They sided with the devil who had insinuated himself into their lives as an expert on authority, on life and death, right and wrong. Instead of keeping their finite minds in complete dependence on God's infinite knowledge, they got deceived into making a choice between God and the devil. They were, indeed, free to do this (a freedom fallen man no longer has), but so doing they became slaves to sin, the flesh and the devil. However God did not leave all mankind to perish in that state of sin and misery, but, in His sovereign good pleasure, chose some from all eternity to everlasting life in the Son of God, the Lord Jesus Christ, our Redeemer. Through Him the elect are recovered from the fall. "He hath chosen us in Him . . . in whom we have redemption through His blood, the forgiveness of sins . . . you hath He made alive who were dead in trespasses and sins" (Eph. 1:4, 7; 2:1). Eve, before the fall, had listened solely to the Word of God. At the fall she exchanged the word of God for human wisdom (her own) as the standard of truth. But after the fall, the elect are converted to the Lord under the preaching of the gospel of God, to again receive His Word, as it is in truth, not the word of men, but the Word of God, which works effectually in all believers who become followers of the churches of God (II Thes. 2:9, 13, 14). Whereas, with man's fall, he made himself the arbiter between God and the devil, and between right and wrong, now, in his renewal, he is restored to the place where again God and His Word are the standard for all judgments in faith and life. This renewal of our nature is the first work of God in our heart, which we call regeneration, in which the "regenerating Spirit pervades the inmost recesses of the man, opens the closed, softens the hardened heart . . . infuses new qualities into the will, which, though heretofore dead, He makes alive; from being evil . . . renders it good . . . This is the regeneration . . . in scripture . . . denominated a new creation (II Cor. 5:17), a resurrection from the dead (Jn. 5:24, 25), a making alive (Eph. 2:1), which God works in us without our aid . . . it is . . . a supernatural work . . . not inferior in efficacy to creation or the resurrection from the dead . . . so that all in whose heart God works in this marvelous manner are certainly, infallibly and effectually regenerated and (so) do actually believe" (Canons of Dort, III-IV, 11, 12). This wonderful, delightful, ineffable change must (Jn. 3:7) come over us in order for us to be defenders of the faith and witnesses for Christ. The dead praise not the Lord, nor fight for His truth, nor gain others to Christ (Heidelberg Catechism, Q. & A. 86).

But the miracle of regeneration is not limited to man individually and personally, as important as that is (Jn. 3:3, 5!), for it extends to the renewal of the elect race (I Pet. 2:9, Gk.) and to The Regeneration (Mt. 19:28) and restitution of all things (Acts 3:21), when the whole creation shall be delivered from the bondage of corruption (Rom. 8:19, 21-23) to issue in the new heaven and earth (II Pet. 3:10-13).

Discussion Outlines for I Samuel
CHAPTERS 9 and 10

by Rev. R. Hanko

A. Saul's first meeting with Samuel.
   1. Who Saul was:
      a. For what did Israel have to wait (8:22) after God promised them the king they wanted (9:15, 16)?
      b. Why is Saul's person so carefully described in 9:1 and 2 (cf. chap. 8:20 and 16:6, 7)? Why are his generations also mentioned (Gen. 49:10, Deut. 33:7)?
      c. Are there any indications of Saul's spiritual character already in this chapter?
   2. Their meeting:
      a. How did God bring Saul to Samuel? Study the Heid. Cat., Lord's Day X and the Belgic Confession, Article XIII and explain how this illustrates the doctrine of providence.
      b. Do you think it is significant that God brought Saul to Samuel but later sent Samuel to David (Is. 55:3-5 and 2:2 and 3)?
      c. What did Samuel mean when he told Saul (9:20) that the desire of Israel was upon him and upon his father's house (cf. 8:20, 12:13)?
      d. At the sacrificial meal to which Samuel invited Saul he made him sit in the chief seat and gave him the best portion. Why? Study I Peter 2:17 and other similar passages.
   3. The significance of these things:
      a. If Israel had understood what kind of a man Saul was spiritually do you think they would have received him as King?
      b. Why did God give them such a king? Read Eph. 1:11b in this connection and explain what is the counsel of God's will for Israel in these matters.
      c. How does Canons V, Article 2 apply to this history and through this history to us?

