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The Ballad of Billie Blue

**Compromise** 



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#### CONTRIBUTING EDITORS:

Rev. Robert Harbach, Agatha Lubbers, Donna Van Uifelen, Sue Terpstra, Jeanne Gritters, Rev. G. Lubbers, Rev. G. Van Baren, Kathy Bylsma, Rachel Lubbers.



All material for publication should be addressed to CALVIN REITSMA 3287 S. Canal, Grandville, Mich. 49418

News Editor: JEANNE GRITTERS 1130 Franklin, S. E., Grand Rapids, Mich. Grand Rapids subscribers please forward subscription dues to JUDY HOLSTEGE 5537 Lawndale, Hudsonville, Mich. 49426 Subscribers outside of Grand Rapids please forward subscription dues to EUNICE HOEKSEMA 1842 Plymouth Ter., Grand Rapids, Mich. 49506

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#### SUPERSCIENCE or BABEL REVISITED ONCE AGAIN

(2)

We concluded our previous article with the idea that what the scientist was actually planning in his use of the new discovery of the DNA molecule was to determine the make-up of the human being – body, mind and, if possible, spirit. He plans, you see, to make, or, better still to remake, man. He will use the discoveries of modern science to aid in the evolution of man into superman. He is not content with curing disease; he wants to become the engineer, the creator rather than the created, the potter rather than the clay.

This is true in the first place with regard to the human body. The *Time* article points out some of the truly amazing things that modern medicine can do and is doing as a direct result of the new genetic discoveries. Mongolism, for example, will be sharply curtailed through counseling and genetic surgery. Truly amazing. But, the scientist can not control himself. He becomes starryeyed and begins to dream. He would like nothing better than to fulfill the prophecy of Aldous Huxley's *Brave New World*. He begins to fantasize, says the article, and, I quickly add, devilishly so. Notice what he plans to do.

First, he certainly does want to live longer and he is greatly encouraged by recent laboratory experiments which, in controlling the metabolism of certain animals, is able to slow the maturation process. Consequently, they reason that man, too, eventually will not grow old so fast. Further, disease will be genetically bred out, and finally, "they look forward—in the distant future and with techniques far beyond any now conceived—to altering the very nature of their species with novel sets of laboratory-created genetic instructions." It becomes clear, does it not, that man does intend to become the potter?

But notice what a mess he gets into, when the superscientist so fantasizes. Claiming the power to make man, they really can not decide how they want him. Maybe he should have a larger head. But, someone counters that man's brain is presently under-

developed. He is not using what he already has. Well then, maybe he ought to have a two-compartment stomach so that, if need be, he will be able to eat grass. Or, maybe man ought to be shrunk somehow so he will better fit into space capsules. Make you laugh? It is really not so funny—they're dead serious.

The superscientist, however, is not content to alter the body, they want to change the mind and spirit as well. This, of course, is more of a challenge. Man's mind, you know, has always been sort of a mystery and when you begin to talk of the spirit, the discussion becomes even more exciting and mysterious. Oh, how they would like to get their hands on these things. The new genetics has given the scientist a new-found hope. The brain, after all, is matter and as such can be altered.

Again, the immediate research is centered on the cure of disease, especially mental disorders, but again the scientist begins to dream. He becomes transcendent once again and now not only decides to make man as a superman with a superbody but wants to make him smart and happy as well. Memory pills, knowledge pills, electronic stimuli to give sensations unimaginable are seen in the future.

And, where does the spirit fit in all of this scientific maneuvering? This is where the ethicist comes in and either condemns or justifies. The scientist of the new genetics does not appear to know what to do with the spirit. It is not matter - at least it doesn't appear to be - so let's just forget about that and let the theologian and the philosopher worry about that. Well, they are worried and concerned. There are many different views presented in the Time article but perhaps the most noteworthy thing is the establishment of the Institute of Society, Ethics, and the Life Sciences, an association of scientists, theologians, philosophers, psychologists, and politicians whose long-term goal is "legitimizing the problems." In other words, the institute wants to impress upon the scientist, particularly now in the face

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of the new genetics, that his work, discoveries, and fantasizings have ethical overtones. And, says the institute, its aim is to educate the future scientist: they want to provide him with a "solid" ethical background,

The problem to the ethicist is an urgent one. "What shall we do?" they ponder. Generally, there have been three schools of thought. The mechanist wants to avoid the ethical problem entirely and wants to concentrate upon the facts of molecular biology. There are others who appeal to the futurist philosophy of Teilhard de Chardin who "welcomes a coming scientific age when men would exult in 'fathoming everything, trying everything, extending everything on their road to an ultimate Omega Point of shared godhood." And then there are those (primarily Roman Catholies) who know man to be a victim of original sin. They warn that man must not tinker with such sacred values as life and the family for fear that the natural order will be disturbed.

You see, then, that the scientist has created quite a problem for himself and for us. He claims power over life and death, over man and nature. He claims to have risen from caboose to engineer, from dust to god, from clay to potter. So he claims. What are we going to do with him? Are we going to claim pilgrim's immunity?

Let's begin by affirming (by faith of course as the Christian always must and only can) a few things to set the record straight. Let's affirm, in the first place, that even though science per se can never be in conflict with the Scriptures, the revelation of God, since that revelation is essentially one, the ideas and predictions and fantasizings presented above do indeed constitute an attack upon the truths of Scripture. Creation is flatly denied. And, if man's creation is denied, certainly the truth that man is an image-bearer of God is denied as well. The lie of evolution is maintained; the truth of creation is not even so much as mentioned.

