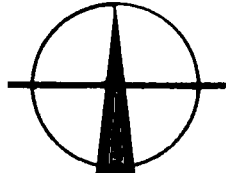


BEACON LIGHTS

*FOR PROTESTANT
REFORMED YOUTH*



April, 1971

Infant Vision

*Sports
Participation,
Do We Have A
Christian
Perspective?*



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. . . AND THOU SHALT LOVE THY NEIGHBOR . . .

It has become fashionable nowadays to use the term "love thy neighbor" as an advertising pitch for all sorts of socially oriented organizations, from conservation groups to social welfare organizations. It is supposedly the duty of all men to love one another, better their economic condition and their earthly environment, thus making it a "better" world.

Christ also sought to lead His people to a better world, a world not of this present evil earth, and thus reiterated the Old Testament commandment to "Love thy neighbor as thyself." So can the same words be used for the building of the Church and for the workings of the Devil.

Harsh judgment, you say? Harsh, yes, but necessarily true, for the love of a Christian must be uniquely parochial to insure the particular purity of the Church of God. Indeed, we must love only God or be forever compromised.

Who then, must a Christian love, that is, who is our neighbor? Webster states that a neighbor is a fellow man . . . a handy definition. Is it then our duty to love our fellow man? A good thumb-rule of judgment is to ask ourselves the question, Does God? By evidence of many passages of Scripture, God hates the sinner, and expects His servants to hate the reprobate also. As the Psalmist states: "Do I not hate them O Lord, that hate Thee?" Ps. 139:21. The love of a Christian is limited to those who love God as we do, for do we not love our neighbor *as ourselves*? Because we love God (For the second commandment is like unto the first) we love ourselves, and our neighbor with that same love. All love begins and ends with God, and cannot be separated from Him, nor can faith function outside of love (Gal. 5:6). Therefore is our love parochial in scope, while being simultaneously unlimited in depth.

As a result of the parochial nature of our love, we work primarily through the institution of the church, and for this end was the merciful office of the deacon ordained. This does not mean that we should

limit our acts of love to the benevolent collection. It is our duty to provide both physically and spiritually for one another in every way possible, for the love of one Christian for another knows no limit to its depth. As we all promise each other during the act of baptism, each child is the congregation's to raise in the paths of holiness, for were we to limit our love and concern to our own families, the church would be a barren and divided place indeed.

If, then, we do limit our love and concern to our fellow Christian in the name of God, what is our posture toward the non-Christian world around us?

Our duty to those around us is primarily spiritual. Through our words and deeds, and through the operation of the church, it is our responsibility to preach Christ crucified for His own. To a starving world we can do no more than preach Christ . . . and this is greater than any amount of free food could ever be. We cannot, we should not offer Christ in a loaf of bread. Bribery never saved one soul, never opened the path of salvation to one reprobate. We are placed here not to preach this life, but the life hereafter.

Does this mean that we let our fellow man starve, even though he has no desire to see God's greatness? On the contrary, it is our duty to act toward all men in an exemplary fashion, knowing that a loaf of bread to a starving Christian is as to Christ, while a similar loaf to a reprobate is as coals of fire unto damnation. We cannot always judge man by his outward appearance. Nevertheless, if there is no doubt of his reprobation and his excommunication before the face of God, we may offer him no succor, save upon his repentance.

This does not mean to imply that the Christian has a place in the do-good societies of this world. We are here to proclaim the glorious truths of Christ, and membership in any group organized around the betterment of this world is folly. There is a group established for the better world hereafter, founded upon the truths of Holy Writ. Are you an active member of this

group, or do you spend time crying for relevance, for social action, for reform? There is an effective and vital tool of Christ on this earth: The Church. This is

where you belong, child of the Covenant. Are you living in and through it? Don't complain unless you are making it alive through Christ in you. C.R.



FROM THE PASTOR'S STUDY

REV. G. VAN BAREN

"GOD'S WORKMANSHIP"

Ephesians 2:10: "For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus unto good works which God hath before ordained that we should walk in them."

Salvation is by grace alone. That theme has resounded through the ages within the church of Jesus Christ. It could be no other way. No dead sinner could save himself. No corrupt man could provide works whereby he could merit his deliverance. It is God Himself Who must and does save His people freely by grace.

But what then of works? If salvation is not of works, but of grace, then can the Christian ignore works? The answer to this question the Word of God presents in this text when it declares: we are God's workmanship—created in Christ Jesus unto good works. Good works must be the fruit of God's work in us.

