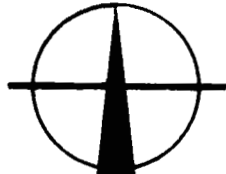


BEACON LIGHTS

*FOR PROTESTANT
REFORMED YOUTH*



October 1969

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ISSUE

THE 1969 P. R.
YOUNG PEOPLE'S
CONVENTION



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“Whom Say Ye That I Am”

editor's note

We wish to welcome Mr. Marvin Kamps as our new associate editor. His first editorial appears in this issue. We wish him the Lord's blessing in his labor's among us.

When this article appears or shortly thereafter, your church bulletins will carry an announcement to the effect: “Anyone desirous of making public confession of his or her faith must contact the consistory. . . .” Have you been thinking about it? You should be!

When considering whether or not to make public confession of our faith, we must not allow mere custom and tradition to be the deciding factor. Frequently it seems, we have the idea that if we are not yet in our late teens it would be presumptuous and bold on our part to make public confession of faith; or if we are nearly twenty or even in our twenties and still have not made public confession of faith, we feel compelled by tradition to do so. These considerations and all other like thoughts we must, of course, ignore. To make public confession of faith is deeply spiritual, therefore, only those thoughts that are of a truly spiritual character may guide us in making our decision.

One may ask the question, isn't public confession of faith a strictly personal matter between the believer and Christ? And, therefore, not a proper subject to write about or to discuss publicly! We can agree with this only to a point; but remember, we are not discussing our personal confession as such, but rather our public confession witnessed by all God's people in the local Church. Our public confession, therefore, has some very serious ramifications to which we ought to give prayerful consideration.

What does it mean to make public confession of faith? Usually we give the following answer; firstly, it means that we acknowledge that we are wretched and miserable sinners in ourselves. Secondly, we acknowledge that Christ has died for us, thereby, covering our sins with His blood and imputing His righteousness to us. And, thirdly, since we are in Christ righteous, we lay claim to all the benefits of salvation. Right here we generally stop listing what it means to make public confession of faith in Christ. This is a serious error. Not that we have answered wrongly, but we have not given a complete answer.

We must not forget that that which we are about to make is a *public* confession of faith. By public confession of faith we become responsible members in a definite communion of believers in a federation of churches. Consequently, we should consider the following aspects of our public confession. Further, it means in the first place, that we covet the fellowship and the unity that believers have in Christ. That we are willing always to suppress our petty personal differences. That we will strive to walk godly in this present world, in order that the unity of the faith which the church expresses may be preserved. Let us not forget that sin *always* has a disruptive power and destroys the fellowship that believers have in Christ. We must be very conscious of this fact, otherwise untold misery awaits us as individuals not only, but also as churches. Secondly, public confession of faith means that we will submit to the rule and government of our officebearers, officebearers who have been called to the office by the Church of Christ and even by Christ Himself. We should carefully reflect upon this aspect of our public confession, for we live in a day when open rebellion and disregard for authority is the order of the day. Third-

ly, our public confession means that we intelligently and willingly accept the "Confessions" of our churches as the purest and complete doctrinal expression of the teachings of the Scriptures. The Holy Scriptures are the sole rule for our lives, and our "Reformed Confessions" are systematic formulations of the teachings or doctrines of Scripture, and therefore must be honored by us all. This is frequently disregarded by those who make public confession of faith in our churches. Soon after they have made public confession of faith they leave us and join another denomination.

Don't think of these things lightly, for it is in the doctrines or dogmas of our churches that you will find the direction and guidance to walk acceptably before God.

Let not these thoughts frighten you, however, for your strength is from on high through the grace of God. You will find that the way of the believer is extremely difficult, yet it is blessed. Find your delight in this promise; "Whosoever therefore shall confess me before men, him will I confess also before my Father which is in heaven."

M.K.

THE 1969 P. R. YOUNG PEOPLE'S CONVENTION

BETH WESTRA

Plans for the 1969 Protestant Reformed Young People's convention started almost before the 1968 convention ended. Our people in Redlands started working right away. Soon the other churches started raising money for part of the conventioners' expenses. The pre-convention projects themselves set up an atmosphere of togetherness and promoted unity among us young people. Although the anticipation was great, the actual event was greater.

For many of us, the "event" started early Wednesday morning, on the thirteenth of August. We were driven to Chicago's O'Hare Airport by parents or friends. At about 11:00 a. m., we boarded the chartered plane, a Boeing 707 jet. About half an hour later we took off, accompanied by the prayers of our relatives and friends.

En route we were served a delicious meal while we enjoyed the scenery. Flying over the states took a good three hours and twenty minutes. We were welcomed in Ontario International Airport by members of the Redlands society, and other conventioners who had driven to California. Indeed, the welcome was warm in more ways than one, but the 116 degree heat wasn't foremost in our minds as we waited for our luggage.

After placing our luggage near the waiting campers, we boarded busses for the ride to Redlands. Once in Redlands, we rode to Sylvan Park, where we registered and received lodging assignments. (I don't know how the lady in charge of lodging got us all

situated so fast!) After punch and cookies we left for our new homes.

Late in the afternoon we conventioners were brought to Hidden Valley, a small resort with a very cooling lake.

The next morning we went to Redlands Protestant Reformed Church for a business meeting. At this meeting, dues were again set at ten dollars per member. The BEACON LIGHTS staff was given a set quorum, and the Hudsonville society was split into Junior and Senior societies. At that time, a lot of the P.R.Y.P. Federation's constitution was revised for the sake of better wording.

A new federation board office was created, that of "Youth Coordinator." He is a lay member of one of our churches who works with the young people more closely than our advisors have time for. However, we still do have advisors, and their role isn't decreased.