In the second place, let us clearly see that the manipulations of the new genetics are an attempt by man to play God. In his devilish attempt to rule the world, he desperately wants to be the creator. He wants to determine his own future and wants to determine his own make-up. He is not satis-

fied with the way God made him. He hates the fact that he is an image-bearer. Rather, the scientists have gotten together and in effect have said, "Come, let us make man." But mind you, not after the image of God but rather after their own image, after the imagination of their own evil hearts. Romans 1 is confirmed. So is the book of Revelation: Babel, the great whore Babylon, has been visited.

Let us affirm, thirdly, that the ideas presented above — the discoveries and prophetic visions of the superscientist — are an indication to us that Christ is a soon-coming King. The miracles which the antichrist will perform, as spoken of in the book of Revelation, are not at all hard to imagine. They will happen. Mark well the signs of the times.

And, fourthly, let us certainly affirm that in spite of the vain babblings of the superscientist, we certainly do have a calling to do science, to be busy in scientific endeavors. God does reveal Himself to us through his entire creation - man included. God certainly does reveal Himself through ourselves - through our bodies and minds. Let's not let unbelieving science deprive us of that truth. But, let us emphasize that the only way that man can even begin to understand this creation and the revelation contained in it is by viewing creation through the spectacles of Scripture. Man, even after the fall, is still king of the universe - not God, not creator as the superscientist intimates - but king and the only way in which he will properly exercise his kingship is as a servant-king. He must willingly rule over and subject and explore the creation as a servant of God who has but one purpose in life, viz., to know and to glorify his Creator. There is not a shred of evidence of this kind of servitude, of this kind of humility (the kind of humility expressed by the writer of Psalm 8) in the entire Time article.

Finally, let us affirm that God truly does give us sufficient grace to save us from utter despair when we come into contact with such ideas. Shocking as the article may be, thank God that he has given us peace — peace of mind, peace of soul. By faith affirm that God is King — forever.

J. Huisken



REV. G. VAN BAREN

#### "THE BALLAD OF BILLIE BLUE"

1 Corinthians 1:17 - "For Christ sent me... to preach the gospel - not with wisdom of words, lest the cross of Christ should be made of none effect."

The above title is the title of a new movie – and supposedly a new kind of movie. This is not a review of that movie – I haven't seen it and don't intend to. This article is rather a reflection upon a movie review which appeared in the *Banner* (the first one I recall seeing in the *Banner* since the Christian Reformed Synod approved the attendance of "good" movies) and an article by Robert Plekker, D.D.S., entitled, "Christian Hollywood Movies" in this same magazine (*Banner*, January 21, 1972).

The movie is the firstfruits of a new "Christian Hollywood" film company called: B.E. Productions ("Better Entertainment for the Entire Family"). The new company was established when some Reformed and Christian Reformed businessmen invested more than \$600,000.00 cash; Dr. R. Plekker is one of these businessmen. The company intends to produce "Christian" films for profit. As Dr. Plekker states, they're "not going second-rate or third-rate (they're) getting the best Hollywood-trained filmmakers to do a first-class job." They've discovered a new male lead star who presents "an in-

credible first performance." The movie has already been "nominated for two Image Awards – even before release!"

The movie appears to portray a family situation where the mother is a woman of no morals who finally becomes a professional prostitute. The movie is supposed to present the dreadful end of such a wicked woman, but also seeks to present "the salvation in Jesus Christ."

Why do I introduce this sort of subject? I have received reports of some of our young people who find the movie very fascinating — in fact, who sometimes attend these without parental knowledge or consent. And such is done in spite of knowledge of our position as churches against movie attendance. I suspect that the present stand of the Christian Reformed Church (allowing attendance of "good" movies) and now the production of a "Christian" movie, become the occasion of increased pressure upon you, young people, to ignore the position of our churches and attend such movies.

Therefore, young people, for your benefit,

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consideration, and discussion, I would address a few questions and remarks to Dr. Plekker and his B.E. Productions.

In the first place, Doctor, I want to state that I am greatly offended at the conclusion you make in your article on "Christian Hollywood Movies." You state, "We beg you for your prayerful support, because what we are doing is most harmful to the Devil, and he is most interested in tearing it apart. He will even use other Christians to attempt it." I greatly resent that claim. You state as fact that which is not proved and I am convinced could not be proved: that your movie production is harmful to the Devil and he would want to tear apart this effort. But also, you claim that anyone opposed to your efforts of producing "Christian" films as the "Ballad of Billie Blue" is being used by the Devil as his tool to tear apart God's work. Am I being used by the Devil in presenting this article? You claim so categorically - though you have never heard my objections. It seems rather to me that Satan would use exactly such a tactic to still objections before they can even be raised. I hope you repudiate the claim you make.

In the second place. Doctor, I could point out that I have grave reservations about the permissibility of dramatization itself. But since you did not even entertain this as a possible objection, and to prevent confusion, I only mention this in passing.

In the third place, Doctor, both you and the reviewer of "The Ballad of Billie Blue" emphasize that it is necessary to be very realistic in such films—also when dealing with sin. You write: "First, we insist that Jesus Christ is the Solution to real life, and we show it in dramatic, exampling, and believable terms. Here is where we may get into trouble with some of you, because we are not sugarcoating our films, to please Christians. We are using the language, actions, and life style of the world, so that they will identify. If we are honest 'up front' they will believe us when we present the solution."

The reviewer of the film writes, "But even so, this movie has its full share of violence and sex and repulsive characters. Sensitivity to the realities and problems of our society make this almost inevitable. To reach our adult world, the producers, in this film, have had to focus on tragic adult situations. Billie's wife, Mae, is a vixen devoid of morals, and she shows it in every movement of her body, every word she spits out, every deed she does. She's an unfaithful wife, and a disaster as a mother. Her degeneration into professional prostitution comes as no surprise. Yet, in its handling of such a personality, there is no glamorizing of immorality, but rather a powerful dramatization of the truth of Proverbs (5, 6)...."