That we are God's workmanship points out the wonder of our formation. God's

workmanship is, of course, evident in all of creation. By the Word of His power, He has created all things in heaven and on earth. These He has fashioned in such a way that they serve His sovereign purpose. Some of the wonders of this workmanship man is only in recent years beginning to discover, though natural man refuses to recognize the power and glory of God manifest in all of this.

But far more wonderful is that workmanship mentioned in our text: the forming of a people unto Himself. He forms those who were dead sinners, those opposed to Him, those living in open rebellion, into children of the light. He eternally determines to do so. In time He provides the way of the cross—the only way through which His people can be fashioned in holiness. He also regenerates them through the Spirit of the Son and guides them in righteousness here on the earth.

The wonder of God's workmanship is summarized in this: He forms this people in His own image! That image of God consists of true knowledge, righteousness, and holiness. The image was lost by Adam when he sinned against God. Now God has restored that to His people — this is His workmanship.

That workmanship is through Jesus Christ. Christ's perfect work is the only basis for justification and sanctification of God's elect. Through the work of Christ, God's people shall finally be glorified. We are God's workmanship, created in Christ Jesus.

But the above truth seems to deserve the criticism which is leveled against it by some: if that is true: there is then no place for good works. Then a Christian can live and do as he wills — he is not bound by any law of God. And there are times when children of God appear to live according to that false premise. One says, "I am a child of God. I shall not be lost. Therefore I need not be concerned about good works." At any rate, in some children of God one sees often no desire for spiritual development or growth. These are idle, or even walk in paths of unrighteousness.

Yet the Word of God emphasizes that we are created in Christ *for* good works. That His people should perform good works is the very purpose or goal of God. These good works must be such as are in harmony with the standards set forth in Scripture itself: they must be according to the law of God, to God's glory, and out of a living faith.

No natural man can perform such works. Wicked men may indeed conform outwardly to some of the requirements of the law of God. He does so when he recognizes that there is some advantage for himself in doing this. But he does not do good — for whatsoever is not out of faith, is sin.

But the child of God is formed that he may do good works. Within the earthly manifestation of the body of Christ, he desires to have the pure Word of God proclaimed — the Word of the cross which is the power and wisdom of God. Within the home, he teaches as parent or receives instruction as child in the fear of God's Name. In seeking friends, in receiving education, in performing one's daily labors,

he desires to serve God. In all things he loves God with his entire being, and his neighbor for God's sake.

The striking truth presented in this text is that such works are foreordained. It is not only true that God has chosen His elect from before the foundations of the earth, but He has also determined the very works which they shall perform. God determines not only *that* He shall have His people, but also *what* they shall do. Even as a composer determines, before the concert is ever given, what each instrument shall play, so also God determines the position and calling of each of His saints. He determines their work that they may be part of that whole grand chorus of the saints who sing His praises forevermore.

If such foreordained works were not present, then God's work would be a failure. A new car which does not run is useless. Apple trees which produce no apples are worthless. So too, if God's workmanship produced not these foreordained works, then God's work would be a failure. But that shall never be.

But now the objector would insist that if God even determined my works before the foundation of the earth, then I am hardly accountable for my action (or lack of it). If God determined what I am going to do, then I am unable to determine my own actions. Then I am nothing more than a pre-programmed robot. Then, so it would seem, I am a stock or block.

But such an objection is of the devil. He would lead us in this distortion of the truth. Those who are God's workmanship are those also who work out their own salvation with fear and trembling — for it is God Who worketh in them to will and to do of His good pleasure (Phil. 2:12-13).

This idea is emphasized in the text which states that we "walk" in these good works. We are not stocks or blocks. A "walk" suggests that there is a definite goal; there is a path towards that goal; and there is the willing activity of the moral rational creature to go in that path. Inanimate objects, as the sun, have their "courses." Moral, rational creatures have a "walk." The Christian consciously desires to serve God with his entire being. He does not ask, "Did God determine this or that way for me?" Rather, he studies God's

Word; and as he is directed by the Spirit, so he also walks as God's Word directs. He will not seek excuses for a sinful walk. Rather, in his walk he will be revealed as God's workmanship indeed.

You, young people, also confess to be God's workmanship. Even those who have not as yet made confession of faith, have nevertheless professed from your youth the truths of God's Word. God's workmanship,

in the line of generations, becomes evident from one's infancy. In your lives must then be evident also all good works. You shun the world and all of its corruptions. You seek that which is heavenly and eternal. He who claims to be God's workmanship, yet follows after this world and its corruptions—lies. God's workmanship is manifest in the works which are seen. Are such works evident in you too?