The suggested rearrangement of the finance section brought the most fireworks on the convention floor. The wording is now changed to be very precise about expenses of the board, particularly about convention traveling expenses.

I suspect that now the individual societies will take a more active interest in federation affairs. Maybe now we'll all realize that this is our federation. It can't exist without us, and we do have a voice in its activities. Unfortunately, "the voices" meet only once a year, so if your society feels that something should be done, the business meeting is the time to air your thoughts.

Please remember that the executive board would like to know of any business you have by June, so that it can be printed on the agenda for the next convention. However, business meetings are opened to new business every now and then during the meetings.

Anyway, after our first business meeting adjourned, we walked to Sylvan Park for lunch, games, and discussion groups. The main topic of discussion was "The Christian and Politics." Some subtopics were: A possible Christian Party, Women Voting, and Conscientious Objectors.

After a supper at our respective homes, the theme of the convention, "The Greatest of These" (I Corinthians 13), began to take shape. Reverend Heys spoke at the first mass meeting on the topic of "Love, The Greatest Virtue." He explained various aspects of love, but still left plenty of room for the other speakers. His speech is printed in this issue.

The next day, Friday, we rode busses to Jenx Lake, which is about six miles above sea level in the mountains just outside of Redlands. After lunch we again split up into discussion groups. This time the general topic was "Dating." We shared our ideas on such things as double-dating, going steady, petting, mixed marriages, and more related subjects.

That night we had our convention picture taken and went to another mass meeting. Reverend Decker spoke to us on the topic of "Love, The Strongest Bond." This speech is also printed in this issue.

Then came Saturday, the day about which we had been warned. Saturday was the day to visit the Pacific (so named on account of its peaceful waters?). The number one thing to beware was the sun. We were told to have plenty of suntan lotion, and to cover up every now and then. The second item, just as important as the first, was to beware of the rip-tides. I never found out for sure what a rip-tide was, but I did keep an eye out for extra-huge waves. One unscheduled event kept us occupied there at Huntington City Park. That was a group of hippies gathered to give their personal testimonies of their new lives in Christ to anyone who would listen. They wouldn't let any of us conventioners tell them of our religion. They just talked about theirs, and wouldn't

let us get a word in edgewise. Apparently we shouldn't have tried, because even our ministers stayed out of any prospective discussions.

Sunday morning services were held in the University of Redlands' chapel. Reverend Decker spoke to us about witnessing. That afternoon the P.R.Y.P. gathered at the chapel again for a panel-audience discussion about witnessing and missions. The topic of the hippies on the beach was brought up. Do we or should we testify of our faith as they did theirs? The possibility of Protestant Reformed Young People working in Jamaica was also brought up for discussion. Sunday night services were conducted by Rev. Heys, who spoke on the faith of the Syro-Phoenician woman. After church we had a hymnsing.

Monday morning started out with the traditional pancake breakfast, held at the university cafeteria. A business meeting followed, in which election of officers was held. Then we had lunch in Sylvan Park. In the annual ball games, the gals and guys of the East beat those of the West.

The banquet that night was held in the Casa Loma Room of the University under the theme "California Dreaming." Reverend Lanting spoke to us about "Love, The Highest Calling." It seemed reassuring to find that born-again Christians don't always know exactly what to do in all earthly situations. We should be concerned about our role in politics, in dating, and in witnessing. His speech will be printed in our November issue, D.V.

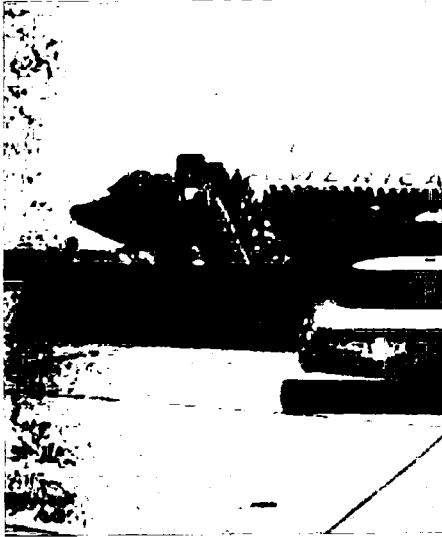
The new officers were presented: Randy Meyer as president, Ken Kuiper as vice president, Jim VanOverloop as treasurer, Dave Lanting as vice treasurer, Linda Ekema as secretary, Rev. Korterling as advisor, and Mr. Nort Brower as youth coordinator. With the singing of "God Be With You," the formal convention came to a close.

Wednesday the nineteenth was a "free" day. Most of the conventioners chose to visit Disneyland. We spent about eight hours in the "magic kingdom," taking various rides and buying souvenirs. After a two-hour ride back to Redlands, a lot of weary conventioners stumbled back to their homes or dorm rooms.

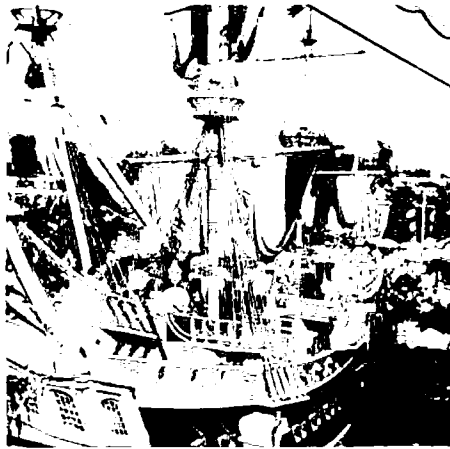
The twentieth of August was a sad day

for us. We had made a lot of friends among the Redlands people, and didn't really want to leave our hosts. I'd like to thank them once again now, particularly Reverend Hanko, who tried awfully hard, and made

his own dream come true. Most of all, though, we should thank God for making this past convention a spiritual success, for we know that without Him, we can do nothing.