Now, Doctor, I would remind you that you (I presume) as a Reformed man also subscribe to the instruction of our Heidelberg Catechism. I remind you only of one question and answer (109); "Doth God forbid in this commandment (7th), only adultery, and such like gross sins? Since both our body and soul are temples of the Holy Ghost, he commands us to preserve them pure and holy: therefore he forbids all unchaste actions, gestures, words, thoughts, desires, and whatever can entice men thereto" (italies added). You subscribe too, to the Netherlands Confession. Can you really agree with the statement in article 37? We read: ". . . Then the books (that is to say, the consciences) shall be opened, and the dead judged according to what they shall have done in this world, whether it be good or evil. Nay, all men shall give an account of every idle word they have spoken, which the world only counts amusement and jest: and then the secrets and hypocrisy of men shall be disclosed and laid open before all . . . ."

Doctor, are there unchaste gestures, words, actions in your film as you seem to indicate? How can any Christian perform such even in play? How can any "Christian" film company allow any unchaste gestures, words, etc. in their film? If they are in the film, you violate the Word of God as maintained in our confessions.

In the fourth place, Doctor, I would assume that in a "religious" film, there would also be prayer to God – play-prayers to give the appearance of piety. Can God possibly be pleased with pretend-prayers? Does not Christ condemn this very sort of praying in Matthew 6:5, 6?

In the fifth place, Doctor. I notice that you and the film reviewer place emphasis

on presenting the gospel while entertaining, thus attracting the world. You write, "We will never satisfy 'sinner and saint' alike, so we will have to meet this challenge objectively, in His strength, and go after the 'sinner.'" And the reviewer of the film wrote, "... you see the beautiful opening scenes of a film that is dedicated to conveying the gospel of Jesus Christ to the movie goers of America, while entertaining them!"

Doctor, is this not that age-old error (becoming more prevalent in Reformed circles today) which suggests that man's cleverness in making the gospel attractive to the sinner will bring him to repentance? Is this not why the preaching is being replaced by all sorts of other programs? Is not your supposition too that unless one can make something entertaining, the wicked will not listen? But is that the position of Scripture? Did not the disciples ask Christ, "Who then can be saved?" Christ said, "With men this is impossible; but with God all things are possible" (Matt. 19:25, 26). Did not Paul reject the notion that the gospel preaching had to be made pleasing to men if we wanted them to hear? Did he not state, "Christ sent me . . . to preach the gospel - not with wisdom of words, lest the cross of Christ should be made of none effect"? Yet are you not trying to do that very thing - with the "wisdom of words" to make the cross of Christ attractive to this world? Again, did not Paul infallibly write, "For the preaching of the cross is to them that perish foolishness; but unto us which are saved it is the power of God"? (I Cor. 1:18). Read also John 3:3; 6:37, 44. The wisdom of the gospel will always be rejected by natural man, and will be received with joy by the regenerated, called child of God. But I find it highly incongruous to maintain that the presentation of the gospel can come in a way entertaining to this world.

I suspect, Doctor, that you are not troubling the Devil in production of this "Christian" film. On the contrary, I suspect that he must be greatly pleased that you have found a way to unite light and darkness in a way that the wicked will be entertained, and the faith of children of God will be further subverted (II Cor. 6). Why not rather invest your \$600,000 in legitimate mission activity through the preaching of the Word by the Church of Jesus Christ? That would have the desired fruit (Rom. 10:14, 15).

#### **SCHOLARSHIPS**

#### GLENDA DOEZEMA

This is the seventh consecutive year that the Protestant Reformed Scholarship Committee will receive applications for scholarships from those of our young people who have decided they want to prepare to be teachers or ministers.

The idea of a scholarship fund came into existence by the Federation Board in 1950. In 1960, the fund was actually realized and continued to grow by assessment, offerings, and gifts. This fund became the "base," which put to use in various investments, would give returns which would be used for scholarships. In 1966, the fund had grown large enough so that it was possible to offer scholarships.

The first five years of awarding scholarships was difficult due to the small number of applicants. Only once did the committee receive two applications and usually only one application was received.

Last year marked a significant change in the number of applicants and scholarships. Eight scholarships were awarded ranging from \$200.00 to \$500.00.

As most of you probably well know, an essay is required in applying for a scholarship. I would like to emphasize that these essays are not required so that we can pick the "winners" from a group of brilliant works of art which required hours of tedious work (which I had thought to be true before I was a member of the committee and was amazed anyone dared to apply).

Instead, the essay hopefully gives us an idea of how much sincerity and conviction one feels for the topic assigned. This is reflected not only in what is said, but how

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it is said. So grammar and form still shouldn't be neglected.

Rules which apply to scholarships are as follows:

- An applicant must be a prospective minister or teacher.
- An applicant will be judged on sincerity, ability, and need.
- An applicant must be a baptized or confessing member of a Protestant Reformed Church.
- 4. Each applicant must fill out an application form and submit it to the committee by May 1.
- The scholarship will apply to tuition only.
- Applicants shall promise in writing to repay in full should they refuse to teach or preach in our Protestant Reformed Schools or Churches. (This

does not apply to those who do not finish school, change their course of study, or are unable to preach or teach when they finish school.)

If you are interested in applying for a scholarship, you can contact your society secretary or this writer for an application form.

The importance of our ministers and teachers can never be underestimated. Our churches and schools are the supporting framework of our denomination. Without them, we would soon lose our distinctive truths. May God grant us His Grace to maintain these truths!

The Beacon Lights Staff thanks all those who participated in our recent contest. Winners will be announced later.