AGATHA LUBBERS

ARNOLD J. TOYNBEE: AN INTRODUCTION, ANALYSIS, AND EVALUATION (V)

Having been inspired by Bulgarian peasants wearing fox-skin caps like the caps Herodotus said Xerxes' troops wore, Arnold J. Toynbee began *The Study of History* in 1922. In his study Toynbee distinguishes 21 civilizations and these grow by responding successfully to challenges under the leadership of creative minorities and decline when leaders fail to act creatively. Toynbee does not wish to believe that the fall of civilizations is inevitable and he attempts to flee from the doctrine of "determinism." Toynbee denies the validity of the determinism espoused by Spengler in *The Decline of the West* and also refuses to accept the Marxian economic determinism. Toynbee sees history in terms of "spiritual" and not deterministic or economic forces.

For a more thorough introduction to the theories of Toynbee I suggest that you read the four previous articles which I have written on this subject.

The philosophy of history developed by Toynbee is so immense that very few scholars of history have devoted the time needed to master the theories of Toynbee. Toynbee is an exceedingly challenging kind of historical theorist and the language

which he uses is so involved and academic that one must spend hours deciphering it so that it can be transferred into a language which will be useful to the student of historical interpretation. Toynbee's twenty-year project I have been attempting to understand and elucidate during the past year. I hope that I have been able to cause a certain number of my readers to appreciate and understand the ideas of Toynbee.

When I last wrote on this subject for BEACON LIGHTS, I discussed the breakdowns of civilizations. This time we must begin a consideration of the disintegrations of civilizations.

The Disintegrations of Civilizations

Volume five of Toynbee's *Study of History* passes from the breakdown of civilizations to the disintegrations of civilizations. This transition from breakdowns to disintegrations is similar to a previous transition from the geneses to the growths of civilizations. In the theories of Toynbee disintegration and breakdown are distinct processes just as genesis and growth are distinct processes. Toynbee has noted that some civilizations solved the problem of genesis but failed to solve the problem of

growth. These civilizations that failed to solve the problem of growth were called arrested civilizations. Civilizations which have gone through a long period of breakdown but are not totally disintegrated are arrested in this disintegration and enter a long period of petrification (petrification). Examples of civilizations which have suffered from petrification were cited by Toynbee. Some of them were: the Egyptian Society, China in the Far East, India, and Ceylon.

As Toynbee is setting things up for his discussion of the disintegrations of civilizations, he cites both Thomas Babington Macaulay, nineteenth century English essayist and historian, and Dr. Edwyn Bevan, who wrote a personal letter to Toynbee, to prove his contention that the disintegrations of civilizations is a problem which demands careful study. Macaulay's essay on "History" is explained by Bevan. Macaulay argued that the barbarian invasions into the Roman Empire were a blessing in the long run because they broke up the petrification of the Roman Empire. The main fret of Bevan was the development of despotism which he thought would be more injurious and harmful than the threatened anarchy. The universal world totalitarian state might develop, said Bevan, if the fratricidal strife in the world is not halted. These comments Toynbee uses to substantiate his position that disintegrations of civilizations present problems which demand discussion and investigation.

Challenge and response is the essence of the growths of civilizations. These responses provoke a fresh challenge and the *elan vital* [creative principle of Bergson] carries the challenged party into an overbalance which declares itself in the manifestation of a new challenge. In disintegration, however, the repetition of challenges takes place but the response to these challenges fail. This failure in making a creative response is the major difference between the process by which a civilization arises and by which it declines.

In growth the challenges are a series of unique and distinctive challenges. Toynbee says that during disintegration the same challenge comes again and again. Successive encounters with the same challenge end in defeat and not victory. This means that

the unanswered challenge cannot be disposed of and it will present itself again and again until it receives some imperfect answer or else brings about the destruction of the society which does not successfully respond.

Dr. C. Gregg Singer, who has written a monograph on the ideas and theories of Toynbee, asks the question, "Why is there the ever recurring challenge?"

Is there some deterministic principle at work which makes this process inevitable? It is obvious from the previous discussion that Toynbee would not accept such an answer to the question. He offers his own answer which is quite obviously based on his empirical study of the twenty-one civilizations which have already perished. He comes to the conclusion that it does take place in every disintegrating civilization without exception. But he is not unaware of the pitfall which lies ahead in this kind of reasoning and he assigns causes to this process of disintegration which, to his satisfaction, maintain a degree of human freedom throughout history. (*Toynbee*, by C. Gregg Singer, p. 33.)

