

BEACON LIGHTS

*FOR PROTESTANT
REFORMED YOUTH*



JANUARY, 1976

ARE WE
PELAGIANS TOO?

BICENTENNIAL



BEACON LIGHTS

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Editorial

NEW YEARSY PISTLE TO JACK AND JILL

by J. M. Faber

Haven't written to you since you were married, so I thought a New Year's greeting would be in order. Will you please pass this letter on to your younger cousins after you have read it; I'm getting too old (I can remember when bread was five cents a loaf and haircuts were twenty five cents!) to write so many letters that each one of my grandchildren would get a personal one.

You noticed that I greeted you with that familiar "Happy New Year." You've probably said that many times today as you greeted your fellow saints at church this morning. Tomorrow you will again repeat that phrase as you greet your neighbors and your fellow-workers. I wonder if you really mean it! Just what does "Happy New Year" mean? You say, "That's easy; I mean that I am wishing my friends, neighbors and fellows a whole year of happiness." Well now, that sounds admirable. But what does the word "happy" mean? Just what are you wishing for your friends? The same thing in each case, whether it be a fellow-saint or fellow-worker who may not be a Christian? Shall we go to the dictionary to learn its meaning? Yes, your gramps did too, but not until after he went to the Bible and consulted the Holy Scriptures which were given to us to make us wise.

First then, grandchildren all, let us see what the Bible means by that word. The original Hebrew word in the Old Testament that is translated "happy" in our English language has two different meanings; and the one has three forms. Twenty seven times it means "blessed" and seventeen times it is "happy." We find the English word "happy" twenty

times in the O.T., and six times in the N.T. The Greek word in the N.T. has two meanings, and they, like the Hebrew, mean both "happy" and "blessed." In almost every instance it means that those who are blessed **are** happy. O.K. so far?

Now we are ready to look it up in the dictionary. There we find it has four meanings. It speaks of being glad, delighted, pleased; and one meaning is "to be favored by fortune, fortunate, lucky."

Now you can see why I like the Biblical meaning better when we use that word in our greetings to our fellow-saints. If one is sure the addressee is a Christian, one can use the term "Happy New Year" freely. That is why I started my letter that way. I wish you all the happiness in the world that is possible in Christ Jesus from Whom all blessings flow. The Scriptures tell us that we receive all the benefits of Christ through faith. Those benefits do give happiness for they include justification, sanctification and eternal life! What more could one wish for his grandchildren, or his family, his friends, his fellow-saints, his neighbor and his Christian fellow-worker! Probably our New Year's greeting could be used more meaningfully (that's a longy!) if we would say, "Blessed New Year." Then we would not be suggesting any of that Websterian "lucky" in our greeting. But I have no "hang up" on that score. I always think of that "happy" in Psalm 144:15, "Happy is that people whose God is the Lord." And with that thought I close.

Happy New Year,
Gramps

P.S. Dearest Marcia-who-is-just-six-years-

old: (See Nov., 1975 **Beacon Lights**, "Mommy's At Work") I read your letter and it made me very sad. Your Mommy did not learn such ill behavior in our house, when she was six years old for we always made much of our children's birthdays. But, of course, your grandma did not work out - she stayed home with the children! On your seventh birthday we will have you over to our house for a real cookie-baking-celebration! It's a date!

Love, Gramma.



HOW SHOULD CHRISTIANS CELEBRATE THE BICENTENNIAL?

by Gerry Schut

Gerry is a member of our Hudsonville Church.

The year is 1976 - the 200th birthday of the United States. Many people from all across the country will be celebrating the Bicentennial. But a serious question comes to mind - How should Christians, people of God, celebrate the Bicentennial?

Before going any further, the matter of patriotism should be explained. What is true patriotism? How must we as Christians exercise that patriotism?

Webster's dictionary defines a patriot as "one who loves his country and zealously supports its authority and interests." God has placed us in this land and the magistrate that stands in authority over us receives its authority from God. We maintain the principle that all authority is from God. We recognize no authority except that which comes from God. This is based on the Scripture text found in Romans 13:1,2 and 5: "Let every soul be subject to the higher power. For there is no power but God: the powers that be are ordained of God. Whosoever therefore resisteth the power, resisteth God: and they that resist shall receive to themselves damnation... Wherefore ye

must needs be subject, not only for wrath, but also for conscience sake."