#### **FEATURE**

#### **COMPROMISE**

MR. J. M. FABER

Once upon a time, in a wayside pond, a frog and a sunfish developed a beautiful friendship between themselves. They seemed to have so many things in common. They both were fond of worms and underwater bugs on their menu. They liked to swim side by side, swerving around and between the weeds and stems of water lilies, swirling and cavorting about like little tadpoles. Oh, of course, there were a few activities which the frog liked in which the bonny sunfish could not join him: he liked to sit and sun himself on a convenient lily pad - and would do so by the hour, to the chagrin of his little friend. The sunfish, on her part, could breathe under water and never had to come up for air, which the frog tried to imitate to greater and greater lengths of time until he became somewhat green in the face. Other differences in their makeup were noticed from time to time, but the major irritation to their growing friendship was the obvious enjoyment the frog found on his toadstool-pedestal as he sunned himself prior to his kerplunking dive into the cool depths of the pond. This one fact finally became the only rift in their friend-

ship which was promising to grow into a budding romance. The frog. whose was the stronger character of the two, so sorely wanted the sunfish to join him on the lily pad, and the sunfish was ripe for any suggestion of compromise to overcome this difference between them. She was eager to please her white-vested friend.

Mr. Watersnake( who else!) came gliding along and saw the frog and the sunfish looking very sad. In his fatherly way, he said, "Now, now, children, surely it can't be as bad as that! What is your trouble? Why are you looking as though you thought the sky was about to fall on our pond?"

The two friends eagerly told the serpent all their woes, each one trying to pretend that the trouble was not really unsurmountable if they could only be shown. And, as might be expected, the wily snake suggested a compromise. He whispered in the ears of the frog, "Suggest to her to try to take a swift swim through the water and take a leap and glide up on the lily pad for just a little while. Tell her she needn't stay as long as you do, but just to show her willingness to meet you half-way to smooth out the

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difficulty. Then, let me know how it works out."

And to the sunfish, sulking beneath the surface, out of earshot, the slithering snake said to her, "I'm sure that your troubles are almost over. If you will only meet your friend half way he will cooperate with you. Don't cry, little sunfish, a little bit of compromising will go a long way. Why don't you ask him to stay under water for longer and longer periods so you can be together much more to enjoy things you have in common. Let me know how it comes out." And the evil one went his way, chuckling to himself, "I'll compromise them to death one of these days."

Early the next morning the frog, who really was the stronger of the two, sidled up to the sunfish and said, I'll tell you what; you take a swift swim towards my lily pad and glide up on it; I'll be there to catch you so you won't slip off. If you stay there in the warm sunshine with me for a little while, I will go down to the bottom with you the next time. The Snake told me that is an example of compromise, whatever that may mean, but he said it always works. So, how about it?"

The silly, gullible sunfish, eager to please, quickly agreed. Against all the warnings of her parents, and frowns of her friends, she adopted the advice of that slinky deceiver, Mr. Watersnake! She swam at full speed, surfaced, and glided on to the lily pad into the arms of her green-coated admirer. They both relaxed in the glare of the noon-day sun, the frog to his sensuous enjoyment, and the fish to her doom. In moments her eyes glazed over, and when the frog saw her with eyes closed he imagined she was enjoying the sunbath as well as he. He then decided that Mr. Snake's advice was good for their relationship, so he gallantly dove from his pad and swam to the bottom, resolved to stay there as long as the sunfish remained on the pad. Silly dead sunfish! Foolish dead frog!

The little folk in the pond heard Mr. Serpent say in fiendish glee, "I like that word, compromise; how can folks think that after a union built on compromise they can expect to 'live happily ever after'? The poor fish!" And a smell of sulfur followed him.

Jack belongs to the "A" church denomina-

tion; Jill has her membership in the "B" church. Their budding romance demands closer ties, so the Serpent whispers the word, "Why don't you compromise?" Sometimes it really amounts to an "adjustment of conflicting principles by yielding a part of each" (Webster) and then Jack and Jill ask for their membership papers to join the "C" denomination. Both yielded and were united on a lower spiritual level. They both resembled the fish with eyes glazed over in (spiritual) death. Usually, though, the weaker Jack, or Jill, yield their "part of spiritual principles" and adjust to the other's principles. That, according to the Serpent, is the second-best solution. But you may be sure that Satan develops opposition to the Word of God most effectively through a spirit of compromise.

Eve fell in compromise with the Devil and compromised her husband with her. The descendants of Seth eventually compromised with those of Cain and were destroyed with them in the Flood. One wonders if the Shemites compromised with the builders of the Tower of Babel and also were scattered in the Confusion of Tongues. Abraham's nephew compromised the future of his family when he "pitched his tent towards Sodom." Aaron was guilty of compromise when he made a golden calf and called it "God." In the period of Judges, Israel repeatedly compromised with the idolatrous practices of their neighbors and worshipped Baal and Ashtoreth. That entire period is marked by the cycle, renewal, compromise, apostacy. In the time of the Kings (which was in itself a compromise) the history was still that vicious cycle, renewal, compromise, apostacy.

In antithesis, the heroes of faith invariably stood firm against any compromise with the world system of their day. Daniel faced the lions in their own den; his three friends faced a fiery death in the furnace rather than compromise with the pagan religion. Nehemiah, Elijah, Jeremiah, David, and other great men of God acted upon the Word of God rather than compromise with public opinion. Consider the Christian martyrs, beginning with Stephen, who differed from the compromising Christians who "love the praise of men more than the praise of God" (John 12:43).

The Bible clearly sets forth the antithesis

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that should be revealed in your walk, young Christians: "Be ye not unequally yoked together with unbelievers"; "And be not conformed to this world, but be ye transformed . . ."; ". . . . having the form of godliness, but denying the power thereof . . . ."

Christian believer, heed this urgent admonition: "Beware lest ye also, being led away with the error of the wicked, fall from your own steadfastness" (II Peter 3:17).