The question of Toynbee's consistent application of the principle of "human freedom" versus historical determinism will be discussed later but it ought to be obvious that Toynbee is always aware of the need for the defense of this principle of human freedom which he feels is in conflict with the principle of determinism. The question remains nevertheless, "How can Toynbee maintain the seeming inevitability of disintegration of civilizations and still maintain human freedom?"

Toynbee follows the same pattern in studying the disintegrations of civilizations that he uses when he traces their growth. He needs in the first place a criterion to judge the disintegrations. He decides that if in the growth the cause is not to be found in an increasing command by society over the physical and human environment,

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Hull Congregation\$22.05
Lynden Congregation 22.71

the loss of such command is not one of the causes of disintegration.

Indeed the evidence, so far as it goes, suggests that an increasing command over environments is a concomitant of disintegration rather than growth. (Somervell, I, p. 364.)

Militarism is cited by Toynbee as a feature of breakdowns and disintegrations but it is also an effective means for increasing the command over the forces of nature and other living societies. A society incurably divided against itself usually devotes the greater part of those additional resources — human and material, which have been gained by military conquest, for military purposes. Toynbee substantiates his position with the following empirical situation.

For instance, we see the money-power and man-power won through Alexander's conquests being poured into the civil wars of Alexander's successors, and the money-power and man-power won by the Roman conquests of the second century B.C. being poured into the civil wars of the last century B.C. (Somervell, I, p. 364.)

Having disposed of the command by society over the environment and militarism as possible *causes* for the disintegration of societies, Toynbee suggests that the criterion for the process must be sought elsewhere. He claims that the clue for this criterion is given us "in the spectacle of that division and discord within the bosom of a society to which an increase in its command over its environment can so often be traced back" (Somervell, I, p. 365). Because Toynbee has already concluded that the ultimate criterion of the breakdowns which precede disintegrations is the outbreak of internal discords through which societies forfeit their right of self-determination, these social schisms will be the ultimate cause for disintegrations.

Toynbee identifies two types of social schisms. They are vertical and horizontal schisms. The vertical schisms occur between geographically segregated communities but the horizontal schisms occur between geographically intermingled but socially segregated classes.

Vertical schisms are characterized by a reckless indulgence in the crime of interstate warfare. This is the main line of the

suicidal activities in which civilizations engage. The division of a society into parochial communities is the most common feature of human societies and interstate warfare is the abuse of a potential instrument of self-destruction which is within reach of any society at any time.

The horizontal schism of society goes along class lines and is a phenomenon which appears at the moment of their breakdowns. Horizontal schism is a distinctive mark of periods of disintegration because it is absent during the phases of genesis and growth. Horizontal schisms are characterized by an internal proletariat and an external proletariat (rebel class). Toynbee uses Hellenistic society to empirically prove his point. He sees the internal proletariat as the creators of the Christian Church and the external proletariat as the creators of the barbarian war bands which invaded and infiltrated the Roman Empire. Because proletariats arise during a time of trouble, it is evident that the Hellenistic Society was manifestly no longer creative but was already in the time of breakdown — it was already in decline.

The dominant minority takes the place of the creative minority in the Hellenic society and is caused to retain its position by force because it is destitute of the charm of a former period of leadership. The secessions of the barbarian war bands (external proletariat) and The Christian Church (internal proletariat) were the reactions to the tyranny exercised by the dominant minority.

Toynbee also emphasizes in the study of the disintegration of civilizations that the process conforms to a standard horizontal schism, as he has described and envisioned it. This is the tendency towards standardization which happens in every decadent civilization. The standard horizontal scheme is: 1) the dominant minority or universal state, 2) the external proletariat or barbarian war-bands, 3) the internal proletariat or universal church.

(to be continued)



Sports Participation, Do We Have A Christian Perspective?

KEN KOOLE

It's such a neutral subject, why take time to think about it? I had never faced the topic any other way, and I was not about to do it now. It had just been brought to my attention at our Spring Retreat in a discussion about fitting topics for THE BEACON LIGHTS. Ironically, I gave this particular subject the least of my sober attention. The topic was useless for discussion. Truly now, could this seminarian find something wrong with, say, a basketball team at Covenant? Whaaat? It was, well . . . almost pietistic. The very idea of someone having serious problems with such an activity, typified narrow mindedness. Thinking about it later, I realized such a response should have been an indication to myself that it was high time that I did give the subject some critical thought.