When we speak of our country, we do so as believers, as Christians in the midst of this present world. We can never forget the fact that our spiritual citizenship is in heaven. We are written into the records of God by His sovereign election. Our home is in heaven. We are new creatures, citizens of the kingdom of heaven, which can only mean that we are strangers in the midst of this present world. At the same time we are friend-servants of God. We are to love and serve Him in the office of believers, in our personal lives, in our family life, in our church life, and also as citizens of our earthly fatherland.

When we speak of patriotism as love for our country, we speak as spiritual citizens of the kingdom of heaven. We are not devoted to our country with a devotion that resembles idol worship. Nor does that devotion resemble an offensive display of our own selfish interests. We are motivated by the love of God. For God's sake we love our parents, our church, our neighbor, and our country.

Patriotism is based on proper citizenship. There can be no patriotism without

George M. Ophoff (3)

by Prof. H. Hanko

The doctrine of God's everlasting covenant of grace has always been the doctrine uniquely characteristic of the Reformed faith as it developed in the Netherlands. This doctrine has never been merely an abstract tenet of dogma, but always remains in the lives of God's people, a very precious confession of the truth. As a matter of fact, many of our readers can speak at length about the covenant lines into which they were born. They can trace their spiritual ancestry back over many generations. Rev. Ophoff used to speak in school of what he called "Gereformeerde Gevoelhoren." I suppose that the translation of this expression would be, "Reformed Antennae," but by this expression Rev. Ophoff meant that a person who is born in a covenant home and brought up by covenant parents develops over the course of the years these Reformed antennae. They are the antennae which one finds on bugs, and which are used by these bugs as feelers. A bug, as he feels his way along with his antennae, makes these antennae quiver every time it meets with a foreign object. By means of this rather expressive metaphor, Rev. Ophoff meant to convey the idea that a child born in a covenant home and brought up under the influence of covenant instruction, is able to develop a sense for the Reformed faith which it is almost impossible to gain in any other way. He believed deeply in the importance of covenant instruction from infancy on. He believed so strongly in this that he maintained that it was next to impossible to develop such sensitive Reformed feelings unless one was instructed in the Reformed faith from days of earliest childhood. There is a great deal of truth in this. There is no substitute for covenant instruction.

This truth of which Rev. Ophoff spoke is a truth which was characteristic of his own life.

It seems as if the story of George Ophoff has to begin with the story of a man by the name of Gerrit Klaas Hemkes. Gerrit Hemkes was the maternal grandfather of George, and the story begins with him because of the influence of this man on George during the latter's formative years.

A brief sketch of the life of Rev. Hemkes is given in the "Semi-Centennial Volume" of the theological school at Calvin College. (This volume was published by the Semi-Centennial Committee of the Christian Reformed Church in 1926, H.H.) We quote the sketch this volume presents concerning Rev. Hemkes.

Gerrit Klaas Hemkes was born in the Netherlands May 6, 1838, at Hallum, in the province of Friesland. He had a religious training and feared the Lord from childhood. When still very young, he was afraid that he had committed the sin against the Holy Ghost. The attacks became so severe at times that he would forget his play and seek a secluded spot, there to present his troubles to the Lord and to pray that out of His fulness God would supply all things needful. In his 16th year the Lord delivered him from this burden, and he became conscious of his salvation in Christ.

It is striking to note that this maternal grandfather of George Ophoff was born four years after the separation in the Netherlands under DeKok, Van Raalte and others. In fact, the parents of Gerrit Hemkes were members of the Churches of the Separation. Apparently, they had separated from the apostate State Church

along with one of the leaders of this movement. They were therefore, among those who were deeply concerned about the spiritual deterioration in that church which only 200 years before this had fought so valiantly against the errors of Arminianism. They were therefore part of that important movement by which God preserved the cause of the Reformed faith in the Netherlands.

There were always among these churches of the separation certain mystical elements. And it seems, from the paragraph quoted above, that the family of Gerrit Hemkes was not entirely immune to these mystical tendencies.

Soon a desire to study for the ministry came to him, but his parents had no means with which to aid him. Through the help of kind friends, however, he was enabled to study for two years with the Rev. Kreulen of Hallum. Then he was given support from the Student Fund of the Friesland churches and received a thorough course at the Gymnasium of Franeker. Here he was brought under the influence of the Rev. K. J. Pieters, pastor of the Franeker Church at that time. He sat at the feet of prominent men such as Dr. Junius, the rector, and Verwey, the "con-rector" of the school.