DONNA VAN UFFELEN

#### GOING THE SECOND MILE

Do we "go the second mile"? Or is the first far enough? Are we content with doing only what is required of us, and that which is considered "average"? Or do we strive to do that "little extra," or attain those "above average" goals?

A great majority of us would have to answer that most of the time we go as far as is necessary, doing only those things which are required of us. The term "average" consists of quite a large area and much too often many of us are content to fall somewhere within this expansive category. In this category lies a maximum and a minimum, and the minimum soon becomes satisfactory to many. After all, if we strive only for the average, why reach the maximum average as long as the minimum suffices?

We can speak of "going the second mile" concerning many aspects of our lives. We can speak of it in our home lives, our school or occupational lives, and our Church lives. We know what is required of us in each of these areas of our lives and most of us are able to attain the "average" goals as far as the things which we must do are concerned. But can any of us sincerely say that this is the best policy to follow throughout our lives? Surely most of us would agree that it is not. But then we ask, "How far must we go?" And our answer should be, "the second mile." Then we

wonder "just how far is this second mile?" The length of this "second mile" varies according to the personal abilities of each individual. It is as far as our own particular abilities allow us to go.

First of all, we are concerned with our home lives, where the beginnings of our "going the second mile" lie. It is important to learn how to accept doing a little extra while we are still young. In our youth, this is a difficult thing to learn because so often we have a hard time doing even those things required in the "first mile." When our parents ask us to do something we often complain and feel that even such a small request is a great chore. This is not a good way to begin to learn how to go the "second mile." By doing the little things required of us in our youth, it is easier for us to learn how to do a few extra things, and begin to travel on that road of the second mile.

Another portion of our lives in which many of us need improvement is in our attitude to our school work and later to the work which we do while at our job. First, we are satisfied with doing the minimum amount of studying with which we can get by. And then many of us are satisfied with a grade of "C" because, after all, that is "average." For a great many of us, this average is below our personal ability. Later, when we work for pay, we often do our job

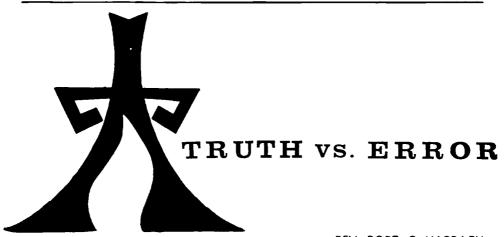
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with the minimum amount of ability necessary and work mainly with the idea of the pay coming after our work in mind.

Finally, and most important of all, we must "go that second mile" where our Church lives are concerned. The first mile is attending Church services and maybe going to society and a catechism class. And of what does does this "second mile" consist? In "going the second mile," we must prepare for our society meetings and attend those extra meetings which are not required of us; we must not only read the Bible, we must *study* it. Most important of all, we

must "go this second mile" willfully. We must not feel that we are forced into doing these things. It is also important that we do these things from the heart. They must not be mere outward gestures which we put on for the world to see. We must strive to do these little extra things of the Kingdom because of our love and gratitude to God.

In Matthew 5:41, Christ says, "And whosoever shall compel thee to go a mile, go with him twain." Are we ready to "go the second mile"? Even more important, are we willing to "go the second mile"?



REV. ROBT. C. HARBACH

#### By-Path Meadow and Doubting Castle

Consider well the path for your feet and all your ways will be sure. Turn not to the right or to the left; keep your foot away from evil. — Solomon

As Christian and Hopeful ever and again consulted their map to compare it with the country they were in, they found a place charted in gold print which read, "Between her street and the river, from this side and that, wood of life" (Rev. 22:2 Gk.) In a short while, sure enough they came to a pleasant river where there was a bronze historic marker which informed travelers that in David's day it was called "the River of God" and in John's day, "the River of Life's water." Extending out from the bank of the river toward the paralleling street, and also from the street toward the river, were wooded areas full of the forest species, Tree of Life. On the street were many mansions, each one having a rear view and run through its own forest park down to

the river's bank. Here they walked with great delight and drank of the river, pure and bright as crystal. Yet they soon discovered that the way they must go departed from the river, became very rough, was hard on weary feet and wore them down with discouragement. To the left of their miserable path was a beautiful meadow, about like the meadow of lilies they had just left. A path conveniently led to it with a signpost which read, "By-path Meadow." At this point they consulted not their map and its charted directions, but seeing that the meadow was along their way, they decided, at Christian's urging, for the easier going, since it was not out of their way. Christian was sure their course was right and wise when a Mr. Vain-confidence they met there

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in the most convincing tones assured them the way before led to the heavenly city. When night came on, neither the way nor their new acquaintance. Vain-confidence, could be seen. But they could hear him, He was much worse off, for they heard him stumble and fall down into a shaft deep into the ground. They heard him break into pieces as he struck bottom. frantic call to him went unanswered, except for a momentary faint far-away sound of groaning from the bowels of the earth. Hopeful looked at Christian with terrified misgivings, his voice trembling with a quavering, "Where are we now?" Then it began to pour down torrential rain as blinding lightning flashed and thunder crashed and deepening waters swirled all around them. Christian, himself thunderstruck with the realization that he had led them both astray, could not answer.