Young People's Society gave me several occasions to participate in discussion about Sports. There were no serious misgivings about participation in them, because they were taken for granted to be right. (This was also my view.) Charges had to be brought against their unquestionable character. The question was always, "What is wrong with sports?," never "What is right with them?" The points in their favor were firmly embedded and irrevocable. It was always, "Are the negative charges valid?" I would like to know if the positive reasons are valid! It is my contention that we should again evaluate the unspotted character of sports.

What really woke me up and started me thinking was an incident at Calvin College. During my German course, two exchange students from Germany visited the class. They compared the governments of our respective countries, the educational systems; differentiated between the general national character; and gave us their first impressions of the U. S. When asked what predominant characteristic of the American student had struck them, they both exclaimed, "The Sports Craze. Every where

you turn it is 'Our football team this, our basketball team that. Let's beat so and so. Clobber them.' Big deal. What does it amount to besides antagonism? Win, and it makes everyone's day. Lose, and it is a calamity."

Neither one could understand it, or figure out what it had to do with school spirit. I would like to have said that this was understandable because they were attending a secular high school, but was not able to. I realized how much I myself set in store by sports. If they had gone to my old high school, certainly how we had talked about and behaved towards sports would have impressed them the same secular way. Our pep rallies were the same; Fire up for victory. There was not anything distinctively Christian about them or our attitude at the game. Possibly we could have pointed to a bylaw in our athletic constitution that said it was different, but that would be of no importance. It is the outward behavior, which shows our inward attitude, that makes the difference. Perplexingly, from the cheers my sister practices, the news which I hear, and the games I have attended, Covenant offers nothing better. I am continually hearing about Covenant's sports teams and personnel in connection with scorn for the whole school. Perplexingly, I say, because our reason for having our own high school is that we are different.

Truthfully now, if someone asks you what school you go to, what do you say? Do you dare say "Covenant Christian"? Well, possibly with a sheepish grin! "What, that P.R. place?" But imagine if to your same sheepish response, he would say, "Oh, you mean the school that won the Class D State championship!" The recognition turns our sheepishness into instant pride. (So this is what school spirit is.) Why the sudden reversal in feeling? Something is not quite right. Namely, our emphasis.

The question then that is of utmost importance is why there is this wrong em-

phasis. Why do we not question the validity of sports or at least examine it.

In addition to the emphasis placed on them by the world, I find three other reasons why we as Christians accept them so unreservedly.

First: In this world cluttered with all of its pleasure spots which entice both mind and body, there seem to be such few activities that we as Christians can participate in or go to. Movies, dances, much music, and many books: All blatantly revel in the lusts of flesh and tastefully present them to the mind. But by sports one can actively fill his time without exposing himself to these depravities.

Secondly: In all our Physical Education classes, the necessity for physical activity is emphasized by the text: "What? know ye not that your body is the temple of the Holy Ghost . . .?" and by the theory that a sound body makes for and aids a sound mind. The body is not mine to willfully misuse or neglect, but to be kept fit and healthy so it can be used as an instrument in God's Kingdom.

Last but not least: Our parents and others in authority set few boundaries, if any, on sports. And anyone who does have misgivings is considered "off the deep end." Just because this seems a simple reason, does not mean it is. Remember, they are the ones who set the boundaries, according to God's Word, on movies and dances, and hopefully led us to be of a similar mind.

But do not make these reasons say more than they do. It does not of necessity fol-

low that sports have an unquestionable character. The first is a "basis" only so far as the other activities fail as CHRISTIAN activities. Nor is the second an actual grounds for them. Although Paul penned the proof text, he certainly did not participate in sports. He had no time. And as for the third, our parents and those in authority could be in the same rut as we are. That is, they have never taken the time to examine and analyzed sports as they should.

To give any worthwhile evaluation of them, one must not look merely at the physical benefits obtained. It is not the fitness of the body that makes it the temple of the Holy Spirit. To participate correctly in sports, there must be a correct attitude, so that the physical benefits aid mental alertness for use in God's Kingdom. This was aptly shown by Professor Hanko, when he spoke at the dedication of Hope School's new gym on I Timothy 4:8, "Bodily exercise profiteth little" (for a man's salvation). Only when viewed and used as a means, not an end or goal (trophies, wins, championships), can they avail for man any benefit. But it is so simple to fall short of this. Could a spectator view our Christian school activities or our recreation leagues, and say we succeed where the others fall short? I myself can not conceive that the two exchange students would be able to say this.