CONVENTION SPEECHES

DEAR READER, *It has become traditional to publish the convention speeches in our post-convention issue for the benefit of all our readers. The first two speeches are presented below.*

EDITOR

LOVE: The Greatest of These THE GREATEST VIRTUE

REV. JOHN A. HEYS

Covenant Young People of our Protestant Reformed Churches, and parents and friends of these Young People:

Let me at the outset tonight speak a word of commendation to you young people for your courage, your zeal and enthusiasm, and your willingness and readiness to work hard, when there is a call for it. Let me then commend the Redlands Society for its courage in accepting the role of being host to this convention and in inviting us all to Redlands. Your resources are very limited as far as lodging is concerned; and you are hundreds of miles from the closest Protestant Reformed church. And yet you, invited us from Washington and Colorado, from the Dakotas and Minnesota, from Iowa and Wisconsin, from Illinois and even Michigan. It took courage to do this and likewise real enthusiasm and hard work to keep at it till now when you are ready for the convention. Our hats are off to you, because what last August was only a dream is now a pleasant reality.

Let me also commend the Federation Board for its courage, enthusiasm and real hard work. Here we have a group of unmarried young people whose financial experiences are yet quite limited, and who never had too many hundreds of dollars pass through their hands as that which they earned and spent carefully and wisely for needs. And yet they go and charter a *million dollar* fan-jet plane to bring 150 of us over here! I do not know . . . ! I do not know what to say. I do not believe that in the church there is a *spiritual* generation gap. But when I think of what the generation to which I belong had courage to do along these lines with Young People's Outings and conventions, then it takes a good deal of my breath away. And we in Michigan do know all the enthusiasm that this Board displayed and the hard work which they performed so

that we all could be here tonight for this inspirational mass meeting and for the whole convention.

In fact all of you are to be commended for your courage to plan on attending a convention down here in California, and for your enthusiasm and hard work required to make you part with as well as earn the money for such a trip so far away from home and so expensive for you. It was indeed a big venture; and all of you are to be commended for your courage, zeal, enthusiasm and hard work performed to bring you here tonight.

I do want to say something about this, however, before I get into my speech. Let it be uppermost in your minds that although we may speak a word of commendation to each other and encourage one another, when we have striven and shown such courage and zeal, the praise must *always* be God's. Without His blessing you could not have succeeded. In fact He could have turned this whole convention into a disaster. Let us, therefore, now and throughout the entire convention render to Him the praise due to His name for all His mercy upon us. What is more, all these, courage, zeal, enthusiasm, willingness and readiness to work are good. But remember that these must always be exercised first and last for the kingdom of God. All our talents, all our abilities must be dedicated to Him Who gave them to us. And I know, this convention is not a carnal, worldly get-together for the flesh. It is for our spiritual well-being; and therefore we ought to remember that all through the convention.

And now I want to say something yet to the host society and to all of you gathered here. Although this convention has just begun; and there are more hours to come than have been spent, and more days of this convention ahead than are behind, I want

to tell you all that now already we can say that this convention is the *greatest!* It is. It is held in the greatest State in the union, that is, the greatest in length, reaching from the southeast corner at the Mexican border in a straight line to the northwest corner at the Oregon line, some 900 miles of California soil! It is also the greatest because gathered here tonight is the assembly of some of the greatest young people in the world today, the covenant young people with the richest and greatest heritage of truth that any group of young people ever had before. There is a constant development of the truth and a clearer and clearer conception of that truth. And you live in the day of the greatest development of the truth that this world has ever seen. Appreciate that fact. Further, the theme of this convention is the greatest, in fact it is literally, *The Greatest of These*. And I have been asked to speak to you under the subdivision, *The Greatest Virtue*. To do so I like to call your attention first of all to the group in which love is the greatest. We all understand from the chapter which was read a moment ago that Paul is speaking here of love — which is a better translation than our word charity. In verse 13 of this chapter Paul says that now abide these three, faith, hope and love. And I call your attention then to these three as an ever-abiding triad. Then I would zero in on this greatest of these, namely, love, and call your attention to the fact that Paul calls it “the more excellent way” in the last verse of chapter twelve. And then we can come to the point where we can show you why love is this greatest virtue, or, if you will, why it is the superior gift.

I. An Ever-abiding Triad

It is well for us to bear in mind that in the preceding chapter, chapter 12, Paul is speaking of the special spiritual gifts which God gives to some in the church. These he mentions in verses 4-11. And they fall into two categories. There are offices in the church which God gives to some; and there are powers of abilities which He bestows upon some. These latter gifts are those of knowledge, wisdom, healing, working of miracles, prophecy, discerning of spirits, speaking with tongues and interpreting tongues. Now the point I want to make is

that God gives these only to some. Thus we read that “to the one” He gives this power by the Spirit, and “to another” He gives this other ability. This He does sovereignly, for verse 11 says that He does this “as He will.” But it ought to be very obvious to all of us tonight that these gifts are special. How many of us here tonight have the gift of an office in God’s church? None of you young people have one yet; and many of you never will receive that gift. Is there any one of us that has the gift of healing? How many of us — if indeed there be even one — has the gift of speaking in tongues? No, these are special spiritual gifts which God gives only to some and at certain times for the well-being of His Church.