You see what it is to take the road to the left, also to take up too quickly with strangers, and to prefer an easier path than the strait way. You hear others falling. They went just a little farther into wrong, but were dashed to pieces in their fall. What takes you off the right road to the left? Is it that you were warned time and again, and that, too, in love, but you were just too proud to listen? Was it some wilful disobedience which Pride convinced you was only modern thinking and doing? Was it some self-indulgence or self-interest you supposed perfectly harmless to yourself or to others? Oh, that little bridge between the Narrow Way and By-path Meadow! that little gangway of agreement between the Church and the World! Keep your ears open and you will hear all around you many falling in Israel to be dashed to pieces. Are you, lately, falling too much under the power of the world? or for the modern baits of Satan? or under the power of your youthful lusts? Have not many of your familiar acquaintances fallen into the horrible pit? Be not deceived, evil company corrupts good manners (I Cor. 15:33). Are you aware of the dangers of bad company? If not, then, "Awake to righteousness" (v. 34), that is, "Sober up in the right way." Satan has you in a drugged stupor. Or are you bemused with an opiate of the people -people like Saint-Simon, Sartre and Altizer? Sober up in the right way! Take a deep drink from that shining river as an antidote. Sober up rightly and sin not, for some have ignorance of God. This to your shame! What a shame, if you, like the Sadducces, know neither the Scripture, nor the power of God! "Some have not the knowledge of God." They have heard it read at their table for years, and have held the Book in front of their own eyes for years in the society of other young people, yet have learned nothing of it. The god of this age has blinded their minds. They sleep with their eyes open. Or they shut their eyes and think of nothing. They looked into the Book with the sightless eyes of a mole, saw nothing, thought nothing, learned nothing. Is that you? Stop slumbering in By-path Meadow! Sober up in the right way. "Seek ye out of the Book of the Lord, and read" (Isa. 34:16). "Seek ye first the kingdom of God and His righteousness" (Matt. 6:33). Then you really will "awake to righteousness." If you have ears to hear, you will hear every day many falling from the easy Bypath from hateful pride, or determined prejudice, or worldly lust into irrevocable ruin.

Our two travelers are not yet as advanced in the School of Christ, or in their pilgrimage, as Paul and Silas were in Philippi. There, when they saw that the way departed from the Crystal River, instead of feeling "not a little sorry," they actually broke out into song, making the dark prison cell-block ring with psalms in melodious duets. They, as you would expect, would remind one another of what the Lord's brother says about counting it all joy when we fall into various trials. They would look at each other, and one would say something like this, "We really know better than to think the King's Way is all along a bed of lilies. We also know that this way departing from the Shining River is, for the time, better for us, which we shall see soon enough to be so, certainly at the end of our journey, if not sooner. What we must do is proceed in this way, for in it we shall find out that good and acceptable and perfect will of our God . . . ." Are you somewhat put out because the way to Canaan is so round-about, and through so much dreary wilderness? Do you "become depressed in spirit as a result of the route"? (Num. 21:4, NBV). Watch out! You are probably looking around to the left of your narrow and flinty trail for

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a softer and "better" way. Pause a moment to write inside the fly-leaf of your Chart Book the motto, "With God anywhere! Without God nowhere!"

Well, our two heroes got out of their fix in By-path Meadow, didn't they? They did; but not before "they had like to have been drowned nine or ten times," and, when they did, they landed in a very dark, nasty, stinking dungeon in the castle of the Giant Despair. The giant had a wife, in some respects more a giant than he. However, her name was not exactly gigantic, for it was Diffidence, a name denoting lack of confidence in oneself, or lack of trust in one's own wisdom, judgment and ability, including Distrust of others, suspicious, doubtful. In other respects, you see, she was smaller than a dwarf – or should I say, smaller than a Hobbit? She it was who counselled her giant-bodied but midget-brained husband to beat our two friends with a crab-tree cudgel, which he did, so badly that they were not able to move all night. The giant's continued attacks on them were fearful and with no abatement, unless and until the monster fell into one of his fits. For in sunshiny weather he fell into fits which disabled him in the use of his hands and arms. (Despair, you see, does not completely overcome the believer.) You rarely, if ever, read anything like Bunyan's Pilgrim's Progress or his Jerusalem Sinner Saved, or like Bishop Ryle's Holiness, or Boston's Human Nature in Its Fourfold State, or Giant Despair's dungeon in the books of today. Why is that? Is there less sin in the world today? or no more than there ever was? or did these writers go into labyrinthine detail in analyzing the exceeding sinfulness of sin? Were they extreme in holding that death and hell are the wages of sin? Are we in this day of modern psychology and psychiatry better conquerors of fear, doubt and despair? Are we advanced beyond the spiritual ups and downs of such men as Job, David, Jonah, Peter, James, John and Paul? Asaph had been in that dungeon of Castle Despair. He recorded some of his experience there in Psalm 77. He, as David, had a deep sense of sin, a high view of God, and often his stricken heart was full of diffidence. Are you not more at home with Asaph, with David, and even with Bunyan than

with the doctors of modern behavioral problems?

Again, it was not the giant himself, but his castle-hag wife who advised him to brain-wash the two prisoners with the suggestion to do away with themselves. In fact, Christian himself hardly knew what was best, whether to live or to die. He was tempted to choose strangling rather than life, and was probably correct in claiming that the grave would be easier than the dungeon (Job 7:15). But he is now learning that it is not necessarily the Lord's will to take the easier course, and never ever His will to sin. Further, he is comforted with Hopeful's caution against suicide, and is reminded that suicides do not put an end to their existence. Indeed, the giant's old crone saw to it that the two tormented captives were shown the bones and skulls of those the Giant had brought to a violent end - the bones of Ahithophel, Zimri, Saul and Judas.