More seriously, if regarded incorrectly, sports can come under the heading of two of the three vices St. Augustine lists in his little book *Of True Religion*. Namely, the seeking of pleasure, and the desire to excel. The value of sports is entirely contingent on the Why? a person takes part in them; either for mere amusement or for recreation. Amusement is a seeking of pleasure used as an escape from the reality of a more important task before us. If so used, sports are hindrances. When the time comes that the work can be put off no longer, we will wish we were back playing sports instead of facing this "chore," and be daydreaming instead of concentrating on homework, the sermon, or Young People's discussion. They have become then too much part of us. Only when viewed as recreation can they be aids. They are then temporary divergences from a chore that

Answers to Crossword Puzzle in the
March issue

B	A	P	T	I	S	M	L	A	M	E
A	N	D	H	E	E	V	E	I		
O	N	E	M	N	F	A	N	A		
S	U	R	N	A	M	E	T	H	E	M
I	T	E	R	O	S	S	O			
T	W	R	B	O	A	N	E	R	G	E
W	H	I	C	H	I	S	H	A	N	D
E	A	G	E	R	T	A	E	N	E	E
T	H	E	S	O	N	S	T	S		
C	T	B	O	A	I	T	I			
U	R	E	O	F	T	H	U	N	D	E
P	R	E	P	A	R	E	N	O	N	E

is fogging our brain and draining our energy. They strengthen us so that we can enter into our task again with vigor and renewed interest.

There is also the second vice, the desire to excel. Excelling not only because of a certain talent, because we desire to defeat and humble the opponent, and in order to bask in praise. Pride. So we see if we have the wrong attitude even sports can be labeled as lusts of the flesh, just as movies, dances, music, and books can present these lusts.

I think that it is these shortcomings joined to our over emphasis that "justifies" our entering into athletic competition and recreation leagues with other secular teams and schools. Yes, you say, but we can never do anything perfectly, and the same attitudes are prevalent in our intramural programs and our own Young People's activities. I agree. But, remember, a criterion for entering into competitive sports with the world is being able to give a distinctively Christian witness. In intramural sports we reap the same physical benefits and can strive for the correct Christian attitude without the world watching us fail time and again. As it is now, we give them occasion to say against us and therefore against God, "They are Christians, pilgrims, strangers?! If that is all the difference Christianity amounts to, it can not mean much." This is exactly what they always say when we tell them we have a separate school because we are called to be a separate people. "So, you are better than us heh? Well, I don't see anything better or different. You act and behave the same as we do, and are worse

because you are hypocritical. Different? You just think so." Sure, they would say this anyway, but let us not give them seeming proofs that we are similar. Competitive sports with the world may be lawful, but, as such, are they expedient? If not, as the evidence indicates, we had better cease from our fraternizing with the world in leagues and games. Is there an unbeliever who is a Good Sport for the right reason? No, it is always, we will show those Christians that we can out "sportmanship" them. We will prove they are not so holy, holy as they think.

By not entering into competitive sports with them, we prove our belief that we are different, that none but a child of God can perform good works. They are not neutral even when on the basketball court. We preach this, let us practice it also. It is in this way that we will give a witness.

Of course, to such a witness, they will take offense. The truth is always a rock of offense to them. Their very act of not taking offense when we play them, should raise doubts about the effectiveness of our witness, for a good testimony never leaves a worldly man unprovoked. At least the fault then lies with them only, and not with us also.

In conclusion let me say that it is high time we give serious consideration to the place of sports in our lives, and deal with its overemphasis. Are we going to continue to be one with the world in this seemingly harmless and neutral past time? They are in need of a Christian perspective and inspection.

Infant Vision

CAROL DYKSTRA

"Newborn infants are incapable of visual focus; their eyes are likely to move in any direction and their motion is not coordinated. Strong light causes discomfort. By the end of a month babies begin to focus momentarily on objects and during the next two months they gradually develop greater skill and begin to recognize objects; their eyes will follow a moving object."

This definition of infant vision was taken

from the Encyclopaedia Britannica. Does it sound familiar? It does to me. Perhaps if you will allow me to itemize some of the similarities between the vision of the child of God and the vision of an infant, it will become more relevant to you.

