

KOINONIA KONNECTION

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DRESSING FOR GOD

PART 2 OF 2

There is a way that seems right to a man, but its end is the way of death. Proverbs 14:12

REVIEW

We need to review so that the conclusion of the article Dressing for God ties together smoothly. In the first part of this two-part article, we learned that even in the Reformed/Presbyterian church some have created a false category for religious adherents. Without confessing Jesus Christ personally as Lord and Saviour, folks are allowed to confess a historical faith.

That means, truths of the Christian faith as summarized in the Three Forms of Unity and particularly the Heidelberg Catechism are taught as the system of doctrine we believe. Then at some point public acknowledgment of those truths are affirmed before the congregation. This allows the possibility for Christian marriage and for children of such marriages to be baptized in the church. Later in life, if an event of sufficient experiential significance occurs, then an attendance at the Lord's Table could possibly be viewed as a genuine confession of salvation.

We also learned that there is a great deal of similarity between this type of thinking and a concept called the "half-way covenant." Believing this type of category would keep people from straying from the church and what hope it offered, it actually keeps people in the organization of the church but away from the hope in Christ. Ultimately, it was and still is a form of

Arminianism, in whatever modern expression or modification found.

THE RAGS OF "PREVENTIVE ELECTION"

We learned in the first article that such attitudes and activities as these are unscriptural and unprofitable to the saving of the soul. However right it might appear to man in its self-imposed religion based on legalism and moralism, this clothing is nothing but rags before God - rags not fit for heaven.

Another filthy garment is also modeled within this type of system. Let's call this garment the rag of "preventive election." The idea behind the rag of "preventive election" is there are some persons who really wish to be saved but cannot. They want to submit to Christ and follow him but God's election precludes or prevents that from happening. If it weren't for that obstruction, it is held, they would eagerly enter the kingdom. It is promoted that some sinners have a longing desire in their hearts to truly see their sin and be brought to life by God. They're willing, but God hasn't granted the fulfillment of their deepest desire. It is often the apparent solemnity and spiritual sound of this type of talk that masquerades the subtle shifts and distortions of what the Scriptures really teach. Much of this idea is based upon a false interpretation of Luke 13:23-30:

Then one said to Him, "Lord, are there few who are saved?" And He said to them, "Strive to enter through the narrow gate, for many, I say to you, will seek to enter and will not be able. When once the Master of the house has risen up and shut the door, and you begin to stand outside and knock at the door, saying, 'Lord,

Lord, open for us,' and He will answer and say to you, 'I do not know you, where you are from,' then you will begin to say, 'We ate and drank in Your presence, and You taught in our streets.' But He will say, 'I tell you I do not know you, where you are from. Depart from Me, all you workers of iniquity.' There will be weeping and gnashing of teeth, when you see Abraham and Isaac and Jacob and all the prophets in the kingdom of God, and yourselves thrust out. They will come from the east and the west, from the north and the south, and sit down in the kingdom of God. And indeed there are last who will be first, and there are first who will be last.

The people pictured in Luke 13, however, are not described as some "noble" seeker, but are shown to be workers of iniquity. It isn't God who is the cause of their demise, but they themselves. Romans 3:10-18 and 8:5-8 vividly show that there is no one who truly seeks after God. Certainly, election is a biblical truth. Those who truly believe in Jesus as the Ethiopian Eunuch did should be comforted that acceptance with God is based upon his good pleasure displayed toward them through the merit of Christ alone. Those who ultimately will not believe have definitely been passed over by God's good pleasure and removed from His presence deservingly so because of their sinful rebellion and disregard of the report given of God's son.

The following tale by Hans Christian Anderson captures what needs to be said about such dressing for God.