Asaph also knew the meaning of "Call upon Me in the day of trouble. I will deliver thee, and thou shalt glorify Me" (Ps. 50:15). As Asaph was counselled to do, so did Christian and Hopeful in the dungeon of Doubting Castle. Then Christian discovered in amazement that he had all along a key in his breast pocket, which now he failed not to try in the prison lock. The key had engraved on it one word, Promise. The promises of God deliver from Despair. Bunyan in his Grace Abounding to the Chief of Sinners brings us his experience in Doubting Castle. He tells us, "You may see much, much, I say, of the grace of God towards me. I thank God I can count it much, for it was above my sins, and Satan's temptations too. I can remember my fears and doubts, and sad months, with comfort; they are as the head of Goliath in my hand. There was nothing to David like Goliath's sword, even that sword that should have been sheathed in his bowels. For the very sight and remembrance of that (sword) did preach forth God's deliverance to him. Oh, the remembrance of my great sins, of my great temptations, and of my great help, my great supports from heaven, and the great grace that God extended to such a wretch as I!"

Keep your foot away from evil! From the wrong path you may pull back the one

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longer reach you, and would do no good if it did.

#### **FEATURES**

#### PROTESTANT REFORMED CONVENTIONS

by DANIEL BOONE\*

Again last August we as the Protestant Reformed Young People had the privilege of meeting for our annual convention. We had the privilege of sharing our Christian faith as well as Christian fellowship; or did we? Some questions have been raised by our Protestant Reformed people concerning the value of our conventions. It is my belief that it was with respect to this problem that the BEACON LIGHTS staff has asked several people to give their reactions, opinions, or suggestions, of conventions past and present.

I am very pleased to see this important matter of our conventions being openly discussed. This attitude reflected by the BEACON LIGHTS shows two things. First, that they are concerned with our church's views of our activities. Secondly, not only are they concerned with doing what is right but they also welcome suggestions to improve on the present system. Therefore, I find it encouraging to see this matter openly discussed rather than avoiding and neglecting it.

Before expressing my own reactions of and suggestions about our Protestant Reformed Conventions, we should know what their purpose is. If we check the constitution of the Federation Board which sponsors our conventions, we find no specific purpose as such stated. However, the purpose of our conventions would be the same as the purpose of the Federation Board namely: "To enable all Protestant Reformed Young People's Societies to work in close unity. To guide these societies so they develop in faith and doctrine particularly by means of a Federation publication. To give united expression to our specific Protestant Reformed character."

With this in mind I feel the conventions have more than filled these requirements. Examining our last convention we find that this was certainly South Holland's objective. This is clearly shown in their prayer. "It is

our prayer as a host society that this convention will deepen our love towards one another so that all can see that we are Christ's disciples; that our faith may be strengthened to take up our crosses and follow Christ; and that we will continue in the truth which shall make us free." Their prayer was made in connection with their theme, "Disciples of Christ." Their theme was subdivided into three speeches given by our ministers. These speeches were, "The Mark of Discipleship," "The Costliness of Discipleship," and "The Freedom of Discipleship."

Not only did we share these spiritual truths but also Christian fellowship. It was a unique assembly of more than two hundred Protestant Reformed Young People gathered together. It is not every day that we can meet with our own people from such a variety of places. In fact, it's only for five or six days a year and maybe for four or five years on an average that we can come together. However, when you attend, it is a unique experience being with a group this size for almost a week. At these conventions you see familiar faces. You meet many new young people as well as the parents of the host society. I am always impressed with the hospitality that is displayed by these parents. These parents are warm, sincere, giving Christians who in many countless ways make this Christian fellowship at our conventions possible.

Sounds as if our conventions are perfect, doesn't it? Well, to be honest they aren't. We do not have a 100% representation at our meetings; we do not have a 100% participation at our discussion groups; nor is 100% of our individual time devoted to dwelling on the convention themes. However, who's at fault? The problem doesn't stem from lack

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Dan is a member of our Southwest church in Grand Rapids.

of effort by our convention hosts, but rather the problem is our lack of effort. I have found that with God's help, the more I prepare, the more I receive. How much do you want to receive? Try reading John 14:13-21 and Matthew 7:7-11.

# SOME IDEAS FOR BETTER CONVENTIONS by BARRY GRITTERS\*

Since I have only been to one convention, I can only take ideas from it and from what little I saw of the one we had here in Redlands two years ago.

First of all, there is sometimes a transportation problem, such as to and from the business meetings or getting a ride to the church or meeting place to leave for an outing. I think it would be a good idea, if possible, that everyone stay in one place like a university or college dormitory or in a few big places where there is transportation available.

Another thing is the places to visit. I think that almost everyone likes to swim or do something in connection with water or water sports. It would be a good idea if there could be one outing to a lake or some place where we can swim or be around water.

The main reason that we have Young People's Conventions is to have fellowship with Christ and with other Protestant Reformed people. I think that there could be some improvement in the discussion groups. Since there is no time to prepare for the discussions, I think the outlines should be more elaborate. If the outlines were handed out ahead of time, maybe more people would feel capable of participating in the discussion. Discussions are the most important aspect of the convention and since some people don't like them very much, they should be made more interesting for everyone.

## CONVENTIONS: WHAT'S YOUR ATTITUDE? VI VAN DEN TOP\*

I think conventions are really great. The host society works diligently to make the week a long-remembered one. At all times, the host society should bear in mind that the convention is to be first of all, spiritually edifying, and only secondly entertaining.

The main fault, however, lies not in the host society. The ones to blame are you and I. What do we expect from a convention? A big, wild week away from the folks? A chance to have that big "booze" party? A time to come in whenever you please and not be tied down to a curfew? A week of fun if you skip the discussion groups, mass meetings, etc.? If any of these attitudes are ours (and I fear they are), then we are the ones to blame for a poor convention. We are to blame because we come with the wrong attitudes and naturally leave feeling disgusted.

When you say that a convention was OK but not as neat as you expected, stop and think. What did you expect? If you expected to go and be spiritually built up in

the company of other Protestant Reformed youth, conventions will not be a disappointment. A convention will fill you spiritually if you come with that desire.

