Prayer and Young People

That is the subject which you gave to me. And I must admit that it is rather difficult.

I could write about prayer; and I could also write about young people. But to write about Prayer and Young People is not so easy. In the mind of those or of him who chose this subject there must have been the idea that prayer and the young people is different from prayer and old people.

I remember that such was my impression when I first was asked quite a while ago to write on that subject.

You might as well ask me to write on Young People and the Love of God. Or: Young People and Justification.

It seems to me there is not so much difference between Young People and Old people in the Church of God. The older I become the more I see that essentially there is no difference at all. And also this: it is a mistake to make too much of a distinction between them and us. Some people talk about sermons for young people and sermons for old people.

There was a day once in the life of God-fearing king Jehoshaphat when he was attacked by a combination of wicked people. And the king proclaimed a fast. And he called the whole nation to him, so that he might stand and pray before them to Covenant Jehovah. And so they came. Listen to one verse in this beautiful history: “And all Judah stood before the Lord, with their little ones, their wives and their children.”

And before the face of that mixed assembly Jehoshaphat poured out his heart to their God. And He heard, and they were beautifully delivered from these wicked people.

And that’s the way our fathers taught us.

Are we not subjecting our children from their earliest infancy to the prayer of their parents, their teachers and their ministers?

I smile sometimes when I think of the first question in the catechism book which I had to learn when I was five years old. Here it is: “How many Gods are there?” Answer: “There is one God.”

Then further: “How many Persons are there in the Godhead?” Answer: “There are three Persons in the Godhead: Father, Son and Holy Ghost.” Further, and that was my third question: “But are there then not three Gods?” Answer: “No, but God is one in Essence and Three in Persons.”

There you are.

I was five years old, and they had taught me the deepest mystery in religion.
A few lessons further there came this question: "Whereby is your faith strengthened?" And the answer was: "Through the sacraments."

I was five years old, mind you, and I had tackled the mystery of faith not only, but also its strengthening.

I said that I smiled somewhat, and you must excuse me. That is on account of my stupidity. Because our fathers were no fools. They had studied the ways of God with His people, including the little ones. And they did likewise.

Here is the point I wish to make: we usually underestimate the regenerated minds of the little ones in the church.

And that is a serious mistake.

And it has serious consequences.

One of the worst consequences is that most of our young people do not partake of the Lord's Supper until they are from 17 to 23 years old. And that is terrible.

The old people (and I mean with old: from 23 to 80 or more) go to the table of the Lord and they thank God for the strengthening of their faith. But what about the thousands and thousands of poor young people who had the faith of Jesus Christ in their hearts, souls and minds, and who must get along as best they can without this strengthening?

In the most flourishing period of the Reformed fathers they took their children to the table of the Lord when they were 14 and 15 years old, and that's correct.

And so it is with prayer and the young people.

Pray: what do we teach them with regard to prayer? Well, the answer is easy. When they are too young to pray a free prayer, we tell them: Pray thus: Lord, bless this food and drink for Jesus' sake. Amen. And in the meanwhile, we pray our prayers by the table for them to model after; and -- they are prayers of the old!

In church it is the same. They listen to the long prayer of the minister twice on the Lord's day. They listen to the Christian school teacher pray 20 times each week. And they are prayers of old people for them to model after.

And so I began to pray when I was young.

Since I had this assignment I turned my thoughts to my first free prayers, when I was alone with God. And, really, they are not much different from the prayers which I pray today. How could it be otherwise? All I had to copy after were the prayers of the old.

If there is a difference, it is the difference of subject matter. And two things come to my mind. First, the subject matter of my mature days is characterized by more knowledge of Scripture. It stands to reason that prayer that is worthy of that name must be Scriptural in content and subject matter. The more you pray like the inspired saints, the more "beautiful" is your prayer. God just loves to hear you pray like Abraham, David and Solomon. Yes, and like Jesus. And, second, my subject matter is richer, because my life's experiences are richer now than in my childhood.

But I will give you some hints.

First, pray early. With that I mean that if you seek the Lord early you will find Him. God Himself asks you to do this. To everyone of His children He says in their infancy and young manhood and maidenhood: "My son, give me thy heart!" And when you do that, you are praying. That is my first hint: praying is the opening of the heart to God. Of course, you understand that I am speaking of the children of God. I am speaking of those that are regenerated, and it is my conviction that almost all of the elect are regenerated in their earliest infancy.

And that first hint is according to God
Your heart has the love of God in it. And your heart will turn for that reason to Him who begat you. Why does the flower turn itself to the sun? Answer: because it loves the light.

Second: that you pray in Jesus' Name. And that does not mean to simply finish every prayer slavishly: for Jesus' sake. Many are the prayers which ended in this manner, but were never heard. But it means that you pray from the consciousness that you are in Him, are ingrafted in Him, and that you are controlled by His Spirit.