An emperor, jealous to have the most splendid robe of any monarch, commissioned the realm's designers to create a garment worthy of him and promised to execute designers who failed him. Finally, the emperor's own tailor announced the completion of the realm's finest robe. But before opening the jewel-studded chest, the tailor informed the emperor and his court that the robe could be visible only to those who had wisdom. Unwilling to be regarded as

lacking in wisdom, the emperor began laughing in approval of the invisible garment. Eventually, the whole court joined in and it was clear that the emperor's charge was met with impeccable success. The next day, the emperor paraded his new robe through the streets. Informed beforehand that only those with wisdom could see the new robe, the people cheered wildly in approval. All was well until a child stepped forward. "But there's nothing there!" he exclaimed. "The emperor has no clothes!" Immediately, cheers turned to silence as the crowd descended upon the naïve and hapless youth.

Therefore, to say there are those who deeply desire to know the Christ of salvation, but God's elective purpose has not allowed that possibility, is to distort two things. First, the distortion of the fact that "There is a way that seems right to a man, but its end is the way of death." (Proverbs 14:12) People, even reared in Reformed/Presbyterian Confessionalism, apart from the sovereign grace of God, will forever create their half-way covenants and dress in their self-righteous rags - these are the workers of iniquity. Second, there is the distortion of God's divine election being achieved through the effectual calling in Christ Jesus by the Holy Spirit through the Word. This means that sinners are invited to come to Christ by the proclamation of God's Law and Gospel, and those who are truly willing to come to Christ are invited and received by Christ, knowing it is God who makes them willing in the day of his power - Dressed in Robes of Righteousness. "I will greatly rejoice in the LORD, my soul shall be joyful in my God; for he hath clothed me with the garments of salvation, he hath covered me with the robe of righteousness." (Isaiah 61:10a) Others simply have no clothes.

Pastor Perry Glenn Brackin

FAMILIES IN FOCUS

MARRIAGE – AN INSTITUTION OF GOD FOR MAN



God has given man a wonderful institution of marriage. In marriage God communicates something of Who He is and something of the harmony that exists in the blessed Trinity. He also reveals to man through marriage how Christ relates to His church. By this pattern we learn how to conduct ourselves within a marriage relationship. However, marriage does not only point to spiritual realities but it also defines the relationship between men and women. God defines the marriage institution but also teaches us how it is to function in our lives. Man brings his own innovations to the relationship with devastating consequences. His relationship to God, already broken by sin, is an ever-widening gap of alienation. His relations with his fellow men and women are hurtful and destructive. One does not need to look far in our culture to see the destruction caused by marital infidelity. Even the church evidences the hard consequences of this within her walls. Studies show that among Christians who profess to be evangelical, or gospel centred, the divorce rate matches that of the secular world. This is a great tragedy and a far cry from the high standard of God's word where the apostle Paul says, "But fornication and all uncleanness or covetousness, let it not even be named among you, as is fitting for saints." Eph. 5:3 Thanks be to God that His super-abounding grace changes sinners who have violated the marriage institution, into members of the pure bride of Christ.

The first purpose and function of marriage between a man and a woman is that they are to assist each other in the affairs of this life and in preparation for the life to come. In Genesis 2:18 we find that God made Adam a help "meet". We might be tempted to think that Eve's purpose was to assist Adam to do what ever he wanted

to do. We might be tempted to think of Adam as the superior and of Eve as inferior. But this would be to misconstrue the text. While it is true that the man is the head of the house, the woman is a vital and integral part of the marriage relationship. The man is responsible for both himself and for his wife and for where they go together. And this is to be doing the will of God. As long as a man pursues first in priority the kingdom of God and His righteousness, the wife is already protected from many abuses. And it is a great privilege for the wife to be a complement to her husband in this task. Both male and female are created in the image of God, but each serves as a complement to the other. Head-ship is the responsibility of the man, and the woman needs it though it is unpopular today. Being subject belongs to the woman's role and the man needs her in order for him to be a leader, also unpopular today.

The role of the husband, as the head, is to lead or guide his wife in the affairs of this life, instruct her in the things of this life and of the life to come, to provide for her needs and to give her the protection that she needs. He is to do this in an understanding way, giving honour to her as the weaker vessel. That means he is not to take advantage of her but is to love her "as Christ loved the church". The implications of this are enormous.