Children of God have only the vision of an infant. This one, for example, has no visual focus at all; he has a Bible, but doesn't take the time to read and study it

for his own personal devotion. He attends church quite regularly, but for reasons other than to listen to what the minister has to say. His eyes tend to move in every direction, perhaps toward the girlfriend or boyfriend sitting next to him, or the hang nail on his third finger left hand, or that pesty bulletin sticking out of the psalter rack. And OH that bright light! It causes so much discomfort! "Why is it" he wonders to himself, "I can't just sit here without always being reminded how sinful I am?" It's true. The light that comes from the preaching of God's word exposes the real state of sinfulness and brings into clear view the wicked deeds that the child of God so easily commits.

Momentary focus is one attribute of *this* child of God: He's quite a pious young person; goes to society on Sunday afternoon and catechism during the week, but finds it very difficult to center his attention on that Word of God for any length of time. So he makes resolutions to study God's Word more and to take a little more time for private devotion. Unfortunately, however, there are many other allurements which cause him to be drawn away from this very profitable endeavor. Activities such as the television, the newspaper or even homework can often hinder his study of God's Word. This should not be. But once again we are reminded that he has only the vision of an infant.

In order to make my analogy between a child of God and an infant complete, I must now cite a few examples of those who recognize an object and follow it. One example is the prophet Isaiah, who in chapter

7, verse 14 foretold of the birth of the Christ, ". . . Behold a virgin shall conceive and bear a son and shall call his name Immanuel." The apostle Paul in his epistle to the Hebrews, chapter 12 exhorts, "looking unto Jesus, the author and finisher of our faith; who for the joy that was set before him endured the cross, despised the shame, and is set down at the right hand of the throne of God." And still others, who eagerly await His second coming, ask in Matt. 24:3, ". . . when shall these things be? and what shall be the sign of thy coming, and of the end of the world?" To this question, the blind scoffer replies (II Peter 3:4), "Where is the promise of his coming? for since the fathers fell asleep, all things continue as they were from the beginning of the creation."

We must notice, of course, the distinct difference between total blindness and mere infant vision. Total blindness is complete and lasting. It offers no hope of any future sight. Infant vision, on the other hand, implies growth, development and hence eventual clear vision. This distinction is also true between the infant vision of a child of God that will one day be perfected in heavenly glory, and that blind ignorance of the child of this world that will finally receive damnation in Hell.

I've just pointed out the similarities between the vision of an infant, and that of the child of God; not only that, I've also alluded to the difference between the total blindness of the man of this world, and the infant vision of the child of God. . . . Did you recognize yourself?

CURRENT EVENTS AND COMMENTS

RACHEL LUBBERS

The daughter of Zion has rejoiced and the daughter of Jerusalem has shouted. Palm trees have been stripped of branches and coats have been laid for a carpet. "Hosanna! Blessed is He that cometh in the name of the Lord" were the shouts heard as one stood in the city of Jerusalem. Slowly, excited crowds disappeared as they entered the Temple, while some, a bit bewildered, stayed behind. As time passed,

Palm Sunday was covered with darkness and another week was about to dawn.

The morning light broke the beginning of each day and life moved on with the work of another week. Questions were asked but remained unanswered. There was much talk of the strange happenings in the Temple. On the sixth day of that week the city awoke to a day that would go on dawning in the minds of every Christian

until the end of time. We all traveled outside the city walls of Jerusalem to a hill named Calvary. On the hill stood three crosses with Christ nailed to the center one. While we gathered around, Christ's first thoughts turned to those crucifying Him and He prayed "Father forgive them, for they know not what they do." And seeing Mary, His mother, with the disciple John, He remembered her and spoke to her saying, "Woman. Behold thy son! Behold thy mother!" Slowly, one of the malefactors who saw that this was the Christ, cried, "Lord, remember me when you come into your Kingdom." Christ answered, "Today you shall be with me in Paradise." And as the fifth hour ticked away into the sixth hour, darkness covered the land. During the next three hours many at the foot of Calvary looked up with helpless eyes to the suffering Christ and shivered as He cried loudly, "My God, My God, why hast thou forsaken me?" As time approached the end, Christ wearily revealed what He felt through His suffering. The fifth cross word "I thirst" was spoken and some, being filled with pity, took a sponge, filled it with vinegar and gave Him to drink. It is almost all over and for the last time Christ loudly cried "It is finished" which is followed by His last words "Father into thy hands I commend my spirit." His head dropped and He left the earth. Nails no

longer tore at His hands, a crown of thorns no longer pressed down on the head of Christ, and the pain of death vanished. The day was over and we left the hill of Calvary. Cries of sadness and suffering faded away while others satisfied their hatred. But still, though we left the scene of the crucified Lord, our eyes continued to focus on the cross, and the seven cross words rang in our ears. The only words we had to offer were "Surely, He hath borne our griefs and carried our sorrows. . . . He was wounded for our transgressions, He was bruised for our iniquities, and by His stripes we are healed."