Third: that you pray to the true God only. And that's very important. God hates it if you erect a god in front of His face. Search your heart before you pray, and take all the idols which you see there and bury them "under the oak at Shechem." Set your face before the great and terrible God of the Holy Scriptures, and then say: Father!

Fourth: Pray according to His Word. Do not pray outside of that Word. Do not pray for all kinds of earthly things. Learn from the saints who are now in heaven, and whose prayers are both inspired by the Holy Ghost, and are left in the Bible for you to copy. And you will find that they almost always prayed for oceans of grace and truth, love and faith and hope, goodness and mercy. In short they prayed to have God in Christ. Praying thus you will grow rich in God.

Fifth: Pray in sincerity and in truth. Be not like the unstable man in James' epistle. James 1:6-8. An unstable man, wavering in his mind while he prays is really afraid that God may hear him. If, for instance, you pray: Lord, lead me not into temptation! be sure that you mean what you say. For God may hear you. And you will be kept from filthy sins. But even while praying for His protecting care, you may secretly hope that He may not hear you. Why? Because you like the very sin you pray against. God hates that.

(Continued on page 5)
THE FLEETING INTELLIGENCE OF PARENTS

We have noticed a strange and puzzling phenomenon regarding the intelligence of parents, especially of parents having growing children. When the youngsters are young, possibly during the ages that coincide with grade school and earlier, parents are virtually perfect. Every decision they make is the absolutely perfect one, every opinion is very fact indeed, and certainly no unworthy or sinful thought ever passes through their minds.

Although the exact moment of this loss of intelligence varies with each individual, the loss is usually noticed most prominently when a son or daughter enters junior high grades and continues until this same child is married.

Suddenly parents lose all sense of judgment. Their thinking becomes out of tune with the date, their judgments become based on archaic or at best, extremely old fashioned ideas; their former concern for the child’s welfare becomes offensive “nosiness,” and they spend long hours lecturing their off-spring on subjects regarding which the latter already knows far more than the parent can ever hope to know.

Or do they?

Let’s look more closely at this supposedly fleeting of parental intelligence. It seems that the same parent can be in both stages of intelligence at the same time depending on the ages of their children. Now that’s odd, isn’t it?

Or is it?

Let’s face it. When we were youngsters, Dad and Mother stood for all that was righteous and good in our minds.

“My Daddy is stronger than your Daddy” was the challenge that we used to tell the world that our parents were richer, smarter, and in general far superior to any other parents in the world now or in the future.

But what happened? What brought on this sudden change that causes us to feel that “the old man ain’t hep”; that Dad and Mother have lost contact with today; that their decisions are based on ideas that should have been discarded with Dobbin, the surrey, and the kerosene lamps?

Regrettfully, it seems to be a part of every person’s growing up since it lasts only a few years. For when teenagers become adults and begin to establish homes of their own, suddenly the parents regain the intelligence. Very strange indeed!

But let us return for a moment to this period when teenagers are forced to tolerate their dull parents. As we evolve from children into teenagers, our education broadens and many hidden things become plainer to us. Basking in the light of a few newly (for us) discovered ideas, we find with mild surprise and not so mild pride, that two and two not only make four but also make twenty-two. Other facts of life which until now had been the almost sacred possession of our parents are revealed to us. Presently we expect to graduate from school and then we’ll have the whole world by the tail. Why should we listen to Mother and
Dad who perhaps haven't gotten past the eighth grade?

Here's why!

Because, although they may have grown up before the days of twin carburetors and fin tailed cars, the basics of Christian living haven't changed! The powerful strength of temptations, the weakening effects of excesses, and the certainty of being burned when playing with fire are just as true as when they were teenagers themselves. Not only is life basically the same as in your parents' youth, but they have the added advantage of experience and years of observing life around them.

For example, when we are warned against driving at excessive speeds, Dad isn't just talking because of general good driving principles he once read on a safe driving poster; he's speaking as one who has either seen or perhaps even experienced the effect of such carelessness.

Or a stronger example. When we are warned by our parents against taking part in questionable activities, they are not simply reading a little speech out of an antiquated rule book. They are warning out of experience of having seen friends' lives marred or even ruined by indulgences such as confront every one of us daily. Perhaps these friends were once as close to them as your best friend is to you. So when your parents counsel you, and warn you, they are most likely just as right now as you thought they were when you were six years old.

In a few years you will be establishing homes and possibly raising families of your own. Between now and that time you expect to gain much knowledge both through education and experience. Doesn't it make sense that your parents also learned much during the same period in their own lives?

Why not listen to them now, and give them credit for having the intelligence you expect to have by the time you are their age?

C. Westra

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**PRAYER AND YOUNG PEOPLE**

(Continued from page 3)

Sixth: Pray in great humility. Remember to Whom you are praying. If angels in heaven cover their faces when they stand before His glorious Face, how about you? I can understand that in better days, many, many years ago, I heard elders pray: O Covenant God! let it not be evil in Thy sight that we address Thee in prayer!