The role of the wife is to be submissive to her husband. Submission is a concept that is hardly understood or enjoyed in our day. Autonomy, or self-will, is so ingrained in our nature by sin, that we can't bear to be in a role of being subject to another. This is just as true of men as of women. Rebellion against God means that we set up ourselves in opposition to God. We choose who we will worship, what

we will do and so on. But since God is holy and good, sin is always destructive for it opposes the holiness and goodness of God. Man's true happiness would consist in submitting to God in His holiness and goodness and to give up his self-determination. And this means taking our subordinate position to others when God calls us to it. The popular notion has it that to be subject to another means to be inferior. Sometimes this is true, as is the case between God and us but also between a king and his subjects as it relates to the rule of the land. As humans, kings and slaves are equal. In a marriage relationship, the husband and the wife are equal as image bearers of God, but serve different functions. What better function could a person receive than the one God gives. For the man it is head-ship, for the woman it is subjection to her head. Christ subjecting Himself to His earthly parents (Luke 2:51) proves what an honour it is to take the place God has given us in marriage. Men and women need to embrace this concept with understanding. The fitness of men to be leaders in their marriage is not something that they have produced themselves, but is the result of the way that God has fashioned man. What misery man brought on himself by sin is clearly revealed by tyranny in marriage on the one hand and the failure to direct married life for godly ends on the other hand. Sinful men and women become a wonderful context for God to display His redeeming grace.

It is interesting to see that the roles that men and women have within the marriage setting, are indeed complementary. Often when a young man and woman begin a relationship

In a marriage relationship the husband and the wife are equal as image bearers of God, but serve different functions.

together, those who know them well see many opposites in them in areas of tastes and styles, character traits, emotions, mind-sets and so on. For example, one of the partners might demonstrate great patience while the other is always on the go. The differences can be so apparent that some would doubt of the possibility that this relationship would work out. After a number of years the couple seem to be quite harmonious, and what was once a glaring opposite trait in them, is now hardly a noticeable difference. Why is this? It could be that through the grace of God the one partner tempers the traits of the other and vice versa. What was viewed as patience in the one may have partly been indecision and the other partners ambition may have positively influenced the first person. Now this person still has patience but instead of being indecisive now makes timely decisions. It works the other way as well. The second person, instead of making hasty and rash decisions, now takes the time to think issues through before deciding. This is only one example of scores of which could be cited. The principle applies in many areas of married life. This is a practical demonstration of the complementary roles of husband and wife.

God knows our needs and has provided for them; in marriage through a wife (or husband). Let us not forget to look beyond the marriage, however, to the One to whom our marriage points. Let us say in faith, "And my God shall supply all (our) need according to His riches in glory by Christ Jesus." Phil. 4:19

-Bill Kroesbergen



MISSION SPOTLIGHT

ECUADOR MISSIONS

Dear family and friends,

As the rains once more begin and the weather turns a bit cooler here, we are reminded of God's faithfulness. Though most of you experience four seasons a year, here in Ecuador we only have two seasons. The rainy season is winter and the dry season is called summer. Summer this year has been unusually short, lasting only 3 months. And now once again we are experiencing the signs of winter; some sun in the morning and then the rains drench the earth each afternoon.

We have recently completed two more studies with two of our Bible Study groups and are presently taking a couple weeks off, before we start up again with two new topics. We plan to begin a basic study on Christian Doctrine with the folks in Comite de Pueblo, and we also plan to offer a new course in our home on another family related topic.

This past month Fred has had many counseling sessions with individuals and couples who are experiencing difficulties in their lives. From domestic violence to unfaithfulness in marriages, one is continually confronted with the dire needs of the families in this culture. One often feels totally inadequate to deal with these things as many situations are extremely complicated. We are learning to trust and rely on God as never before, as the demands of this work goes far beyond our natural capacities.

This coming weekend we hope to celebrate the institution and dedication of the Reformed Church of Ecuador. La Iglesia de La Gracia (with Pastor Richard Aguilar) will celebrate this moment with a special worship service this Sunday evening. We are very grateful to God for the blessings He has bestowed upon this

new church in the past year, and pray that the Lord will continue to pour His blessing upon this body of believers as they worship from Lord's Day to Lord's Day and seek to bring the gospel to this city.