But now in chapter 13 Paul speaks of spiritual gifts which God gives to every single one of His children; and which He has been pleased to give to every single one of you reborn, converted young people of His kingdom. These gifts are faith, hope and love. And I would like to call them a set of triplets. I do that because they are all three born in us the same day and by the same Parent. The moment we are reborn, the moment we receive the life of Christ in us, we have all three of these powers in us, even as the roots, the trunk and the leaves of the oak tree are all in that acorn. We do not receive faith first, then hope and finally love. They are all given in the moment of our rebirth. None of us has only one or lacks one while having the others. All who have faith, have hope and love as well. They are not identical triplets, for love is the tallest (the greatest of these), but they surely are “blood brothers,” having as we said the one Parent, our Father Who is in Heaven. And Paul mentions them elsewhere in his epistles as being found in every child of God. Thus we find these together in I Thessalonians 1:3 and 5:8, and again in Colossians 1:4 and 5.

I cannot go into detail on all of these, but I do want to make just a few remarks about each in order that we may see why love is the greatest. Faith, according to the Heidelberg Catechism is a certain knowledge and hearty confidence. We may also say that although knowledge is an essential part of faith, the chief idea in faith is that of confidence or trust in God. If you believe in God, you trust Him. Hope, we may say, is

an expectant longing. It is not wishing, even though it has in common with wishing a desire or longing. But hope is always an expectant longing. It is longing for that which we are sure that we shall receive because the Almighty and Unchangeable God has promised it. Love is called the strongest emotion in man and has many aspects such as mercy, grace, longsuffering and the like.

And at this point I want to emphasize that all three of these abide forever and will be found in us in the new Jerusalem. There are some wierd ideas as to why love is the greatest. There is one that claims that faith and hope are means to bring us to love. And if that is true, then love is the greatest because it outlasts the others, it is greater in length of time that we have it. For means are always discarded when the goal is reached. The plane which we used as means to get to Ontario we left there. The cars we used to get here at this meeting we left behind. So, if faith and hope are nothing more than means to bring us to love, we will not need faith and hope once our love is perfect in the new Jerusalem. And then love is the greatest because it is forever, while faith and hope are temporary.

There is another incorrect idea that states that love is greater than hope and faith, because it is the only one of these three that is found in God. This certainly is not true, even though it may be granted that Scripture says that God is love and does not say that He is faith and hope. But God certainly has faith. He believes *in Himself*. And talk about a certain knowledge and a hearty confidence! You certainly find these in God. And where will you find one who expects more perfectly that which He desires? Consider even the alternatives. If God has no faith, He has unbelief, doubt, uncertainty. If God has no hope, He has despair. How could we ever dare to take such a position?

Nay, all three of these abide forever in God but also in His people. It is true that in us faith, hope and love will undergo some change, but they surely will abide forever in God's people. Paul points out, in the verses that just precede the statement that *love is the greatest of these*, that we shall see face to face and not know only in part,

as now we do. This certainly will effect our faith, our hope and also our love.

Let me simply point out to you that Paul says it in so many words that these three *abide*. The word "now" does not mean that these three abide now, at this time, and not pretty soon. Instead Paul says, "Now, at this time, I want you to understand that faith, hope and love abide for all time and into the everlasting life of the new Jerusalem." How else shall we explain the cry of the souls under the altar in Revelation 6? Without faith and hope they could not cry for the day of Christ to come. And try once to visualize what the alternative again would be for us. If we do not have faith in God, and have not trust and confidence in Him in the new Jerusalem, we have unbelief, distrust and lack of confidence. Is that possible? If there we do not have hope, we have despair; and how could that be heaven and glory? Nay these shall be full and perfect and be ours to enjoy, and through them to enjoy our salvation forever and forever.

II. A More Excellent Way

Looking more carefully now at this love, which is the greatest of these, I would point out that Paul calls it the "more excellent way" in the last verse of the twelfth chapter. And although I must say something more then about this love, I want to be careful not to trespass on the territory assigned to the other two speakers. Yet I must point out here that by love in the entire chapter Paul has in mind love for or towards God. He is not thinking of a natural love which the creature may have for the creature. This is a matter of the emotions. It is found not only in the unbeliever but also in the beasts of the field. And it is that which makes Valentine's Day such a commercial success. This Paul cannot mean here in I Corinthians 13. Try it out once: "Love to man is greater than faith and hope in God." That certainly is not telling it as it is. In no instance in the whole chapter ought we to read the word love that way, as though that is all that it said. Instead we must read each and every time, "and love not God" or "Love to God is. . . ." Try that out once. "Though I speak with the tongues of men and of angels, and have not *love to God*, I am become as sounding brass, or a tinkling cymbal." Go now to verse 3 and you will

see that this is the truth of the matter. "And though I bestow all my goods to feed the poor (that is, if I show this natural love to the neighbour), and though I (in that natural love of the emotions of the flesh) give my body to be burned, and have not love to God, it profiteth me nothing." Let me in parenthesis here point out to you young people that here indeed is the vital point of difference between us and so very many churches that claim to hold to the Reformed Faith. Denying total depravity the churches that put us outside of their fellowship in 1924 have since then maintained a certain "common grace" of God which so restrains sin in the heart of the sinner without regenerating him that he can perform works of "*civic righteousness*." Paul certainly does not agree with that! He says that if we do what seems good in man's eyes, God still calls it unrighteousness. There is no profit in it. It is not anything for which God will give a blessing. It is not righteousness, that is, is not anything that God calls right according to His law.

And now to return to what we began to say, in the verses 4-8, once again, we are to read, "Love towards God suffereth long and is kind, envieth not. . . ." Look once at verses 6 and 7. Certainly natural love of man for man does rejoice in iniquity. Hollywood's lovers rejoice in iniquity and plot it together. The natural love of man for man does not believe all things and hope all things and endure all things. That would have been the case, if we had not fallen into sin. Adam and Eve had that kind of love for each other. But today it is absolutely impossible for the man who has only natural love to believe all things, hope all things and endure all things.