Why do you think God called David a man after His own heart? I will tell you. It is because I know no other saint who was as humble as he. Reading his humble prayers and supplications of which the book of Psalms is full, I am beset with holy jealousy. Oh, to pray like David! And look at Jesus! He is the better David. No, there's not one like the lowly Jesus. No, not one.

When you are alone, when you are going to bed at night, when you kneel by your bedside, crawl in the dust for your own heart and consciousness, and pray. Say to Him: O God! I am not worthy of all Thy benefits. If Thou wouldest behold iniquity, I could not stand before Thee. I am worthy of only one thing: and that is to be cast away forever from Thy care and thought. Tell Him that you are sorry for all you have done amiss. Do not spare yourself. Tell Him everything: "k Verborg geen kwaad, dat in mij werd gevonden!" (Ask some Dutchman to translate this for you.)

Be humble. Be meek. Be lowly in your mind. Say with Paul, and say it with your whole heart: I am the chief of sinners.

Seventh: Thank Him, oh, young people, thank Him, that you are His child, that He showered great, eternal, spiritual, heavenly blessings on you. Praise Him, adore Him, extol Him whose name is Jah!

Finally, pray in the assurance that you are heard. That is the meaning of the Amen at the end of your prayers.

I thank you, young people, for asking me to write for you.

Gerrit Vos
As I wrote the title above, the thought entered my mind that it is quite possible that this title will not fit for very long any more, for we might conceivably lose our name which we have now held for thirty three years. Probably all of you know the circumstances which have arisen in the last two months which have made this entirely possible. Nevertheless, there is no doubt in my own mind that we are still the Protestant Reformed Churches regardless of what may happen to our name. And there is plenty evidence upon which to base this conclusion. Since the time of the split in our churches in 1953, we are the ones who have moved forward, not the ones who have taken steps backward. We have maintained our own Theological School, and are not sending our theological students elsewhere to be instructed. We have continued to broadcast over the Reformed Witness Hour and have expanded this broadcast considerably. We have still our home missionary in the field, and have not reached into another denomination for a missionary. We have continued to send our children to our own Christian Day Schools, and have not sent them back once again to the existing schools. We still maintain the Declaration of Principles which was adopted by the Synod of 1951 and have not discarded this document in order to make our covenant view sweeter to the taste of others. We have not made flattering and hesitant overtures to the Christian Reformed Church in order to make way for returning, and our ministers have not been preaching in Christian Reformed congregations. And yet all these points can be considered rather mild and minor. For all these things do not make a denomination.

But there can be no doubt about it, and it ought to be evident to all who seriously consider the matter, that we continue to maintain the truth as we have distinctively maintained it from the very beginning of our history. This truth we have not corrupted nor changed in the least. For our own satisfaction, we can conclude on the basis of the Word of God and the Confessions of the New Testament Church that we have been faithful. There is nothing that can change that conviction at all. And regardless of what happens to the name therefore, we may be assured that we are the same as we have always been.

If the courts of the land decide that we have no right to the name, it must be on other grounds than these. If we are deprived of our name and our property, it is on the basis of considerations other than the truth and the faithful adherence of our churches to the Church Order. And this is exactly what happened also. It was not considerations with respect to the truth, which the courts cannot and may not decide; it was not on the basis of the Church Order that recent decisions went against us, but the wholly arbitrary and irrelevant consideration of where our continued Synod met in 1954. Risking the danger of having the charge made that we are crying "sour grapes," I am personally very pleased with the fact that we do not have to be considered the continuation of the Protestant Reformed
Churches by virtue of meeting where we should not have met. We could have gone to First Church to meet with the others at that Synod; but that would have placed us in a position where we recognized the right of an unfaithful Stated Clerk to designate the place of meeting. And it would have meant that we would have had to go to a place where we were refused entrance either for meeting on Sundays or for any other purposes. I was present at that meeting in First Church of the “Synod” of the other side. And I recall distinctly that they were certainly not expecting our men there at all as it was testified in court. There were not chairs set up for them; they did not wait with calling the meeting to order to give our men a chance to appear. All this was testified in court, but was not true at all. Besides, they seriously considered seating new delegates, but finally decided not to on the basis of the fact it was a continued Synod. I also recall that there was a “Declaration of Continuation” at that meeting which was drawn up by the Consistory of De Wolf and which had come on the Synod by way of their Classis. I have a copy of this document before me now. This document is divided into four main headings: “Articles of Declaration,” “Reaffirmation of Basis,” “Purpose of the Declaration,” “Resolution.” Under the second of these, there appear three articles, the second of which reads, “The acceptance of the Three Forms of Unity, to wit, the Heidelberg Catechism, The Belgic Confession and the Canons of Dordt, as interpreted and maintained by the Protestant Reformed Churches.” When this particular article was up for discussion and adoption, there was very little discussion on it. When it was about ready to be voted on, then one of the delegates present suddenly suggested that this might conceivably include the Declaration of Principles, which was adopted by the Synod of 1951. It was finally agreed upon that, although they had not realized it, this was indeed the case. One delegate insisted that he would never adopt an article that accepted that document. And this was the general sentiment of the group. Yet they had to adopt it if they were to be the continuation of the Protestant Reformed Churches. And they felt that they could not discard the Declaration of Principles yet, for this was a continued Synod, and it might endanger their position before the courts. They were in an awful dilemma and felt it. Not knowing what to do, they finally decided to adopt the article with the “gentleman’s agreement” that it did not include the Declaration of Principles, and that they would discard that document as soon as feasible. Nothing of this, of course, appeared in the minutes of their meeting. They did not want it to appear. I think it was in their next Synod that they did discard the Declaration of Principles altogether.