After five years at the Franeker school he was graduated, delivering an oration in Latin on "Oedipus Coloneus." (This was a tragic play by Sophocles, an ancient Greek playwright, produced near the end of his life and published after his death about 400 B.C. It is interesting to note that even in those days Latin was so thoroughly mastered that the graduates of the schools could speak in Latin. H.H.) He then proceeded to Kampen, and was graduated from the Theological School in 1865. After passing a

successful examination at Enumatil, he became pastor of the church at De Leek, in the Province of Groningen. He also served the church of Stads-Musselkanaal in the Netherlands from 1873 to 1874. Then he received a call from Bunde, Oostfriesland, Germany, where he served from 1874 to 1877. Here he also had the opportunity to give instruction to two young men who desired to study for the ministry.

In 1877 came a call from Vriesland, Michigan, and after due consideration it was accepted. Here he labored until 1884. In 1883 he became assistant professor at our Theological school in order to relieve Prof. Boer somewhat in his arduous tasks. During this time he received aid from other pastors in supplying his pulpit in Vriesland. In 1884 he was appointed regular professor, at first with Prof. Boer giving instruction in many branches both in the literary and theological departments, and later especially as professor of church history. He was faithful in his work, and loved by his students. Especially did they enjoy the many stories told in connection with his work in the classroom.

One of these stories has come down to me, by what means I no longer recall. It was told me, and the story may be apocryphal, that one day Prof. Hemkes was strolling across the campus of Calvin College when he was seen by three students who decided to try to play a joke on him and see, if possible, whether they could embarrass him. After hurried consultation amongst themselves, one of them came up to Prof. Hemkes and said to him, "Good morning, father Abraham." The second one hastened up and said, "Good morning, father Isaac." The third one followed immediately and said, "Good morning, father Jacob." Pausing only for a moment, Prof. Hemkes turned

to the students and said in a most serious voice, "Young men, I am not father Abraham; nor am I father Isaac; nor am I father Jacob. However, I am Saul the son of Kish, and I think I have just found my father's asses." Prof. Hemkes was quite a story-teller in his own right. Especially the children loved to hear him tell his stories, for he included in the stories all the motions and expressions necessary to convey the full impact of the tale, even if this meant laying aside his professorial dignity and crawling all over the floor.

In 1905 he became emeritus, but still went out preaching. His last sermon was delivered in Allendale, in which he spoke on "The Fulness of Christ." In March 1916 he fell, breaking a leg at the hip. A stroke of apoplexy, paralyzed the other leg, and made it difficult for him to use

his hands. In this condition he lingered along for three years. Finally diabetes set in, and he died December 4, 1920, not having lived in vain. This not only those of his parishioners still living can testify, but also the students who were favored with his instruction. Of this his many writings both in the Netherlands and here in America are a testimony. For four years he was editor-in-chief of *De Wachter* and for 40 years one of the editors of our *Yearbook*. His was indeed a life well spent, and a great blessing to many.

George Ophoff stayed with his grandfather a number of years during his college days. But to this we shall return presently.

SEMINARIANS

This begins a series of articles on a few hi-lights of the students in the pre-seminary and seminary departments of our Protestant Reformed Theological School. We hope in this way to better acquaint our churches with the current students. The idea to do this comes from Rev. Bekkering. We thank him and others for articles, ideas, suggestions and encouragement. We ask more of our readership to send articles and ideas.



The three gentlemen pictured above are first year or second year students of pre-seminary education.

First of all, Deane Wassink, nineteen years of age, is a member of our Holland Protestant Reformed Congregation. He has been a member there since September 1974, coming to the Protestant Reformed Churches from Calvin Christian Reformed Church in Holland, Michigan.

Deane, along with his parents, two brothers and two sisters, first heard about the Protestant Reformed Churches by attending a lecture in which Professor Hanko was the speaker. They met with a group of people in Holland, with Professor Hanko as leader, for a short time before joining the Protestant Reformed Churches.

Deane graduated from Holland Christian High School in 1974, and now, along with his pre-seminary courses, is attending Calvin and Grand Valley Colleges for extra credits.

Next is Duane Alsum, age 26. He is originally from Randolph, Wisconsin. Duane and his wife Marlene and their son Jayson have done some traveling within the past few years.

After serving for the Armed Forces in 1968-1971, Duane went to Redlands, California and studied for two years at California Junior College in Chassey, California. From there he moved to

Loveland, Colorado and attended the University of Northern Colorado for two more years. His previous education was centered mainly around psychology and philosophy.

Duane and his family are now members of our Southwest Protestant Reformed Church in Grand Rapids, Michigan, and living in Jenison, Michigan.

Thirdly, is John Hilton, age 34, who is also a member of our Southwest Church.