B. The Anointing of Saul.
   1. The event itself:

a. What was the significance of anointing (Ps. 133, Is. 61:1)? Do we have a similar ceremony today (Acts 6:6, I Tim. 4:15)?
b. In what way did Saul have God's Spirit? In the way of Ezek. 36:26 and Col. 3:9, 10? Does the example of Cyrus in Isaiah 45:1-4 and 5 help answer this question?
c. Later on Samuel tells Saul he would be changed into another man (10:6) and that he received "another heart" (10:9). What does this mean (11:6ff, compare also 16:14 and 17:11)?
d. Why did Saul need to be instructed by Samuel even to the extent of staying with him a whole night (9:26, 27)? Cf. Deut. 17:19, 20.

2. The three signs that were given to Saul:
a. What three signs did Samuel give Saul when they parted and why did he give them?
b. Explain the first sign in connection with Deut. 18:21, 22 and Jer. 28:9.
c. What did the second sign of the loaves of bread show? Cf. chapter 9:20.
d. What was the significance of the third sign? Cf. chap. 10:1.
e. Do you think the fact that three signs were needed is a commentary on Saul's spiritual character?
f. Why were the people amazed when Saul prophesied? Explain in this connection the proverb that they made (10:12). Refer to Ps. 115:17, 18 and Is. 38:18 for an answer.

3. Conclusions:
a. In what respect is Saul's anointing different than that of David (II Sam. 23:1-4, Ps. 78:70-72)?
b. In what way are all ungodly rulers like king Saul? Look up Rom. 13:1-4, and explain what lessons we may derive from this history.

C. Israel given their king.
1. The story:
a. What was the purpose of the lot and why did Saul still have to be chosen by lot in the presence of the whole nation (Prov. 16:33, I Sam. 10:24)?
b. Why did Samuel remind Israel once again of their sin of rejecting God as their king (Ezek. 33:1-6)? Did the people pay any attention to Samuel?
c. Why did Saul hide when it became obvious that the lot would fall on him? Was this wrong? Look up Ps. 21:7, 31:17 and 125:1 for an answer.

2. Lessons for us:
a. What lesson can we learn from the kind of King that God gave to the nation of Israel in Saul (Jer. 17:5-8)?
b. What does all this teach us about our relation to God in the work that he gives us to do (Is. 26:1-4, John 15:4-7, II Cor. 10:3-5, Hebr. 10:36-39)?

WHAT AWAITS US TOMORROW?

by Rev. C. Hanko

The covenant youth of today sees quite a different world from yesterday. Mothers, who formerly concentrated all their efforts to be homemakers and to raise a family, now go out to work, in order to obtain extra luxuries not available to them from one income. All around us the Scriptural idea of holy marriage is laughed to scorn. Ridiculous! Marriage is for this life's enjoyment and that is all. The vows "Until death us do part" are made with tongue in cheek, as is evident from the ever increasing number of divorces and remarriages. Living together as unmarried individuals is condoned by the excuse, "Everybody does it". Rather than considering it a privilege to have children, they are considered to be a nuisance and therefore unwanted or kept to a minimum.

What results will this have on the future generations? What can the young people of the church expect for their future surrounding?

A thought provoking article appeared in the May 9, 1983 issue of the **U.S. News** under the heading, "When 'Family' Will Have A New Definition".

The article starts out by saying, "On a spring afternoon half a century from today, the Joneses are gathering to sing "Happy Birthday" to Junior. There's Dad and his third wife, Mom and her second husband, Junior's two half brothers and from his father's first marriage, his six stepsisters from his mother's spouse's previous unions, 100 year old Great Grandpa, all eight of Junior's current 'grandparents,' assorted aunts, uncles-in law and stepcousins. While one robot scoops us the gifts and another blows out the candles, Junior makes a wish . . . that he didn't have so many relatives."