All this is sufficient ground upon which to conclude that we are the same as we have always been as churches, and that we are Protestant Reformed. I say this is sufficient grounds for our own convictions. It matters not to me what others may conclude. They may decide that this is not the case, but that is rather immaterial.

The result of all this is, however, that we lose our name and perhaps our property. And the question arises, whether or not it is worthwhile to remain members of our churches which are Protestant Reformed now, but may presently go under some other name. This is a rather important question for our young people, because it is a question which is often raised by others outside our churches. These say that they do not want to be members of such a small church; they see no future in our churches; they do not like so much bickering and fighting; they rather not belong to a group which emphasizes so much its distinctive-ness and doesn’t seek broader contact with other denominations, etc.

My purpose in discussing this is not in order that we may weigh the “pros” and

(Continued on page 9)
The devil and his cohorts center their attack upon those points of the Christian faith that are most vital. If these be successfully undermined the entire structure will fall for, "If the foundations be destroyed, what can the righteous do?" (Psalm 11:3)

One such point that has been subjected to the most malicious attack during the last nineteen centuries is the truth concerning the Divinity of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ. Realizing that the whole Christian faith, with respect to both the judicial and the organic lines of the truth, stands or falls with the doctrine of Christ's Divinity, the enemy has never relented in his vicious assault upon it. In countless ways and in the most subtle manner he has attempted to disprove this fundamental claim of the Christian church.

Very early in the history of the New Dispensation church a false view was developed regarding Christ's Deity. It was taught that the Son in eternity is nothing but the mind of God. He had no distinct personal existence in eternity. He becomes distinct from the Father when He is brought forth as the Word, at the time of, or immediately before creation. The father of this lie was the well-known Arius and the children which it begat are known by various names in later times.

There were those, for example, who taught that the Son is created by the free-will of the Father, before creation, and that He is called God merely because of His exalted office. Thus Milton, Clarke, Whitby, the Remonstrants, and the School of Groningen.

So also did Socinius and his followers embrace this lie and from this sprang up modern Unitarianism. Socinius held that the Father only is God. Christ, the Son, is merely a holy man, supernaturally conceived and born, to reveal a new law, the Father's will. He was crowned with divine glory after He fulfilled His mission in the world.

And so in our present day there are many cults, including the well-known Spiritists, Christian Scientist, every shade of Modernism, and the Russelites (Jehovah's Witnesses) who follow the same pattern by reducing the Son of God to a mere creature such as we are, although they do ascribe to him a high quality of character and righteousness.

Especially the latter, who go about from door to door peddling their damnable heresies to an undiscerning and gullible public, are persistent in their denial of the truth concerning this point. The founder of this cult, Charles Taze Russell, boldly asserts in plain language that "Jesus Christ was the creation of God . . . that He was created a spirit being just as the angels were and that before He came into this world he was none other than the Angel Michael." Further he asserts that Christ, "at the time of His incarnation gave up His spirit being, and that while He walked on earth He was nothing more than a perfect human being." Then he goes on to state: "Neither was Jesus a combination of two natures, human and divine."

Overagainst all this the faithful and true testimony of the Church has been and is: "We believe that Jesus Christ, according to His divine nature, is the only begotten Son of God, begotten from eternity, not made nor created (for then he should be a creature), but co-essential and co-eternal with the Father, the express image of His person.
and the brightness of His glory, equal unto Him in all things. He is the Son of God, not only from the time that he assumed our nature, but from all eternity . . ." (Belgic Confession, Art. 10).

Space, of course, does not permit us to cite the many Scriptures that sustain this testimony of TRUTH! Neither is this necessary. It is taught in clear language and emphasized so frequently on the pages of Holy Writ that to deny it one must indeed be the shrewdest sort of exegetical contortionist. Significant is the condemning testimony of Scripture upon such deniers in I John 2:22, 23, "Who is a liar but he that denieth that Jesus is the Christ? He is antichrist that denieth the Father and the Son. Whosoever denieth the Son hath not the Father, but he that acknowledgeth the Son hath the Father also."