Today we are made alive! The grave of Christ is opened and the stone is rolled away, for Christ has risen from the dead. Today is Easter, which does not mean a flower to wear to church, but which means that today we are born to eternal life. Death is overcome through victory! Someday we shall be changed and will see the risen Lord. With thankful hearts we rejoice and celebrate the three events.

But through rejoicing there runs a shadow of sadness. We are made alive but yet we cannot tear the scene away from our minds. His bleeding body being racked by the tortures of hell and his agonized cry ripping through the darkness have sunk deep into our souls. And we face the empty, Easter grave with tear-filled eyes.

"REALIZATION"

*When morning comes
And light shines on my face
The dark dreams of night fade,
I am put in my place —
Put in my place to know
What to do, to know
Who I am, and to face
the day through.*

*When hope nearly flees,
And thoughts turn away,
A beam of light breaks!
The shadows stray.
Day once so dark
Fills with the light.
The beam grows stronger
dispelling the night.*

— Senior of Covenant Christian
High, 1971

NEWS

from, for, and about our churches

KAREN LUBBERS

From Hope in Walker, Michigan:

The new address of Jim Rau is:
Pvt. James A. Rau 380-54-3772
Co. A 3d Bn. TUSAMEDTC, Class 181
Fort Sam Houston, Texas 78234

From Hudsonville, Michigan:

As most of you already may know, Rev. Veldman has accepted the call to the South-west Church in Grand Rapids.

From Loveland, Colorado:

Mr. and Mrs. Bill Buitter rejoice in the birth of a daughter.

From Hull, Iowa:

Mr. and Mrs. Egbert Gritters and Mr. Mrs. Donald Hoksbergen both rejoice in the birth of daughters. Mr. and Mrs. Bernard Driesen rejoice in the birth of a son.

Confession of faith was made by the following young people: Arlin Brummel, Gloria Brummel, Jerry Brummel, Faye Brunsting, Shirley De Jong, Chuck Westra, Mrs. Gerb De Jong, Helinda De Jong, Carl Jansma, Diane Jansma, Karla Kooiker, and Peter Westra.

Several families of the church offered to purchase a new pulpit and baptism font for the church. In addition, the consistory decided to purchase a new communion table and collection plate stand.

From South Holland, Illinois:

Confession of faith was made by Denise Flikkema, David Zandstra, and Twyla Brummel.

From South Holland Christian School's "Reflector," ". . . when a Christian child sees a fellow Christian, he sees a person for whom Christ died on the cross. If Christ shed his blood for a person, this same person demands every bit of love and respect his fellow Christian has to offer. Any less is sin." PB

Miscellaneous News:

A "Ten to Twenty" Drive for Covenant Christian High was held in March. Envelopes were mailed to all Grand Rapids area church members which were dropped in church collection plates. Thanks to the many supporters of the high school, the drive netted \$4985.00!

The all school program of Hope School in Walker was held on April 2 in the First Church in Grand Rapids. The program was centered about the theme "Our Catholic, Undoubted Christian Faith."

On April 7 the Federation Board sponsored a hay-ride at the Chapel of the Pines in Hudsonville. Refreshments were also provided.

As the springtime once again invigorates the earth with life and energy, perhaps it is time that we too once again renew our spirits and joyfully re-dedicate our lives in service to our God!



BOOK REVIEW

The Creation vs. Evolution Handbook
by Thomas F. Heinze; Baker Book House,
Grand Rapids, Michigan, 1970; 79 pages,
paperback, \$1.50.

Mr. Heinze is a missionary in Italy for the Conservative Baptist Foreign Mission Society and formerly taught subjects related to the field of Science and Religion.

As the title indicates the book is only a *handbook* or guide for use by those not trained in the biological sciences. Of necessity then it does not consider all the ramifications of the theory of evolution nor does it give complex refutations against all the so called "proofs" of evolution. Even at times it appears to me that the author's arguments are too weak to represent good scientific investigation.

The author's purpose simply stated is to show that the observations made by scientists do not contradict the word of God as presented in the Bible. Within the limitations mentioned above, I believe that this objective is realized; and therefore, recommend this volume to all who wish further information concerning this topic. C.R.



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