Of course there is an aspect of that love towards God that causes us to love men and to deal kindly with them. The love that causes us to keep the first table of the law leads us to keep the second table as well. Let me point out, however, that the love of which Paul speaks in chapter 13, is a matter of the will and not the emotions, or the feelings. This is so because our love to or for God is nothing else than His own love for Himself, which He has shed abroad in our hearts. God causes us to love Himself, and by doing so He causes us to love the neighbour for His sake. For love always

seeks to please the object of that love. And when the love for God has been instilled in our hearts, then we want to do His will, for there is no other way to please Him. And we will want for the neighbour — no matter what a miserable character he may be — what God wants for him. We will not dishonor him when God has honored him with an office over us. We will not take away the life that God is pleased to give. We will not defile him, take his possessions away, say about him what God does not want us to say about him, or covet anything that God has been pleased to give to him. But the point is that unless we have this love for God, we will not seek to deal with the neighbour as God wants him to be treated by us.

That is why Paul calls love "the more excellent way." There can be no doubt about the fact that this is the relation between these two chapters of I Corinthians 12 and 13. Chapter 12 ends with an exhortation to covet the best gifts: because we always covet the more glamorous. In this instance, in the church at Corinth there was a striving for the gift of speaking with tongues. Such a gift would make a big impression upon people. To be able to do that was considered quite an achievement. It was far more glamorous than the work of patient teaching. But Paul says, "No, if you are going to covet one of these special gifts, then covet the best, namely prophecy, that is teaching (He says that in Chapter 14:1). And yet I will show you something more excellent than that. Pray God that you may have love towards Him." And then he devotes a whole chapter to this more excellent way.

O, the idea is not that we cannot serve God with the gift of tongues, or with the gift of prophecy. He surely does not mean that we cannot serve God in the offices to which He calls us. But he does mean that there is a more excellent way to serve God and a more excellent way to covet. Covet love for your God. For without love you certainly cannot serve Him in the office or with tongues or interpretation of tongues, or with prophecy, or with healing or working of miracles. Love is the special ingredient that enables us to use all the creatures of this earth in all our deeds in a way that pleases God.

III. A Vastly Superior Gift

This quite naturally brings us to the underlying question in that phase of this Convention's theme which has been assigned to me. Why is love a greater virtue than faith and hope? If love is the more excellent way to serve God than these special gifts in the church, why is it greater than faith and hope? It is suggested by some that this is due to the very nature of love, because love is outward in its activity, while faith and hope by virtue of their natures are always inward in their activities. Through faith and hope we always benefit ourselves. These bring to us peace, confidence, contentment, a warm feeling that all is well. They do not benefit anyone but the one who possesses them. But love always benefits the object of that love. Love always serves the one whom we love. And if we love God, we will serve Him by serving the neighbour for His sake. Love has a farther outreach in its activities.

Now I will not deny that all this is true. It is quite in harmony with the whole sentiment of the two chapters. It explains why Paul urges us to covet the best gifts and then shows us a more excellent way. But I do not believe that this is the basic reason why love is greater than faith and hope.

Rather must we understand that love is that which gives our faith and hope their spiritual, ethical value. Our faith and hope depend upon love to be the faith and hope that is pleasing in God's sight. Let us remember that all men have faith and hope. All men are believers. James tells us that the devil is a believer. He says in James 2:19, "Thou believest that there is one God; thou doest well; the devils also believe and tremble." But there surely is no virtue in that faith of the devils. Satan and his host keep on trying to destroy the Church of Christ and they hope to succeed. And they keep on trying exactly because they have some hope that they will succeed. Is there any virtue in that hope? And thus it is with those whom we call unbelievers. They have faith; even though we call them unbelievers because they do not have faith *in Christ*. They have hope, but they do not hope for the blessings promised in Christ. What virtue is there then in this faith and in this hope?

Yea, these will testify against them in the day of days. But what makes our faith and our hope virtues is this greatest virtue of all, love toward God.

Turn now to verse 7 of this chapter and you will see this truth. Paul says that love believeth all things, hopeth all things. The love of God, working in that area of our souls wherewith we believe, causes us to believe *in* God as He has revealed Himself in Christ as the God of our salvation. The love of God, functioning in that sphere of our souls wherewith we hope, causes us to hope for the blessings promised us in Christ. And very plainly, then, without love we cannot call faith and hope virtues. These become virtues only because of that virtue of love. Therefore love is the greatest of these and is the greatest virtue.

And it is exactly because of this truth that we come to the heart of the very matter, and that we can see that love is the greatest of these. It is this: Love makes us like God again! God *is* love; and the love of God shed abroad in our hearts makes us like Him once again! I say, once again, because we were created in His image to reflect in a creaturely way His virtues. The likeness is not physical, for God is a Spirit. But when Adam was yet in his state of righteousness the virtues of God's knowledge, righteousness and holiness shown forth in all that which he said and did.

Before he fell Adam had in his spiritual arteries and veins the love of God. This love of God his heart pumped through his whole being, nourishing every cell and area of his body and soul. That love, nourishing that area of his soul wherewith he believed, caused him to have faith in God as his God and as God alone. That love, nourishing that area of his soul wherewith he hoped, caused him to long and expectantly look for a continuation of the covenant fellowship which he was enjoying with God. As a result he had a walk in harmony with that faith and hope. And you saw God's work of righteousness and holiness in Adam's conduct and behaviour.

But you know the story. Satan managed by means of the lie to begin a blood transfusion in us whereby all that love of God was drained out, and in its place hatred towards God flowed in to feed our whole

spiritual being. By means of the lie Satan did manage to get us to hate God. Envy, greed are the root of hatred. And now in place of that faith in God came suspicion, distrust, denial of His goodness. Our hope for His covenant fellowship was turned into hope for the impossible: To be like God essentially so that we could decide for ourselves what is good and what is evil. And the result is today — and I say it reverently — we look like the devil. Today the veneer is rapidly being torn off and in all the rioting and looting, war and brutality, sexual immorality and open defiance of God in every department of life and in every sphere of our lives indicates our spiritual parent to be Satan rather than God.