Previously, he attended the Orthodox Presbyterian Church in Cornville, Maine. Before moving to Grand Rapids, Michigan, in September 1975, John and his wife Karen and his daughter Elizabeth attended the Protestant Reformed Mission in Skowhegan, Maine led by Rev. D. Kuiper.

John attended Colby College in Waterville, Maine and received his bachelors degree in German. From the University of Maine, he has a Masters Degree in secondary school administration.

For the past twelve years, John taught mainly math and German to high school students in Maine.

Now residing in Grandville, Michigan, John, like Deane and Duane, has plenty of studying to keep him working full time.

Hold Fast Our Heritage

In the December issue we started a new rubric called *Hold Fast to Our Heritage*. The intent of the staff was that we would ask older people to write for this column. We ask therefore for volunteers to write and/or suggest articles. The Protestant Reformed Young Person realizes the wisdom of his parents and grandparents. So we will be looking forward to hearing from you: parents, grandparents, uncles, aunts and whoever. Send material to address inside the front cover.

The Covenant Faithfulness of God

by Pete Lubbers

**Mr. Lubbers is a member of our
Hudsonville Church**

Have you ever traveled, possibly through the western states viewing the beautiful mountains and bountiful plains, or toured the north eastern states with their autumn colors and beauty as God alone can make them? Upon a safe return, did you relive all the pleasant memories and experiences over and over again? I think we all have. We all are travelers. Day by day and all our life long, "we are marching to Zion." Our life is much like a book. Our years are written upon its pages until it is full. With this thought in mind, let us pause and reflect upon the past twenty-five years in which our Covenant God has led us as Protestant Reformed Churches. At once we are reminded that many of us at that time were your age, attending the various young people's societies and conventions; we are now in the forties and fifties. Time has carried us on through years of joy and sorrow, toil and strife. Our thoughts return to the early fifties, when at that time our numbers more than doubled in membership and ministers. The time when all seemed peaceful, as shoulder to shoulder we clung to the truth of God's Holy Word. But, alas - there appeared questioning clouds upon the horizon of our churches. Some were denoting different sounds of emphasis in the pulpit and societies. The liberated conditioned view of the Covenant had made inroads among us, much due to the influence of Dr. K. Seilder of the Netherlands, as he lectured and visited our churches from the east to the west, and back from the west to the east. Later in nineteen hundred fifty three, the separation took place, leaving us in the minority and endangering the loss of our church name and properties. How well I

remember one of our ministers saying, "Nothing can be done against the truth, but only in favor of it." As far as our name Protestant Reformed is concerned, "a rose under another name will smell just as sweet." Yet, through it all Satan desired to have us that he might sift us as wheat, but our great Intersessor, Christ, the King of the Church, prayed for us that our faith may fail not. Our God led us through these trying months and years, tested us, and gave us stronger faith and deeper understanding of the truth. So with fewer numbers (a Gideon's band), the Lord has continued to bless us as churches. To Him be all the glory! He has most bountifully supplied. The Lord has given us our places of worship, our own Protestant Reformed schools of higher and lower education, and our own theological school building, professors, and students in preparation for the ministry. We are thankful for our professors and ministers, present and past - faithful warriors who have, and are, spending their lives for the cause of God's kingdom. May God bless them forevermore.

As we have scanned the pages of yesterday, let us turn to the unwritten page of tomorrow. We have a serious calling as parents, but also as "young people" (the promising church of the future). Let us look away from ourselves and settle our eyes unto the hills from whence cometh our help. Our help is in the name of the Lord. Let us be much in prayer and remain faithful to the truth - "the blessed heritage" handed down from our fathers. Fight the good fight of faith to the end. Crown our beautiful confessions with a godly walk. Doctrine and life must go side by side. As one of our Reformed fathers stated, "To live a truly Reformed life, one must be constantly reforming his

walk." We read in Amos 6:1: "Woe to them that are at ease in Zion." and in Rev. 3:11-13: "Hold that fast which thou hast, that no man take thy crown...Him that overcometh will I make a pillar in the temple of my God, and I will write upon him the name of my God, and the name of the city of my God which is new Jerusalem, which cometh down out of heaven from my God: and I will write upon him my new name. He that hath an ear, let him hear what the Spirit saith unto the churches."