Hence, it is a question of Truth vs. Error. This is not an abstract academic matter nor is it merely a subject for philosophical debate and argumentation. It is fundamentally a matter of faith that is of such serious consequence that whoever brings not this doctrine may not be received in our house neither may we bid him God-speed. Denial of the truth of Christ's Divinity places one in the camp of anti-christ, enemy of God, and inevitably leads to the denial of all the other fundamental truths concerning God and the work of salvation. It must deny the Incarnation and Atonement and leads to out and out autosoterism, salvation through the achievements of man alone. The truth, on the other hand maintains that salvation is entirely of the Lord, revealed and realized through the wondrous work of His grace in the birth and crucifixion of His only begotten Son.

This is also why it is serious error to attempt or pretend to maintain the true confession concerning Christ's Deity while mixing it with all sorts of errors that strip Him of all Divine power and attributes and reduce Him to a pauper or beggar among men. Who impotently seeks and earnestly desires the salvation of all men but can save only those who "accept His offer of grace" and "voluntarily surrender themselves to Him." Such a presentation of Jesus, the Saviour, is common-place in our day but:

a. REMEMBER that such a Jesus is not the Eternal Son, co-equal with the Father and,

b. BE NOT DECEIVED for a mere human Jesus or a Jesus equal only to humanity cannot save for there is also much truth in our concluding quotation from Wm. Biederwolf:

"It's a strange thing how easily people are led astray in religious matters. They'll have good sense in every other way and yet they'll need a commission on sanity to sit on their case when it comes to religion. They'll allow themselves to be roped in and to be duped and bamboozled and hoodwinked by any old sort of a theory as long as it has a few verses of Scripture in it to make it look like it's religious."

But . . . . DON'T YOU!!!!

REV. G. VANDEN BERG

CHRISTIAN LIVING
(Continued from page 7)

"cons," put the evidence for and against on a balance to see once whether or not it is worthwhile, and withhold conclusions on the matter without prejudice until all the evidence is in. My purpose is not to cast doubt upon the advisability of retaining membership in our churches. I am convinced that whatever may happen, this is the only church to which I can belong. But it is well to understand why this is true. It is well to know the basis for this, for there is much evidence which seems to deny this fact. And therefore I would like to discuss this for a little while.

H. HANKO
BIBLE OUTLINE

THE BOOK OF ACTS

The Council at Jerusalem
Chapter 15:1-35

INTRODUCTION

The material of this Section constitutes a sort of interlude in the narrative of the mission labors of the Apostle Paul and of the Antioch Church. And yet it would be a mistake to separate the events narrated here from that mission labor among the Gentiles, or, in fact, from the history of the entire church in apostolic times, or, moreover, from “the things which Jesus continued to do and to teach” after His exaltation and return as the quickening Spirit. It is especially, I think, from this last point of view that the present passage must be considered. In the council of Jerusalem and its decision the Lord Jesus Himself did something very important in and for His church, and was busy teaching them a very important truth, — a truth also of great bearing for the practical life of the church.

This is true, first of all, quite obviously with respect to the saints from among the Gentiles who were being gathered at that time. It was also true for those congregations in Gentile regions in so far as they were constituted of both Jews and Gentiles. This was true, moreover, with regard to the further labors of the church in evangelizing the Gentiles. With respect to all these this particular point in the history of the church is a crucial one. And we may surely observe that it was by no means an accident that this entire question arose shortly after the first missionary journey, but before any further labors were conducted. Since this question was so all-important for the future of the church from among the Gentiles and for the future labors of the gospel among the Gentiles, it had to be decided at once. If it would not be decided, the whole life and labor of the church would be hampered in a most serious manner not only, but the entire church would stand in danger of being divided by a most serious cleavage, and that too, just at the very beginning of its greatest growth.

We may observe, however, in the second place, that the same issue that confronted the council at Jerusalem was equally important for the Jerusalem Church and for all those congregations which were at that time almost entirely of Jewish constituency, who were traditionally more closely connected with the Old Testament ordinances, who lived locally near the temple and its services, and who could not as yet liberate themselves, — at least, not completely, — from the bondage of the law. Also them the Lord was leading and guiding and teaching in the incidents connected with the council at Jerusalem. The principle that the Gentiles had been taught from the beginning through Paul and Barnabas and which evidently had presented to them no problems until some from Jerusalem came and taught the necessity of circumcision was evidently not fully accepted at this time by the Jewish Christians. They still had not let go completely of the Old Testament ordinances, and did not see clearly that Christ had fulfilled the law, the whole law. Hence, they were in need of instruction, and had to be weaned away from their mistaken position, and had to learn to stand in Christian liberty. It was also, therefore, with a view to them that the Lord caused this whole issue to rise in the Antioch Church, caused the council...
Jerusalem to be convened, and through His Holy Spirit caused the Church to come to a decision in which the principle at stake would be clearly decided.