But now when God through His regenerating grace sheds abroad His love again in our hearts, our faith again becomes trust and confidence in God, and our hope becomes a confident longing for life with Him in the new Jerusalem. With the new birth comes new spiritual blood: The love of God. Now our faith and hope are richer, because now we have the love of God in Christ. Adam loved God before he fell. We love Him more richly because of His love manifested in the cross of Christ. And that richer blood makes us more like God than Adam was in his state of righteousness. For we are recreated in the image of Christ.

Talk then about a vastly superior gift! Faith and hope are precious gifts from God. An office in His Church is a gift to be appreciated. To have the gift of prophecy, of healings, of speaking or interpreting tongues are not to be despised. But the gift of love in our hearts makes all these so wonderful, and make it possible for us to serve God consciously and willingly with these other gifts. When the sub-topic, "The Greatest Virtue" was assigned to me, I was puzzled for a few moments. That love is a virtue was plain to me. But to call faith and hope virtues did not seem right. Faith and hope are activities. They are wonderful gifts of God's grace. Yet the designation, "The Greatest Virtue" under the title, "The Greatest of These" means that we also call these lesser ones virtues. And the solution is exactly there: Love causes the child of God's faith and hope to be virtues. The faith and hope of the unregenerated are nothing more than vices. Truly, then, of

these three love is the greatest virtue. And love is the vastly superior gift. Yes, we will need more than love. We will also need faith and hope; but love is the vastly superior gift of God's love that makes these other gifts of faith and hope to be virtues.

Now our appearance is different. We no longer look like the devil. We look like God. We look like God's only begotten Son. And then we also look upon all things in an entirely different way. The other two speakers will call your attention to this when they speak to you of, "The Strongest Bond" and "The Highest Calling." That love of God in our hearts will make all things new. We will see God in a new light. We will see ourselves in a different light. We will see our calling before God in a different light. Love is that indispensable ingredient that makes us like God Who is love.

In conclusion, then, let me call your attention to what the psalmist says in Psalm 17:15. "But as for me," he declares, "I will behold Thy face in righteousness: I shall be satisfied when I awake with Thy likeness." Indeed: Man made in the likeness of God and fallen to look like the devil cannot be satisfied until he awakes with God's likeness. He may try by rioting and revolt, by education and research to find a little happiness. He will not be satisfied until he awakes with God's likeness. And only God's elect children shall awake with it, because in this life already God begins to shed abroad his love in their hearts. Love makes us like God. And love satisfies. It is the greatest virtue and the vastly superior gift. Covet it, covenant young people, that you may be like God.



LOVE: *The Strongest Bond*

REV. ROBERT D. DECKER

Convention Speech delivered at Redlands, California for 1969 Y.P.'s Convention

What follows is a condensation of the speech delivered by the undersigned at the young people's convention this past summer in Redlands. If memory serves me correctly the speech was of approximately 45-50 minutes in length. Hence the condensing of it now.

Covenant youth, we are worried about you! By "we" I mean your parents, teachers, elders, and pastors. We spend much time discussing you and your problems searching for ways to "get through to you." We are worried not because we do not see much evidence of the grace of God in you, we do and we are thankful for that. But we worry because we see you coming to maturity in a world which is unbelievably wicked. The temptations you face are tremendous and your flesh (and ours!) is so weak. Often we yield and compromise with the world without even realizing what is happening. Of the many areas in life in which we have been influenced by the world I am only going to speak to you about one, dating and marriage.

We are worried too because we love you so much. Believe it or not we are deeply concerned about you. We want you to be happy — in one word we simply want the best for you. And the best you can possibly have is the love and favor of God!

Out of that deep concern and love I address you tonight. My assigned subject is "Love, the Strongest Bond." I am going to emphasize the practical side of that, applying it to dating and marriage. Some of the questions we shall attempt to answer are: What is love? What is marriage? and What is dating? Let me say I am going to "tell it like it is," straight from the shoulder. And what I am going to say will not be some "preacher talk" but it will be the Word of God! God's Word, you know, bridges that generation gap the world is so fond of speaking about today. And God has a good deal to say to us in the Bible precisely on this subject.

Let's consider first two basic principles of Love, The Strongest Bond.

The first principle of love is this: LOVE IS OF GOD! That is literally what the Bible says in I John 4:7 and 8. We find two statements in that passage about love: John says, "Love is of God" and that means God is the subject or source of love, and more profoundly Scripture says, "God is love." Now that is a tremendously significant statement. God has many virtues in addition to love — grace, mercy, goodness, longsuffering etc. But one never reads in the Bible that God IS these. We read that God is the God of all grace, that He is merciful, or that He is longsuffering toward us, but certainly it is striking that only of love do we read God IS love.

This can only mean that love is THE CHARACTERISTIC OF GOD! Love belongs to the very essence of God's Being, it is His cardinal virtue. To sum up this first principle we understand that God is love. The implication is clear: all love is from Him, love for one another as friends in Christ, love for boy friend or girl friend, love for parents, love in marriage — it is all the love of God.

The second principle is that love operates within the sphere of God's Holy Law. In this connection, Col. 3:14 is crucial to our understanding of love. There we read that love is "the bond of perfectness." That term "perfectness" refers to moral, ethical perfection, the ethical perfection of God Himself first of all. God lives a life of intimate love within the perfection of His Own Being.