The writer assumes that "different demands on the young and the old will create a generation gap the likes of which civilization has never known . . . . We'll continue to look for something better. If the marriage does not measure up, it will be ended. . . . Many more people in the future will live together before marriage, or not get married at all."

Experts look for "a double set of grandparents, aunts, uncles and brothers and sisters, as well as former in-laws and ex-spouses all of them making up the new divorce extended family. . . . Couples will decide to have fewer and fewer children - or no children at all . . . . Already it is predicted that by 1990 up to 50 percent of

all children will have experienced divorce and remarriage in their families. . . . What once was thought of as distasteful or unfortunate - the step family - will become very normal."

Sociologists see "the growth of nonfamily households - group marriages, gay parents, unmarried couples, communes of close friends, and a growing number of single parents. . . . Racial intermarriage is expected to become increasingly common."

What about bringing up children in a broken home?

"Friends and neighbors as well as kinfolk and the government are likely to have a greater role in rearing children 50 years from now - necessary outgrowth of more family break-ups and more mothers working outside the home. By the turn of the century, two thirds of American wives and most female single parents will hold full time jobs."

What part will the government continue to play in all this?

"Pressure will increase on government to provide or finance more day care and after school programs. . . . While not expected to take a Big Brother role in home life, the government will also oversee the use of genetic-engineering techniques that hold the potential for altering the characteristics of babies. It may even fall to Uncle Sam to help increase the number of children in future generations. . . . The government will not only offer financial rewards for newborns but also encourage more births through greater use of test-tube baby techniques and surrogate mothers. Families used to be responsible for the education of children and the care of the aged; the government does both now."

What will be the anticipated advantage?

According to the writer, there will be many advantages of this new "family" situation. To mention a few? "The children of these (inter-racial) marriages will have greater ability to mix across racial and cultural lines than past generations. . . . They may be our hope for the future. Me-ism will soften or be replaced by we-ism. Boys will do housework and will be educated to realize that they are no longer to be sole providers. Girls will be raised to be breadwinners, too. . . . The notion of the husband being the only breadwinner and the wife being the homemaker will become irrelevant - an historical curiosity."

One wonders in how far the church members will continue to go along with these departures. For one thing is evident, the departures from the Word of God and the imitating of the world today will bear their bitter consequences in the generations to come.

The signs of the times must be evident to anyone who wants to see them. The ungodly are lovers of self rather than lovers of God. Every commandment of God they defiantly trample under foot. The institution of holy marriage becomes worse than legalized prostitution. As a result, the family, which is the very foundation for true fellowship in the world, will completely disappear. Man will play god by determining the size of the family, by attempting to make test-tube babies and by seeking out surrogate mothers to produce a super-race. The wicked do what is right in their own eyes with every effort to wipe out God's Name, God's cause and God's church from the earth.

Will this world last another fifty years for the rise of this fuller manifestation of the anti-christian world power? Or will this happen sooner than we expect?

There is good reason for the church to heed the call of God's Holy Word, "Come ye out from among them, and be ye separate, saith the Lord, and touch not the unclean thing." II Corinthians 6:17.

Well may we pray with ever increasing fervor, "Come, Lord Jesus, yea, come quickly."

HIGH SCHOOL GIRLS AND CAREERS

by Prof. H. Hanko

High School ought to be and often is the time when young people decide on their calling in life. If they are children of God's covenant and consider their life's work to be truly a calling, they will do this through prayer, seeking the Lord's guidance in learning what He wants them to do. They will seek the help of their teachers and parents (and sometimes of their pastor or elders); they will try to judge as objectively as they can the gifts and abilities which God has given to them; and considering all these things prayerfully, they will make their decision. The decision is not and cannot be final, for circumstances may arise which cause them to alter their judgment. But a decision is made at least in a preliminary sense, because some hard choices have to be made concerning whether they want to continue their education or not; whether they want to look for a job or work at home.