Truth vs. Error

REV. ROBERT C. HARBACH

SHEEP IN THE MIRE

"We know that the law is spiritual, but I am flesh, sold as a slave to sin. I am doing something strange, because I don't do what I like, but what I hate. But if I do what I don't like, I agree that the law is right. It is no longer I doing it, but sin living in me. I know that nothing good lives in me, that is, in my flesh. I'm willing, but I'm not doing what is right. I don't do the good things I like, but I do the evil I don't like. Now if I do what I don't like, it is no longer I doing it but sin living in me. So I find it a rule: When I want to do what is right, wrong suggestions crowd in. In my inmost heart I agree with God's law, but in my whole natural

make-up I see another law fighting against the law that my mind approves of. It makes me a prisoner to the sin ruling my body. What a miserable man I am! Who will rescue me from the body that brings me to death? Thank God - He does it through our Lord Jesus Christ!" (Rom. 7:14-24, basically from Beck's N.T.)

These are not the words of an unregenerate man, for such a man does not say, "I'm willing" (v. 18), "I do what I don't like" (v. 15), "the good things I like" (v. 19), "in my inmost heart I agree with God's law" (v. 22), the commandment is "holy, just and good" (v. 12), "I agree that the law is right" (v.16). These

and especially this, are the mark of a **regenerated** person: "I am a wretched man!" (v. 24).

Neither is this a Christian presenting legitimate excuse for his sin, as though one might say, "Well, we are all totally depraved, prone to all evil, and incapable of doing any good, so everyone of us can't help but sin. Coveting material things and indulging in worldly pleasures? A little cheating, lying and swearing now and then? Everyone is doing it! We are all sinners, with a sinful nature. The natural man is in us, so it is all very natural to me. You see, 'it is no longer I doing it, but sin living in me. Nothing good lives in me. I don't do the things I like, but the evil I don't like.'" So the excusing of sin runs. But this is outfacing and overbearing the truth. It all sounds much like Mr. Antinomian. But Pauline argument it is not. The man who indulges in sin, including those just mentioned, does what he likes, what he loves, not what he hates. He cannot say, "I do the evil I don't like." He is really saying, "I do the evil I do like; I do what I like!" Now if there is any sin, of which you can say, "I do not hate it," you may well doubt that you know what it is to experience regeneration. For one of the marks of a Christian is that though he sins, he does not love sin but fights against it.

Furthermore, a Christian may not say, "I can't help it," for a Christian has to help it. He may not say "can't." He must not say, "It's of the natural man, and so natural to me." Of course it's natural. But isn't that just the trouble, and an added reason for your guarding against it? All of nature, and especially your sinful nature, must be subjected to Christ that grace may reign through righteousness, and bring into captivity every thought to the obedience of Christ.

Walking along a country mountain road, a hillside came into view, spotted with shady shrubs under which a few sheep lay. If one of those sheep should

somehow fall into the mud, it would immediately and quickly struggle up and out of it. Sheep hate the mudhole and do not go near it. The deeply rutted mountain road is full of the slimiest muck which covers two or three hogs. Above the grimy surface appear only their snouts and their pig eyes. Where the sheep would be unbearably distressed, the hog wallows. The swine loves the slough. But we are sheep. When we slip and fall, sin is a misery to us. As Christ's sheep, we hate the mire of sin. In it we look and feel a sorry mess, and scramble up out of it as quickly as we can. The old saying, "It's an ill wind that blows nobody any good," refers to the wind of sin. No sin ever helps anyone, but only seriously hinders and harms. Nothing can be said in favor of sin. You can never "talk sin good," and no heir of God would defend sin or plead its cause.

What do you think is Jesus' attitude toward sin? He bore our sins in His own body onto the tree. Our sins brought the scourge to His back. Our sins caused the bloody sweat to pour out of His body in the garden. Our sins crowned Him with thorns, pierced Him with nails and spear. Our sins to Him were vinegar and gall; they were agony and death. He who knew no sin was made sin for us. Bearing it on to the cross, He sank down under its weight into the darkness of death and hell. Sin meant hell for Him. Then how He, the Holy One, must have hated it! Saved from hell, shall we not hate it as He did? The cross of Jesus is not something to wear on the lapel. The cross is a symbol of capital punishment. Would you wear a little pin in the form of a hangman's noose or an electric chair, if by such means your well-beloved was murdered? Our sins were the death of Him on the cross. Not one of our sins is innocent of the murder of our Best-Beloved. Then to have Christ is to be quits with sin. You can't embrace Christ and hug sin. He shall save His people **from** their sins. He never saves