Among other things, what this means very simply is this: love cannot exist or operate within the sphere of the darkness of sin. Listen to what the Bible says on this score: I John 3:14, 15, "He that loveth not his brother abideth in death . . . and is a murderer with no eternal life abiding in him." I Cor. 13:4 tells us love envieth not, vaunteth not itself, is not puffed up; all these are manifestations of pride which

arises out of hatred against God. I Cor. 13:5 and 6: love "doth not behave itself unseemly" (immorally, indecently). In Rev. 16:15 we find that term "unseemly" used to refer to the shame of nakedness. Love is holy, pure as God. Love "seeketh not her own, is not easily provoked" — that's pride again, self-seeking and anger are the evil fruits of hatred not love. Love "rejoiceth not in iniquity," that is, love has no delight in unrighteousness, but "rejoiceth in the truth"!

All this means love exists only in the sphere of the Law of God. In His law God lays down the standard, the criterion for what is good and pure and righteous. Love is the fulfillment of that law; it meets the standard. The entire law comes down to this: love God with all your being and the neighbor for God's sake!

Love is not the silly, sloppy sentimentalism that the world talks about. Nor is it a mere feeling or emotion. It is the bond of perfectness, a union of intimate fellowship based on the moral perfection of God's Law. It is found ONLY in God. It is found only in our hearts when God sheds it abroad by the Holy Spirit. Only then do we love God and one another.

This has serious implications for dating and marriage. Marriage is a beautiful picture of that love of God. From its very institution recorded in Genesis 2:18ff we understand that it is the highest relation among men. Man and woman are one in their very origin for the woman was created from the rib of man. And God said "therefore shall a man leave his father and mother and cleave unto his wife and they shall be ONE flesh." Adam recognized this clearly when awaking from the deep sleep he exclaimed concerning Eve, "bone of my bone and flesh of my flesh." There is a union of being between man and wife that is absolutely unique among human relationships.

As such, marriage is a beautiful symbol in Scripture. From the Old Testament we learn that it was an earthly reflection of God's Covenant with His people. Frequently the Old Testament Scriptures speak of the relation between Jehovah and His people Israel as a marriage relation. Hosea 2:19 records the Word of God: "I will betroth thee unto me forever; yea I will betroth thee unto me in righteousness and in judgment

and in lovingkindnesses and in mercies." We find the same idea in Ezekiel 16. The real marriage is between God and His people, the marriage of man and wife was instituted to be a picture of that. This finds its fulfillment in Jesus Christ. The Church through Christ's sacrifice on the cross becomes His Bride and in Christ is united in love, the bond of perfectness, to God. That is the beautiful truth of Ephesians 5, where Paul speaks of the callings of husbands and wives. Husbands are to love their wives as Christ loved the Church and gave Himself for it, and wives are to be in subjection to their own husbands because the husband is the head of the wife even as Christ is the head of the Church. And all this is based on the fact that Christ and the Church are united in a bond of intimate love and fellowship. The Apostle concludes: "This is a great mystery but I speak concerning Christ and the Church."

Marriage, therefore, is a union of one man and one woman, a communion of love that reflects the Covenant established by God with His elect in Christ. In the marriage bond husband and wife live one life together in the closest communion of the love of God. That means too that marriage is an exclusive union which cannot be broken — no more than the union between Christ and the Church can be broken.

In that light dating takes on tremendous significance. Dating, then, is NOT an end in itself. We do not date just for the sake of dating. In other words, we do not go out merely for a good time, for fun. That does not mean we cannot have good, clean, wholesome fun, or that we cannot enjoy Christian fellowship with members of the opposite sex. We can and we should. Our conventions, outings, banquets, singspirations and other group activities serve exactly that purpose. But it does mean that a "good time," or "fun" is not the prime or sole purpose of our dating.

Nor do we date for the satisfaction of the carnal lusts of the flesh. That is precisely the world's attitude toward dating. This is what is called by the world "the new morality." The world because it refuses to recognize marriage as a union in the love of God and a reflection of Christ and the Church regards dating as an entity in itself. It's for fun, relaxation, and quite frankly

for sexual gratification. The world at best takes a very flippant, casual attitude toward dating (and altogether too much of this pernicious notion has rubbed off on us!). Says the new morality: there are no standards. What we call moral standards are only customs with which we do not have to comply. We can have, and some go so far as to say even should have, sexual relations before marriage. As long as a young man and girl love each other and their actions do not interfere with the rights of others, pre-marital relations are condoned. So we find the advent of co-ed dorms on the university campuses.

Now we ought to call that exactly what it is! That is not morality, it is a rejection of God's law of love which is born out of hatred against God! Nor is that "new." It's as old as the fall of our first parents and it became manifest very early in the **history** of mankind. Lamech, the seventh from Adam in the murderous line of Cain, together with his senseless wives, Adah and Zillah, was a proponent of the "new morality." The Bible calls it: lust, adultery, fornication, vile affections, lasciviousness, in one word **SIN!** It is simply a fact, one does not find true love in the world. Remember the two principles: love is from God and operates within the bounds of His Holy Law!

Dating is a prelude to marriage, real marriage, not the adulterous unions of the world. When we date it means we are searching for a marriage partner. We are looking for a fellow believer, to love and be loved in the love of God, to reflect God's love and bring forth the children of God's covenant! Also and emphatically in dating it is our purpose to fulfill our calling as God's "elect strangers" in the world.

Is that what we are looking for and striving after as Protestant Reformed young people? With that as their purpose our young men will not look at the outward appearance of a girl. They will not have as their criteria mere physical beauty, a cute face, and nice figure. They will not look for young women whose adornment consists in the outward adorning, the plaiting of hair, the putting on of apparel, make-up, and enticing dress (cf. 1 Peter 3). But they will look for a woman whose adornment is a meek and quiet spirit, they will look for a

true daughter of Sarah! And our young women will look for sons of Abraham. They will search for one with whom they can live together in the bond of perfectness as "heirs together of the grace of life" (1 Peter 3:7).