A very interesting phenomena has been occurring recently in this new church. As many of you know, very few Latin American churches consist of people from different social classes. There are churches filled with the poor, and other churches filled with the rich. Seldom can one find a church with a mix of poor and rich. The social structure here is so rigid that it is almost impossible to move from a lower class up. One of our prayers and desires has been to see this church become one that has all classes of life in it, one in which there is no special regard for the rich over the poor, nor difference between the races and where all realize that we need one another equally in the body of Christ. Well the Lord has given to us a real mixed bag of people, from doctors, lawyers, and professionals to the poor, from Ecuadorians, Mexicans, Peruvians, Brazilians, Chileans, Americans, and Canadians.

Recently we have also had a number of missionary families join the church. At first Fred and I were somewhat concerned when we noticed several more white missionary families come to worship with us. We didn't want a church of missionary families. However, as we have wrestled with the Lord over these things, He began to show us a different angle. Because HCJB world radio is stationed here in Quito, there are many missionaries living here working within this big interdenominational organization. Most of them spend all their time within the compound, and are devoted entirely to the radio broadcasting. They have very little time to spend outside in actual person to

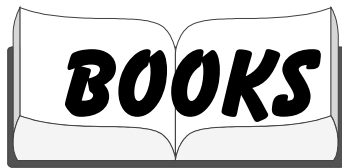
person ministry among the Ecuadorians. Recently a few of these families have joined us in worship on the Lord's Day and have been particularly attracted to the Reformed Faith because of the Biblical emphasis on God and the centrality of His word. How encouraging to see people who have never understood the basis of the Reformed faith, come to know God in a new and deeper way.

Next week we hope to begin a women's Bible Study. Please pray for us as we organize and begin this ministry to the women here. We have been praying that the Lord would prepare someone to head up this ministry as we simply

cannot do much more. We have now found someone very capable and willing to do this with our help so we praise God for this. Please pray that the Lord would give Pilar guidance and wisdom to take on this ministry.

Next month Arlene will also offer another Sunday School workshop to various churches who have heard of the new program and who would like to have this program for their church. Please pray that the Lord will continue to use this for his glory.

Remembering you in our thoughts and prayers,
Fred, Arlene and children



BOOKS IN REVIEW

What is the Christian's relationship to God's Law? He has been set free from its condemnation; but is he still under the moral law as a rule of life? Or is he free to live as he pleases? Is holiness an option?

No Holiness, No Heaven
Richard Alderson
The Banner of Truth Trust
approx. \$8

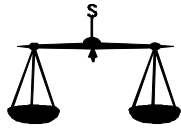
NO HOLINESS, NO HEAVEN! answers the many questions of the christian's relationship to God's law in a clear and popular fashion. It was written out of deep concern for some trends in current Christian teaching and practice, especially the inroads of lawlessness into the life of the church.

In the Espistle to the Romans, the apostle Paul teaches that salvation is by the grace of God through faith alone in Christ Jesus alone. Even if people lead blameless' and upright' lives, all their morality and good works are filthy rags' in God's eyes. The worst of sinners can go to heaven simply by casting himself upon God's mercy and trusts in another's righteousness.

The moral furor that this gospel creates raises the question of "Shall we continue in sin that grace may increase?" The apostle's logic is that this is unthinkable, for the Christian through union with Christ has died to sin and been raised to new life. Unhappily, many in the church today have not followed Paul's logic and say that if one is justified by faith alone, you may live as you please.

This book has been written to demonstrate that the Biblical truth that, while Christians are indeed justified by faith alone, they will inevitably demonstrate that faith by lives which are not merely moral but positively holy.