anyone in their sins. What of those, then, who would be saved only their way, in their sins? They do not hate them and cannot bear to part with them! What do they know of the cross of Jesus? What do they know of the peace of God, or peace between them and God, when there is peace between them and sin? Oh, they are not drunkards, nor thieves, nor fornicators, and they wouldn't be hypocrites for the world. Thou that hatest lying, art thou given to lechery? Thou that despisest fleshly lust, art thou proud? Thou that drawest up thy nose at sin, dost thou think it smells sweeter smeared with Chanel No. 5 or sprinkled with a little English Leather? Thou art a gentleman? So was the King of Sodom. Suppose he were held captive by but one single very small vice. He would still be under the dominion of sin. He would be in bondage to iniquity. If one Diabolonian were allowed to remain alive in the Town of Mansoul, that would be treason against Prince Emmanuel. Things are not right there unless Goliath's head is off, Sisera is nailed to the ground through his temples, Eglon is stabbed to the heart, Dagon is broken down and the golden calf is ground to powder.

All those excuses for sin really mean, "I do not consent to the law of God. I do not delight in it. I do not like to hear, 'Thou shalt not covet,' or 'Remember the Sabbath Day to keep it holy,' and 'Thou shalt not bear false witness against thy neighbor.' I wish they were not in the Bible and were not among those things forbidden or commanded. I wish there were less law and more license. I don't care to be bound by commandments which judge our thoughts, or which infringe on the freedom of our will. I don't want to

live that way, or associate with those who do. I intend to live as I like." This is the lawless antinomian who gloats in his rotten interpretation of Romans 7 and waves it like a flag of victory. He says, in effect, that it is impossible to get out from under the dominion of sin, so that a Christian may live in sin with one part of his nature so long as he admits in the other part of his nature that what he is doing is wrong. But this is not the Pauline doctrine. If all those excuses for sin were valid, there would be no such thing as a godly life. We are not to spend our time writing passes for sin, to come and go in our hearts and lives. For us there can be no licensed sin. Sin is outlawed. It may not be lodged in the guest room, not even in the barn or out-house.

The Lord gives us the Comforter not to comfort us in our sins, but to deliver us from evil and to sanctify and comfort us in righteousness of life. There is comfort, too, in the knowledge that this struggle Paul describes is a part of Christian experience. Neither the presumptuous libertine nor any dead in sin have ever made proof of any of these things. This inward conflict proves a man truly, spiritually alive. There is life in the soul that hates sin, even though it cannot do the good as it would. Where there is pain (the misery of sin), there is life. The best of saints have suffered this pain, the cause of which is "my corrupt nature, against which I have to struggle all my life long." (Heid. Catec., A. 56). We get to heaven fighting every bit of the way; but we get there - some on boards and some on broken peices of the ship, all get safe to land. Sheep may slip in the mire, but they do not flounder in it.



From Rev. Engelsma's book on Marriage:

An implication of this (Referring to Prov. 31:30 - JVO) for the believing young man is that he must make this the all-important question as he looks for a wife: Does she fear God? May he believe, and not have to find out by bitter experience, that favor is deceitful and beauty vain.



FROM THE PASTOR'S STUDY

by REV. M. KAMPS

ARE WE PELAGIANS TOO? (3)

It does not seem as though the caption to this series of articles really fits the subject material. Does it? The caption asks a question about us as P.R. young people and as churches, that is about our present spiritual attitude and confession. The only possible validity for this caption to the previous articles of this series might be found in the word "too" of the caption. For this little word implies that the "We" of the caption was being compared with someone else, the C.R.C.

Now it is of some moment to me to show that often times we are Pelagians in our walk if not in confession. We say, preach and publicly confess one thing, but do another!

In the previous two articles, I called your attention to the "Pelagianism" to be found lying at the bottom of the C.R.C. theory of Common Grace. We saw that especially the 2nd and 3rd points (this is not to say that the first point does not also implicitly teach pelagianism) constitute a denial of total depravity, on the one hand,

and teach, positively that the unregenerate wicked are able to do ethical good and in fact do much that is well pleasing unto God. Rev. Herman Hoeksema and we with him have declared this to be nothing more than the Pelagian doctrine condemned by the great Reformed Synod of Dordrecht.