If you come for the fun and feel that "church stuff" is the bad part, stay home. If you come to "raise the roof" and feel negative toward the spiritual aspect, stay home. Stay home because people like you detract from the true purpose of the convention and you will not benefit.

On the other hand, if you feel a positive calling to your Protestant Reformed heritage, come. Come, if you desire the fellowship of other Christian youth. Come with the attitude that you need a spiritual filling. You will not be disappointed.

It is the hope of the staff that these articles will stimulate discussion and lead to even better conventions.

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<sup>\*</sup>Barry is a member of our Redlands church and is presently a student at Ontario Christian High School.

<sup>°</sup>Vi is a member of Doon Protestant Reformed church and is presently a student at Dordt College.

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#### LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

Dear Readers,

Often we read in the "NEWS — FROM, FOR, AND ABOUT OUR CHURCHES" column of BEACON LIGHTS items of interest concerning the activities of our Protestant Reformed Churches. For examples — from the Nov. 1971 issue — I find that lectures were given in both the Grand Rapids area and in South Holland, Ill., by the Revs. Robert Decker and G. Van Baren. Although I was not present at either of these gatherings, I have been informed that both meetings were well attended and were enjoyed by all who heard the speeches rendered.

But — even though I did not attend these meetings — I enjoyed the lectures none-theless! How? By means of tape recordings! I wish to inform each of you that tape recordings of these two lectures, and of many other lecture meetings, held in our churches, are available.

These taped reproductions can be purchased at a very nominal cost.

For further information please write:

TAPE LIBRARY 1047 ALTO AVE., S. E. GRAND RAPIDS, MI.

This endeavor is sponsored by The Mission Committee of our Protestant Reformed Churches. I assure you that all requests for information regarding the tapes will be promptly answered.

H. VANDER WAL

### The Beacon Lights thanks the following for their gifts:

Southwest congregation	\$41.65
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# NANS

#### from, for, and about our churches

JEANNE GRITTERS

#### From our First Church:

About 160 young people attended the annual winter banquet, held this year on January 28 in Hope School Gym. Seminarian Ron Van Overloop was Master of Ceremonies; Jerry Vander Kolk played his cornet and DaVonna Miersma sang a solo for the special numbers. The theme was "The steps of a good man are ordered by the Lord," and Professor II. Hanko spoke on this subject. A film on surfing was shown and the evening was closed with the singing of Psalter No. 101.

Mr. and Mrs. Dave Doezema rejoice in the birth of a daughter, Jodi Lynn, born on January 4.

#### From our South Holland Church:

Mr. and Mrs. Henry J. Zandstra rejoice in the birth of a son.

On January 14 the Ladies Auxiliary sponsored an evening in which Professor Hanko spoke on "The Scriptural Conception of the Child as to Emotional and Spiritual Development."

A son was born to Mr. and Mrs. Thomas Staggs on December 20.

Public confession of faith was made by Joanne Stouwie on January 30.

Robert Hoving left for service in the U.S. Navy on January 3. His address is:

SR Robert Hoving, Jr.

322-44-3463

U.S. Navy, Company Oll, Battalion 25 Recruit Training Command Great Lakes, Illinois 60088

#### From our Loveland Church:

The Sunday School presented their Christmas program on December 20. The title of the program was in Latin – "In Amori Veritatem Dice," meaning "In Love Witness the Truth."

On Wednesday, December 22, the young people met together as a group and went out Christmas caroling.

#### From our Hope Church in Walker:

Jerry Dykstra left for military service on January 7. His address is:

BEACON LIGHTS Fifteen

Pvt. Gerald L. Dykstra 385-56-6771 Co. A., 1st Bn. 1st BCT Bde Ft. Polk, La. 71459 (4th Platoon should be written in the bottom left-hand corner.)

The Jamaican Committee sponsored a program in Hope Church, held after the evening service on January 2. Rev. G. Lubbers, who was visiting Grand Rapids with his wife for a short time, reported on his labors in Jamaica, and shared some of the problems that he encounters on the island.

Mr. and Mrs. Clarence Kuiper were blessed with the birth of a baby boy on January 7.

The baptismal certificate of David Lee Tanis was received from the Hope Christian Reformed Church.

The membership papers of Mrs. Donald Cook and the baptismal certificate of her son, Shawn, were sent to her at her request.

David Lee Tanis and Miss Carol Elzinga were united in marriage on January 21 in Hope Church.

Mr. and Mrs. John Besselsen rejoice in the birth of a daughter, born on January 8.

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#### Author's Key-

D.B. - Daniel Boone

G.B. - Gary Bouwkamp

K.B. - Kathy Bylsma

G.D. - Glenda Doezema

C.D. - Carol Dykstra

J.D. - Jessie Dykstra

J.M.F. - John M. Faber

D.F. - Don Faber

B.G. - Barry Gritters

S.G. - Shirley Gritters

P.H.H. - Prof. H. Hanko

R.R.H - Rev. R. Harbach

MR & MRS JOHN ZANDSTRA JR. 492 GLENWOOD-LAMSING RD. GLENWOOD, ILLIMOIS 60425

Je. H. - Jennie Hoving J.H. - Jon Huisken J.K. - John Kalsbeek Ka.K. - Karen Karsten K.K. - Ken Koole R.K. - Rev. J. Kortering D.L. - Dave Lanting A.L. - Agatha Lubbers R.L. - Rachael Lubbers R.G.L. - Rev. G. LubbersT.N. - Thomas Newhof, Jr. S.P. - Sue Porte C.R. - Calvin Reitsma R.R. - Rosalynn Reitsma J.S. - Jim Slopsema R.S. - Rev. M. Schipper S.T. - Sue Terpstra R.V.B. - Rev. Van Baren V.V.D.T. - Viola VanDenTop D.V.U. - Donna Van Uffelen B.W. - Beth Westra



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