For boys the difficulties are great enough; for girls they are even greater. This article has to do with the problems which girls face in this regard. More particularly, the question of this article is: ought covenant girls to pursue a career after graduating from High School? That is, ought girls to continue their education in college with a view to entering a career?

There are many aspects to this question and there are no easy answers. We shall explore a few implications which are involved in this matter and hope that, through further discussion, our covenant girls will have some guidelines in their decisions.

The Scriptures do not speak directly to the question, although this is not to say that there are not certain implications of Biblical teaching which ought to guide us in our thinking on the matter.

Scripture holds before us the fundamental truth that, normally and all other things being equal, young women ought to seek marriage so that their career is to be a wife and mother in Israel. Scripture holds before us the examples of many Godly women: Sarah, Rebekah, Leah, Ruth, Hannah, the virtuous woman of Prov. 31 and many others. In every case these women are mentioned in Scripture and information is given us concerning them so that they may serve as examples to covenant girls of the truth that a girl's career is to be found in the home and in her family. She who helps her husband and cares for the needs of her children is indeed a virtuous woman, whose price is

far above rubies (Prov. 31:10). The wife of a man who fears the Lord is as a fruitful vine by the sides of the house (Ps. 128:3). Those who are the true daughters of Sarah are those who obey their husbands and call him lord (I Peter 3:1-6).

All of this runs counter to the thinking of a modern world dominated and influenced by ungodly feminism. The world, in its consummate folly and thinking that it knows better than God what the role of women ought to be, speaks of the fact that a woman can only fulfill herself if she seeks a career outside the home, and she develops her feminine potential to the full only when she is freed from the shackles of the home and the rearing of children.

While the young women in the Church may sometimes be influenced by this type of thinking, it is godless and wicked. The role of women is rooted in the creation ordinance when God created the woman as a help meet for Adam and performed the first marriage ceremony and instructed our first parents to be fruitful and multiply and replenish the earth.

Motherhood is the God-appointed career of covenant women. There are few more noble callings and there are few higher responsibilities. If covenant young women will look at their calling from the viewpoint of Scripture and see the glories of motherhood as Scripture sets them forth, they will revel in their calling and count themselves extraordinarily blessed to be able to hold such a lofty position in God's covenant and the realization of His kingdom.

The Hebrews well understood this, and girls were trained from earliest childhood on to be wives and mothers. In fact, almost all of their education was devoted particularly to this kind of training. Especially the faithful in Israel, who understood the blessedness of the privilege of bringing forth the seed of the promise saw to it that their girls were prepared for this great task.

But having said all this, we have not told the whole story.

There are other factors involved.

Sometimes it happens that young women themselves have no greater desire, when they graduate from High School, than to marry and bring forth children. But year after year goes by and they are not asked for dates, nor are there any prospects of marriage. These girls begin to wonder whether their desire to have a place in bringing forth the seed of the covenant is to be denied them.

Sometimes the reason why they never find suitable husbands lies in the lack of spirituality among the young men of the church. Sometimes young men, for many years after graduating from High School, are not interested in finding a Godly girl and in marrying. They are carnally-minded young men who love the things of this present world. They want to earn money and they want to spend money on themselves. They want cars and radios, basketballs and skis, televisions and stereos, boats and airplanes. And a wife and family are too costly. They want to play basketball and baseball; they want to go to Colorado to ski or hunt and to the lake or ocean to swim; they want to be boss of their own time, and they are not interested in being "tied down" by a wife and children. This happens oftener than we suspect in the Church and it must be some kind of a barometer of the spiritual life of our young men.

Other times young men turn their attention to girls, but they are more interested in what the world calls beauty than what God calls beauty. They are more interested in a girl who wears the latest fashions, who is "fast", who knows her way around, or who has "sex appeal", but they are very little interested in a Godly girl who will be a faithful and virtuous covenant wife and mother.