That purpose will greatly affect our entire attitude toward dating. It will have something to do with the age at which we begin to date, the things we do on a date, the places we go on a date. It will have something to do with the young men and women we date — certainly we will not seek them among the sons and daughters of the Edomites of this world. It means too that our dating will be done in **PRAYER**. And we will be very specific in our petitions too. We will pray: "Lord, lead me not into temptation, keep my thoughts and desires pure, remove all uncleanness from me, and lead me to the man or woman of thy choosing." We will date because we want to be married in the Lord, united in the bond of perfectness, as heirs of the covenant to His glory!

In that way we shall be richly blessed for time and for eternity. Verse 8 of 1 Cor. 13 says: "Charity (love) never faileth." That marriage will not end in divorce, love will deepen and grow and those so united in the love of God will have the assurance of His blessed favor. So it will be in the Church. Motivated by the love of God our congregations will not be torn by what James in chapter four of his Epistle calls "wars and fightings," but they will be united in the communion of saints.

Everything else fails. 1 Cor. 13 says even prophecies, tongues, knowledge, all that which is now in part will be done away with at the coming of the Lord — even all our sermons and theology, this speech too. But the love of God never fails! It endures to all eternity. In heaven, in the new creation that bond of perfectness of which our earthly marriages are just a faint reflection will be realized and we shall be drawn into the intimate fellowship of our God in Christ. We often sing of that: "They that walk in love shall share in life that never ends."

That you may walk in that love of God in obedience to His Law and Will in dating, marriage, and in the church with your fellow-saints is my prayer.

NEWS

from, for, and about our churches

KAREN LUBBERS

Dear Readers,

One-half year ago you began sending your news to a new address, that of Judy Henson. Beginning with this issue, however, you are requested once more to send it to:

5301 Barry St.
Hudsonville, Mich. 49426

Judy has resigned as your News Editor and as her sister, I feel privileged to take her place on the staff. I hope I can serve you as well. I appreciate the news I receive and welcome additional news from those churches who do not now send it. Help keep our magazine alive!

Miscellaneous

As is evident from this issue of BEACON LIGHTS, the highlight of August was the Convention in Redlands, California. It was truly a success and we plan to see you all in Hudsonville next year.

A Pre-Convention Singspiration was held in First Church on August 10 at 9:00 p. m. The singing was led by Mr. E. Ophoff.

A clothing drive for our brothers and sisters in Jamaica was held in the Grand Rapids area during the week of Sept. 14.

On August 1 the Hudsonville society sponsored a beach party at Tunnel Park for all the young people of the area churches.

The Hull, Doon, and Edgerton young people enjoyed a swimming party and picnic supper in Rock Rapids on July 15.

The catechism classes, societies, and schools of our churches have begun a new season once again. We are thankful for this privilege; let us labor while it is day, 'ere the night come when no man can work.

Births

Mr. and Mrs. John C. Haak from South Holland, a daughter.

Mr. and Mrs. R. Miedema from Hope, a daughter.

Mr. and Mrs. Chuck Kalsbeek from Hope, a son.

Rev. and Mrs. David Engelsma from Loveland, a son.

Mr. and Mrs. Rog King from Hope, a daughter.

Mr. and Mrs. Don Aardema from Doon, a daughter.

Rev. and Mrs. R. Decker from Doon, a son.

Mr. and Mrs. Jerry Van Den Top from Doon, a son.

Mr. and Mrs. K. Doezema from Southeast, a daughter.

Marriages

Mr. Ron VanOverloop from Hudsonville and Miss Sue Swart from First on August 7.

Mr. Ivan Elzinga from Hope and Miss Joanne Hoolsema on August 28.

Mr. Dave Miedema from Hope and Miss Marcia Schuiling on August 22.

Mr. Ben Huizinga from Hudsonville and Miss Myrna Van Raalte on Sept. 5.

Mr. Tim Pipe from First and Miss Lois Engelsma from Hope on Sept. 25.

Mr. James Slopsema from South east and Miss Joan Jansma on June 22.

Membership

Mr. John Hoekstra from First has transferred to Hope.

Mr. Ron Van Overloop from Hudsonville has transferred to First.

Miss Winifred Koole from Hope has transferred to Southwest.

Membership

Mr. and Mrs. Koop and three children have transferred from Hope to Southeast.

Mr. and Mrs. John Kalsbeek have transferred to Doon from South Holland.

Confession of faith was made by Mr. Wm. Bates in Hope.

Confession of faith was made by Miss Gayle Dykstra at Southeast.

Confession of faith was made by Mr. Philip Harbach at Kalamazoo.

Confession of faith was made by Mr. and Mrs. Glenn Mantel at Doon.

Our Servicemen

The address of George Bodbyl from Hudsonville is:

Pvt. George Bodbyl 386-52-9238
Co. D, 1 Bn., 4th BDE
South Fort Polk, Louisiana 71459

The Address of Larry Koole from Hope is:

Pfc. Larry Koole 380-52-3836
Co. C 1/20 11th L.I.B.
A.P.O. San Francisco
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The address of Don Jonker of Hope is:

Pfc. Don Jonker 380-48-7112
549th M.P. Co. SUC
Fort Davis, Canal Zone 09829

PLEASE

send all news

items to our new

NEWS EDITOR:

MISS KAREN LUBBERS

5301 Barry St.

Hudsonville, Mich. 49426

As Judy Henson retires from the BEACON LIGHTS Staff as News Editor, the Federation Board, on behalf of all the Young People, would like to thank Judy for all her time and work in this Kingdom service and wish her the Lord's blessing in the future. We would also like to welcome Karen Lubbers to the Staff as Judy's replacement and wish her God's blessing as she undertakes her new duties.

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