This has been our position as P.R. churches for half a century. Our ministers have thundered from the pulpits about the horrible evils of common grace. We have heard it declared that the C.R.C. by its doctrine of common grace has destroyed the doctrine of the apostle John (I. John 2:15), that is the doctrine of the antithesis. Oh, how our ministers love to preach the truth concerning our calling to live antithetically in the world and, rightly so, for it is the doctrine of Scripture: "Love not the world neither the things in the world...Seek those things which are above...Draw nigh to God...Resist the devil...Flee from temptation." For fifty blessed years faithful men have con-

demned the attempt to establish a common ground of ethical activity and fellowship between the believer and the unbeliever, between the church and the world. Common grace doctrine is an attempt to establish this ethical common ground of cooperation between believer and unbeliever. We have heard it preached time and again that the world does no ethical good and can do no spiritual good. "They that are in the flesh cannot please God." Our leaders have preached this to us as they repeated and expounded the words of the apostle Paul. Consequently we were to have no fellowship with the evil works of darkness. We were called to stand alone and opposed to the ethics and morals of this world.

We have been taught that the common grace theory constitutes a spiritual or religious "bridge" for the joining of two spiritual realms which according to the command of God ought to remain separate...the Church of Christ in the world but not of the world, the Church of Christ in the world and testifying to the unbeliever, and condemning and opposing sin. But common grace as a "bridge" between the world and the Church would be the means of joining Athens and Jerusalem; it would be the means and the justification for the worldliness, rebellion and world-conformity of Athens to infiltrate the C.R.C. Hoeksema said forty to fifty years ago that "it would happen" as sure as it is true that doctrine and life are inseparable. We have come to see the day that "it has happened;" homosexuality, adultery (divorce and remarriage), rebellion - approved if the rebel holds a AFL-CIO card -, certain types of pornography condoned by some of their leaders, neglect of the means of grace as witnessed by empty pews every Sunday evening as the pulpiteers struggle for an audience against the enticing allurements of T.V. drama and pro-football, a higher critical attitude taken by her "exegetes"

toward the Bible, and much more is incontrovertible evidence that the harvest of the fruits of the pelagian doctrine of common grace are the C.R.C.'s present state and condition.

It is sad, but true, Hoeksema, Danhof and Ophoff saw very clearly the effect the deadly venom, common grace, would have upon the institute of of the church.

But what of us! Are we pelagians too? Have we been instructed in the evils of pelagianism only to ignore the instruction. Are we witnessing the devastating effect of pelagian teaching on our mother church only to ignore the lesson of history?

We are not Pelagian in doctrine, of that fact we may rest assured. Nor do our preachers preach anything that is even tainted with Pelagianism. For this we should be and are thankful to God. Since we have as churches officially resisted the inroads of Pelagianism, we may take courage for the future. At least this doctrinal aspect of our ecclesiastical ship is sea worthy.

But what of our walk? Official doctrine can be merely a matter of the "book," synodical decisions. Faithful preaching too, is in a large measure to be attributed to the faithfulness of a few by God's race. Does our walk as individual members reflect our official teaching and preaching of God's Word? Or is it true that we merely mouth an opposition to common grace as pelagianism, while our walk is one of conformity to the world? Do we only pay lip service to our calling to walk as a separate people, while in actual fact we are really common grace people who by our daily practice deny that it is our calling to walk antithetically? Could be, you know!

It could be that we hypocritically say, "Yes, yes," in church to the Dominee's sermon about our calling to walk antithetically, but when we get home we draw the drapes shut so that we can watch on T.V. our pro-football heroes...in peace. After all some say, "we have to enjoy life too."

It could be that our young people sneak over the C.R.C. constructed "bridge" to attend the theater. Although, I suspect, we are to suppose that parents use this same "bridge" to spiritually journey out of the realm of their faith commitment into the realm of fellowshiping with the ungodly through the means of dramatic productions called "last year's theater movies," which are now shown on the home screen. Further, we should ask ourselves the question, "What is the scriptural justification for us as parents to encourage our children to watch so-called educational T.V. programs...an education which is based on evolutionistic, pelagianistic and atheistic presuppositions?" Just because these programs are dignified with the term "educational" does not mean that in fact they are not detrimental to our covenant children.

Much, if not all, of T.V. and radio programming is nothing more than the wickedness of the world, and yet many of our parents and young people think nothing of spending day and night doing nothing else than fellowshiping and identifying with the world through participation in their godless entertainment. What is the scriptural basis for all this? "Are we pelagians too?" Are we as members of a denomination of churches devoid of integrity on this score...preach one thing and do another? I believe the statement, "practice what you preach," is applicable not only to the Dominee but to us all. Consistency, thou jewel!