The result of this is that young women in the church get left standing on the sidelines and are denied (some for many years; others for their entire life) the blessedness of motherhood — though their souls crave it.

This sort of situation puts a girl who wants to marry and raise a family on the spot. She nears the end of her High School years and has had few or no dates. She begins to wonder whether she should not after all seek a career in the likelihood that she will remain unmarried. Other girls still hope, even under these adverse circumstances, that they will find a boy friend when they are out of school and so will not have to wait too long until they can begin a covenant home. But year after year goes by and nothing happens, and so they decide that they had better return to school because it appears as if marriage is not open to them.

There are still other girls who believe from the beginning of their High School years that they do not want to get married because they have other goals in life. They have the opportunity to date and they have the possibility of marriage as an option in life. But they choose a career instead. Is this wrong? Not necessarily.

There are, Jesus says in Matthew 19, those who make themselves eunuchs for the sake of the kingdom of heaven. I.e., there are those who never desire to marry because they want to devote themselves to the cause of the kingdom. Marriage is not mandatory. No one is under the absolute obligation to marry. Such a one (young women included) may surely refrain from marriage in order to seek a career. But Scripture nevertheless makes clear that such a career ought to be in the service of the kingdom of heaven. What would our Christian schools be, e.g., if there were not Godly women who devoted their lives to the education of covenant children in the covenant schools which parents establish?

It ought to be emphasized, however, that a young woman who chooses to be single ought to do this because she believes that Christ has called her to devote her life to special work within the kingdom.

But what about those young women who are single not by choice but by circumstances?

God is sovereign over all life, and he controls also these things. It may be that, though a young woman would prefer to be married, God does not prepare a husband for her. And it may be that God has done this to point such a woman to the fact that she must, after all, prepare herself for special work in the kingdom. It may be that she is mistaken in her desires, and she must learn, through prayer and waiting upon the Lord, to reconcile her will to the will of her Father in heaven.

But it may be also that young women prefer to marry but never have the opportunity because of circumstances, but who do not necessarily seek a career. I have known such women too. They too are not to be despised in the Church. They have often (and we have examples in Scripture again for this) devoted their lives to helping others. We need only think of Phoebe, Dorcas, the women who served the Lord during the years of His earthly ministry. Theirs is a humble place in life, from a human viewpoint, but nevertheless important in the sight of God before Whose eyes the least are the greatest. They literally devote their lives to the care of the aged, the care of the poor, the teaching of Sunday School, the helping of those dependent upon them. This is not a "career" in the usual meaning of that word, but it surely is a noble work and calling in the sight of Almighty God.

But the point is that careers belonging to women who do not marry are careers in which they can serve, with their own unique gifts the cause of God and the kingdom of Jesus Christ.

"AS A FATHER PITIETH"

by Rev. D. Engelsma

How are we to rear our children?

This is a question of great importance to many Christian parents, as is evident from the popularity of the various seminars on the family. It is an urgent question for us Reformed parents, because of the Lord's covenant with us. God is the God of our children, as well as of ourselves, and saves them by the blood and Spirit of Jesus Christ. God brings them to spiritual maturity, and prepares them for their place and work in His Kingdom, largely through our rearing. We have taken a vow at their Baptism to carry out the rearing of them in the Word of God, to the utmost of our power. Expecially for us, therefore, it is a burning question, "**How** are we to do this?"

The single most important, most practical, and most fruitful way of rearing our children is that we consciously take God's Parenthood towards us as our model, and that we deliberately reflect the Fatherhood of God in all our rearing of our children. As you would expect, the answer to our question is found in the Bible. But it is not be looked for only in the relatively few passages that directly address the subject of child-raising, passages such as Deuteronomy 6; the book of Proverbs; Ephesians 6:4; and the like. The answer to our question is given in the Bible at large — in the entire revelation of God as the Father of His people and of the manner in which He deals with His children. Just as the secret of marriage is the reflecting of the union of Christ and the Church, so the secret of Reformed parenthood is the reflecting of the relationship between God and His family.