As far as our study of this material is concerned, we call your attention to the fact that in Galatians 2 we undoubtedly find somewhat of a parallel record to that of Acts 15. We advise you to refer to this passage in Galatians. But at the same time we call attention to the fact that the record in Galatians 2 is not entirely parallel: it concerns several factors not mentioned in Acts. And we therefore also caution you to keep in mind that the discussion at present is centered on Acts, not on Galatians.

I. THE DISPUTE: (vss. 1-5)

A. As it arose at Antioch:
1. Who caused this dispute to arise at Antioch? vs. 1.
   a. Were they unconverted Jews or converted Jews?
   b. Is it possible that these men were of the Pharisees? cf. vs. 5.
   c. Were they men authorized by the Jerusalem Church?
2. What was their teaching? vs. 1.
   a. Did this involve merely the rite of circumcision, or more?
   b. How necessary was circumcision, according to their teaching?
   c. Why was this such an important issue?
      (Note: Especially in regard to these questions it would be well to consult the epistle to the Galatians).
3. What was the effect of this new teaching? vs. 2
   a. How is it to explained that this should cause such dissension and dispute?
      1) On the part of the Gentile Christians?
      2) On the part of the Jewish Christians?
      3) Do you think an issue of this kind would have any great practical effect in the life of the congregation? Why?
   b. Who, evidently, were the principal opponents of these Judaizers?
      1) Why was it Paul and Barnabas that opposed them?
      2) Was this an issue of importance to the two missionaries? Why?
      3) Do you think it strengthened or weakened Paul’s position that he was a Jew, and that too, a Pharisee?

B. As it was transferred to Jerusalem:
1. Who were delegated to bring this question to the apostles and elders at Jerusalem? vs. 2
   a. Why was it decided to do this? Was the church at Antioch in doubt? Was not the teaching and authority of Paul and Barnabas sufficient?
   b. Who are meant by “certain other of them”? Why were these sent?
   c. Was this a mixed delegation of those who sided with Paul and those who opposed him?
2. Is it of significance that this delegation was “brought on their way by the church”? vs. 3
3. What did Paul and Barnabas do on the way? Why? vs. 3
4. At Jerusalem: vss. 4, 5.
   a. Is it of significance that Paul, Barnabas, and those with them were received of the church, and of the apostles and elders?
   b. Did Paul and Barnabas at once and directly bring up the issue? What did they do first? Why?
c. Who rose up at Jerusalem to oppose Paul and Barnabas?
   1) Were these men still of the sect of the Pharisees?
   2) Are we to take the notice that they “believed” in the sense that they truly believed, but as believers were victims of a serious misunderstanding and mistake, or in the sense that though they were members of the church they were at heart still Pharisees and legalists?
   3) What did these men contend? Did they insist on two separate conditions, i.e., circumcision and the keeping of the law of Moses, or are these two intimately connected?
   4) How is it to be explained that they took this position in the light of Peter’s experience with Cornelius and in the light of the fact that Peter acquainted the Jerusalem Church with what the Lord had taught him at this time? cf. Acts 10 and 11.

II. THE COUNCIL: (vss. 6-29)
A. Its Membership:
   1. Who made up the membership of this council? vss. 6, 12, 22.
      a. Are we to conceive of this gathering as including the whole Jerusalem Church, apostles, elders, and ordinary members? And did the entire congregation decide this issue in very democratic style?
      b. Or did the decision of this issue rest with the apostles and elders?
      c. If the latter is the case, what is the explanation of the references to the “multitude,” vs. 12, and to the whole church, vs. 23?
   2. What was the nature of this gathering?
      a. It is sometimes called “the first synod.” Is this correct?
      b. Can you point out any important aspects in which this gathering did not partake of the nature of a synod?

(to be continued)  
H.C.H.

NEWS FROM ILLINOIS

On November 1, we, the young people of Oak Lawn and South Holland, sponsored a Reformation Day Mass Meeting for our two congregations. We usually hold mass meetings for our two societies only, but this time it was decided to try something different and invite the whole two congregations.

We had a good turnout; our auditorium was filled.

Several special numbers were given and Rev. Vanden Berg gave a very interesting talk on the topic: The Reformation in our Fatherland.

We all went in the church basement afterwards for refreshments and everyone went home feeling he had spent an enjoyable evening with others.

On December 13, the young people of South Holland got together for a party given by their society president, vice-president, and wives.

Games were played, gifts were picked out of a grab-bag, and a delicious lunch was served by Mrs. H. C. Hoeksema and Mrs. G. A. Van Baren. Our evening closed with the singing of a few Christmas carols.

An enjoyable time was had by all who attended the party.

RUTH POORTENCA  
Regional Staff Reporter
INDIVIDUAL DIFFERENCES

Human beings differ in physique, mental ability, personality, educational achievements, and in all other characteristics. Not only is one man unlike another, but every man is essentially different from every other, so that no training, no forming, nor informing, will ever make two persons alike in thought or in power.