-Cope Jonkman



HISTORY HIGHLIGHTS

WOMEN OF ANCIENT GREECE (PART 1 OF 2)

History illustrates all too sadly the stark realities of how relationships suffer apart from obedience to God's truth. In the following article, the role and relationship of women in ancient Greek culture is explored. The importance of this historical highlight will be seen as it provides insight into the world which the Gospel would be coming -the Gospel of Jesus Christ which alone can reconcile men and women to their Creator and to one another.

For the most part, the lives that the women of ancient Greece led would not be envied by the women of today living in our modern western world. Women of that era had their lives defined in a very narrow sense by their male counterparts. Woman knew nothing of personal fulfillment, self-improvement or careers. The virtuous middle-class woman was obliged to lead a sheltered life of domestic constraint. She lived in a man's world.

Life in early Greece was permeated by the actions and values of the warriors and heroes who dominated the land. The virtues of strength, courage and martial skill were emphasized in this militaristic society. Yet these traits were associated with the consorts of warriors to a degree, and the earliest Greek women had it better than those born later during more civilized times. Male virtues were mirrored in the women, and this was reflected in the female deities of the day. Goddesses such as Athena, Artemis, Hera and Aphrodite were not portrayed as being inferior to their male counterparts. Of course the women of this class were the mothers, wives and daughters of the warriors and could therefore be accorded vicarious respect. Worthy husbands and sons, after all, could not be associated with unworthy wives and mothers.

Family loyalty during these early times was very important. When a son was married he brought his bride into his father's established household, and she was obliged to obey her father-in-laws rules. Most homes had three generations of women living in them; the mother-in-law, the son's wife, and her daughters. Blood ties were very important, and frequently they were all that mattered. The enemy was often anybody not related.

As Greek society progressed and urbanization grew, the lot of the upper and middle-class women steadily deteriorated. As women's activities moved indoors their labour became less visible, making it less valued. The women of the fifth and fourth centuries B.C. endured the worst of it; and this was the time of Greece's 'Golden Age'. Legally and economically they had virtually no status at all. Women did not have a voice in public affairs. They were not even considered citizens; they could only claim to be married to a citizen. Women could not own property or in appear in court on their own behalf. For the most part they did not engage in intellectual pursuits. The vast majority of women did not receive an education outside of the home. Women were believed to be mentally and physically inferior. Each woman had to have a male master or kyrios (lord) who was responsible for her. If unmarried the kyrios was her father, brother or uncle; if married her husband was her kyrios. For the entire course of their lives they were under the close supervision of a man.

In Athens only citizens (males) could own property, and only their sons could inherit. Sons had to be proven to be legitimate in order that they might be declared citizens and deemed capable of inheriting their father's property. Bastard sons, like women, had no

right to citizenship or property. This caused middle-class men to keep a close watch on their women to ensure that illegitimacy did not occur. The penalties for trying to pass off a non-citizen child as a citizen were very severe.

As a result middle-class women spent most of their time at home in the company of female slaves and children. The urban Athenian woman felt useless as she spent most of her time in virtual seclusion in the women's quarters of the house. If they went out in public they were always chaperoned by slaves and were obligated to pull their cloak up over their faces as a veil. Obviously employment outside of the home was not even considered. They could weave and sew inside, raise children, act as midwives and run the household. In this respect poor women were better off; at least they could go to the community well to draw water or go to the market to purchase household necessities.

If an Athenian middle-class family only had daughters, the eldest became an epikleros (heiress) upon her father's death. This created

a problem since it was illegal for women to own property. Therefore an epikleros had to marry her nearest male relative who was available on her father's side. If all of her father's male relatives were married, one had to divorce his wife in order to marry her, so that he could inherit, not her.

Upper and middle class women of ancient Greece lived straightened lives. Secluded and confined in the home, they lived under what almost amounted to be house arrest. Although this kind of life is alien to the women of our western culture, it is familiar to other women of our day. Women in Hindu and Muslim cultures live out their lives much like the women of ancient Greece did. Restricted to the home, fully enshrouded while making a foray out in public, they are like phantoms skirting around the edges of society. One can only imagine the level of unhappiness and frustration many of these women feel. We can be thankful that our lives are not regimented and constricted in such a manner.

-Frank Berger

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