God is Father of His people; this is the basic relationship in which He stands towards us. Although this is more fully revealed in the New Testament, it was made known already in the Old Testament. When God was about to redeem Israel from Egypt, He told Moses to say to Pharaoh: "Thus saith Jehovah, Israel is my son, even my firstborn" (Exodus 4:22). Psalm 103 makes explicit comparison between our fatherly attitude towards our children and God's attitude towards His children: "Like as a father pitieth his children, so Jehovah pitieth them that fear him" (v. 13). The New Testament reveals this fully. Not only in the address of the Lord's Prayer, but also all the way through the Sermon on the Mount, in Matthew 5-7, Jesus teaches us that God is our Father. Time and again, the New Testament compares the acts of the Heavenly Father and the acts of us earthly fathers. Luke's account of the Lord's Prayer does this regarding the answering of the petitions of children: "If ye then, being evil, know how to give good gifts unto your children: how much more shall your heavenly Father give the Holy Spirit to them that ask him?" (Luke 11:13) Hebrews 12:1-13 compares God's Fatherhood and ours as regards the discipline, or chastisement, of children: "If ye endure chastening, God dealeth with you as with sons; for what son is he whom the father chasteneth not?" (v. 7)

God's Fatherhood is the original Parenthood; ours is derived from His. He is the original Father in His own Being in that the First Person of the Blessed Trinity begets the Second, as eternal Son. He is the original Father in His relationship, in Christ, to His people, whom He adopts as children and begets in His own image. Our parenthood, derived from His, is called to reflect His.

If this is the basic answer to our question, it must be clear that there is no easy way to rear children. Some have the

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notion that there is a secret somewhere, which they may discover in the latest seminar or book and which they can then apply, quickly and easily, to their children and family-life. It does seem to me that a book on Reformed child-rearing, written from the point of view that I am proposing, would be helpful. The best that I read are Abraham Kuyper's **When Thou Sittest in Thine House**, Jan Waterink's **Leading Little Ones to Jesus** (both of which are out of print), and Andrew Murray's **The Children for Christ**. In any case, there is no easy way. The right way is the difficult way of being like God in our parenthood.

What's Happening?

by Paula Faber

NEWCOMERS:

God Blessed:

Mr. and Mrs. R. Dykstra, of First Church in Grand Rapids, with a son, Nathan.

Mr. and Mrs. R. Hoksbergen, of Hull Church, with a daughter, Emily Jean.

Mr. and Mrs. V. Haveman, of Hudsonville Church, with a daughter, Amy Lynn.

Mr. and Mrs. C. Booth, of Hudsonville Church, with a daughter, Kelly Marie, On November 20.

Mr. and Mrs. D. DeJong, of South Holland, with a son, Carl David.

Mr. and Mrs. E. Van Maanen, of Hull Church, with a daughter, Sheila Jean.

Mr. and Mrs. G. Vander Schaaf, of Southest Church, with a son, Joel Alan, on December 10.

MARRIAGES:

Edward Van Egdom and Carlene De Bondt were joined in marriage October 15.

David Dotson and Cheryl Buiter were joined in marriage November 26.

CONFESSION OF FAITH:

Duane Bruinsma and Lisa Nymeyer made public confession of faith on November 27 in South Holland Church.

Milo Meyerderk was baptized and made public confession of faith on December 4 in Southeast Church.

ACTIVITIES:

On December 4 Hudsonville Church Choral Society gave its Christmas Concert.

On November 20 the Young People met at First Church for a Thanksgiving Mass Meeting.

On November 27 the Faith Choir held its program.

On December 25 the Choral Society of Hope Church gave its Christmas program.

On December 18 the Federation Board sponsored a Singspiration at Hudsonville Church.

On December 18 the Young People's Christmas Mass Meeting was held in Southwest Church and Rev. De Vries spoke.

The Southeast Church began a Young Adult Society on November 27. They will meet every other week under the leadership of Mr. Steve Ophoff.

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