In the field of education the differences are eliminated somewhat by having everyone of the same chronological age begin school at the same time. But a cross-sectional study of children of any given age, however, would show that both the physical ages and the mental ages of a group of children of the same chronological age give indication of a great variation within themselves and between the two. Among seven-year-olds, for example, physical growth status may range from extreme underdevelopment to exceptional overdevelopment, especially in height and weight. Similar variations can be found among seven-year-olds in their relative degree of mental ability, ranging from very low mental status to superior mental acuity. In general, therefore, there appears to be no guarantee that a child at any given chronological age will have reached “normal” stage of growth either physically or mentally.

The teacher has constant experience that the children before him are unequal in all bodily and mental qualities, and that as they grow older these inequalities, far from disappearing, will accentuate themselves.

Some systems disregard the age grouping plan in individual cases and place a child with a group of a younger chronological age in order that his mental maturity level is somewhat the same as that of the younger group. The opposite may be done with a child who has superior mental abilities—place him in the grade ahead. Generally, however, children are grouped according to their chronological age.

And since this is true, the curriculum must be so adjusted as to catch all differences in the net. There is the Winnetka plan. During the time devoted to individual work in the common essentials every child does his own job. If one steps into a “fourth-grade room” for example, he may find each child doing a different thing. One is just finishing third-grade arithmetic, another has begun compound multiplication, another is in the middle of long division, while still another may be beginning fifth-grade work in fractions. A child may be doing fourth-grade arithmetic during one period, but a few minutes later, in the same room, be doing fifth-grade reading.

However, this system is too individual and too concerned with subject matter and not enough with the child as a personality. For grades one through six the “unit-of-work program” is a way for handling inequalities. It accommodates the differences in working speed, way youngsters learn, their readiness, willingness, intelligence, and interest. This “unit-of-work program” follows a pattern consisting of these four steps: orientation, planning period, working period and culmination of activities. It includes the three steps in learning: readiness, exercise, and effect. To execute a successful unit takes careful planning on the part of the teacher, wide general knowledge resulting from a first-class general education, and an understanding of the needs of each child in all
the different phases of learning which are: language experiences, as well as social, number, scientific, healthful, creative, and most of all religious experiences. This integrated curriculum program rids the class-

room of the lock step, teacher imposed method and instead provides for the individual variations that do exist.

THE TEACHING OF READING

The ultimate purpose in teaching of reading as in every other subject is to glorify God and learn more about Him and His Creation. It is the duty of every Christian to seek to comprehend more and more of God's General Revelation. Through reading, the child is also enabled to live intelligently and with pleasure in our complex civilization.

The importance of reading is apparent everywhere. In everyday life, one must be able to read in order to meet the demands of society. One must read about the background of political candidates in order to vote intelligently. Daily routine activities could not be carried out without being able to read. Driving along the highway, one must be able to read the signs in order to know how to drive safely and according to the law. Recreational activities also require reading ability. Even the oft-reproached pastime of watching TV requires some reading ability for full enjoyment. And most important, religious activities require much reading on our part. Daily searching of the Scriptures, study of Bible commentaries, and reading of the many church papers are all important for the wide-awake, sincere Christian.

In the school, too, reading is all important. Reading is the means through which the social heritage is transmitted. By reading about the past, the student begins to understand what his predecessors have done and what they have contributed to his present way of life. A sound reading ability is also needed for proper use of textbooks. The student must have a broad reading vocabulary in order to grasp the meaning of the author and to know how to read textbooks.

Proper study habits can be developed and maintained only through good reading ability.

Today there is much concern about children who lack reading ability and enthusiasm. Rudolph Flesch, in his recent book—"Why Johnny Can't Read," has done much to increase this concern. It is a question however, as to how much of this is actually true. How much better were the children of thirty years ago able to read than today's children? How much better can you read than your child? How much better a reader is your father or mother than you? Actual tests have shown that children today read more than children did thirty years ago.

Perhaps the busy life and the numerous possible activities of today account for some of the apparent lack of reading time. There are so many sports to watch, so many meetings to attend, so many programs to plan that one finds it difficult to take time out for reading.

On the other hand, today there are many good books available to everyone. And endless amount of good books can be obtained at no cost from the local library. Paper-back editions make it possible for almost everyone to own many of the great works of literature. The increased number of people attending the colleges in our land shows that not only the books are available, but also the guidance under which to read them.

In order to begin to teach a child to read, he must have attained a certain amount of readiness. He must have reached a mental age of approximately 6.6 years. He must also have attained a certain amount of emotional maturity, shown in the wa
The re-acts to the school situation. As far as intellectual development is concerned, the child must be able to do some abstract thinking, be able to see likenesses and differences in words, and be able to remember word forms. Kindergarten is an important place for these abilities to be developed. The home can also help by giving the child a rich and varied experience in many fields. They can also help by clear pronunciation and the use of correct grammar.

Before the child is taught to attack words through various methods he must first have developed a basic sight vocabulary. This is the group of words which he will memorize and recognize immediately at sight and not have to sound them out each time he meets them. He recognizes these words because of their general shape, the length of the words, its striking characteristics (like double letters, etc.), by seeing known parts within words, and in many other ways. Some teachers prefer to develop this sight vocabulary independently of books, while others use the book to teach the sight vocabulary.

There are several general methods of word attack or identification. Some words can be identified by reading the rest of the sentence or paragraph in which it is found. Of course, this is not always accurate, since many words have similar meanings. Picture analysis, that is, looking at the picture and discovering what the strange word is, can also be used, but is again not always accurate or possible since not all books contain pictures. Phonetic analysis is one of the most popular methods of word attack. The child sounds out the parts of the word, and by combining the sound finds out the new word. This works only for those who have an adequate sense of sounds and functions only for those words which are pronounced as they are spelled. It is important to remember at this point that no one method will work for every teacher or every student. It is up to the teacher to decide which method will work best for her student and to make the best use of this method.

A reading lesson in the lower grades usually follows the same general pattern. The teacher begins by introducing the new words, usually trying to get the children to sound them out and perhaps find out what the word is for themselves. Then a short drill follows, usually a flash card game, consisting of old words as well as the new ones. This is followed by an introduction, in which the teacher seeks to motivate interest in the story, for the day. The children then read the story, first silently and then orally. The children do some of their reading in groups which are arranged according to ability, called "reading circles." This eliminates the extreme differences between readers and allows for more even competition in games.

As the child grows older, there is less emphasis laid on word drill and more emphasis on story content. Reading is no longer to be restricted to the textbook but is to be extended into various areas of interest and study. Instruction should also be aimed at developing good reading habits and attitudes.

Through all the phases of reading instruction the teacher must continue to impress her student through her attitude and example that reading is a gift of God and is to be used only to His honor and glory.

Thelma Pastoor

Recent Contributions
Gratefully Acknowledged

Reformation Day Singspiration
Doon - Hull ..................... $18.00
Doon Prot. Reformed Church .... 14.60
Mrs. N. Yonker .................. 2.00
Holland Prot. Reformed Church ... 24.20
Hope Prot. Reformed Church ..... 50.00
Hope - Singspiration ............ 33.22
Men's Society - First Church .... 9.00
Choral Society of Prot. Ref. Churches of North West Iowa ............ 25.15
Henry J. Holstege ............... 2.00
DANCING

You may be surprised to find an article on this topic in our Young People’s magazine, but the question: Can we as Christian young people participate in some forms of dancing for recreation? is in the minds of many people today. For this reason, dear reader, we have decided to discuss the problem.

I had the opportunity to listen to a pro-con discussion on this question. I will tell you in part what was said there and perhaps we can come to some conclusion on the matter.

Those speaking in favor of the question pointed out: 1) that according to Phil. 4:5 we can engage in dancing to a moderate degree, just as we show moderation in other things. 2) Dancing is something we, as Christians, have been afraid to indulge in, but by doing so would be a good way to squelch the curiosity young people have concerning this activity. 3) Dancing would be a means to fulfill the recreational needs of young people – inactivity isn’t good. 4) Dancing serves to develop the whole person, the physical as well as the mental. 5) Dancing, when kept in proper bounds, and channeled in the proper direction can be a very worthwhile recreation.

The affirmative also raised some questions: 1) What does it really mean to be a separate people? 2) What does it mean to be in the world, but not of the world? 3) Is there perhaps just a stigma connected with the word dancing which makes us think it so evil?

The negative set out to prove the wrong in engaging in such recreation. I believe their strongest point was that the so-called harmless dance definitely leads to other forms of dancing which in the end would find us walking hand and hand with the world. They also pointed out that dancing is intoxicating; once you indulge in it, it may be difficult to stop, and so becomes habitual. The physical advantages derived from dancing can be obtained by the Christian in other, more healthy forms of exercise and recreation. The Christian is in the world, but not of it; he cannot engage in this activity and think it right merely because it is performed by a Christian. These actions are sinful for the Christian also.

Now, dear reader, let us ask ourselves the question. To find our answer let us turn to the Word of God – the Scriptures. Are not these given to us of God and do we not find a guide for our walk of life therein? In II Cor. 6:16b and 17 we read: “... will be their God and they shall be my people. Wherefore come out from among them, and be ye separate, saith the Lord...” And in Eph. 5:1, “Be ye therefore followers of God, as dear children.” Also verse 8: “For ye were sometimes darkness, but now are ye light in the Lord, walk as children of light.”

Can we do both? Can we walk as children of light, and also on the other hand join with the world in their recreation? Can we serve God and mammon?

What do you think, dear reader? Can some form of dancing serve a legitimate place in the Christian’s recreation?

RUTH DYKSTRA