Is it not true, dear brother or sister, that our confession concerning the believer's calling before God to walk antithetically, i.e. to draw nigh to God and to put off the old man and to put on the new man, must be **confirmed** by a walk in

godliness. Can we complacently allow our walk to be diametrically opposed to what we preach and then honestly still try to leave the impression with others that we take our preaching seriously? Can one of us, a P.R. brother, after having gorged himself on the rot of the unbeliever's entertainment via radio or T.V. or what ever medium of communication, go to his C.R. brother and lovingly rebuke him for his pelagianism and worldlimindedness, attempting to show by this rebuke a deep, heartfelt concern for his brother's spiritual welfare? NO, of course not. It would be spiritually impossible for this P.R. brother. He and his C.R. brother are essentially one in walk **and** confession.

So then what are we? Pelagian in walk and heart...while Reformed in the pulpit. Preachers of the antithesis...while in actual practice common grace people

It is easy to excuse ourselves. We could answer, as many do, very piously, that "after all we only have a small beginning of the new obedience." In other words, we could fault God's grace and His incomplete work and thereby seek to justify or at least seek to salve our conscience with respect to our inconsistency. We ought, however, to be careful not to lay the blame for our shortcomings at the feet of Him who loved us unto death.

I readily acknowledge the presence of the old man of sin in myself and in you. He is Pelagian to the core. Our enemy is with us till our hoary head is laid in the grave. But Christ calls us to fight in the battle of faith. Christ instructs us not to cuddle the old man of sin within or to make excuses for his presence...but to kill him.

Are you thinking about next years convention? See **A CONVENTION-NOTE Concerning The 36th Annual P.R.Y.P. Convention. Start planning money raising events now!!!!!!!!**

AROUND THE WORLD

by Beth Bos and Verna Klamer

Beth is a member of our First Church and Verna of our Hope Church.

This past summer we two girls were privileged with something that neither of us will ever forget. We traveled around the world and learned a lot. One of the things we realized was how fortunate we are to have been brought up in Christian homes and in a country in which we have almost anything we want, and nobody is starving nearby.

First, we went to Hawaii with Rev. Hanko. Here he watched us take off for Singapore, where we would stay for one month before meeting him and Prof. and Mrs. Hoeksema again.

We were on the plane for the whole day and spent the night in Bangkok, Thailand. The next day we reached Singapore. The Chinese people at whose home we were to stay picked us up, although we were ready to take the first plane back home again. These people were considered quite wealthy, but still their house wasn't like anything we were used to.

The food also took a lot of getting used to. Both of us ended up liking rice and fish. They eat a lot of this because it is so cheap there. Near the house we stayed at, was a housing complex (one square mile), which housed 250 thousand people. These apartments had three to five rooms apiece and sometimes a family with six kids shared a three room apartment.

In Singapore, there are 2.4 million people under very crowded conditions. The majority of the people are Buddhist. They are very superstitious and are very frightened by their religion. Above the doors of many houses or apartments, there are lights, a picture of

Budda, a mirror, burning sticks or simply just Chinese writing, all of which are supposed to scare away the evil spirits. They believe that if they do not lead a good life and obey Budda and all the gods, the gods will become angry and at the people's death they will be punished severely. We visited a place that showed the Chinese beliefs concerning heaven and hell. This is very real to the people and even to us it was very scary. Many Christians in Singapore will not visit this place, or any place that concerns Budda.

There are not many Christians in Singapore compared to the population. They belong to the Bible Presbyterian Churches. There are about twelve of these churches, made up of mostly young people. A lot of these young people are either persecuted or thrown out of the house by their parents because of their religion. This creates many problems in the church. The Bible Presbyterians are not very reformed in their beliefs. For many of the people, their main goal in life is winning people for the Lord, and seeing how many people they can convert in one day. Sunday is not a day that they keep only for the Lord. After all their talk about God we thought Sunday would be very important to them, but after church and lunch, Sunday is all done and the rest of the day is left to do what they want.

After Rev. Hanko and Prof. and Mrs. Hoeksema came to Singapore, we all visited a Chinese temple. Here we saw a little bit of the idolotry of the Buddhists. But it wasn't until we got to Bangkok that we really saw how awful the heathenism of the East was. We all took tours of two different Buddhist temples there. We were horrified at what we found in these temples. There were many people doing different things. There was buying and selling of many things, there were many

monks, and people worshipping. It's quite awful to see very poor people that have nothing, praying and offering incense to a stone image. Rows and rows of Buddas (each in a different position) line the walls of some temples. We saw one huge Buddha that was solid gold and all the rest of the large Buddas were either overlaid with gold, copper or marble, all with mother of pearl for eyes, nose, mouth, fingernails, etc. This was terrifying in itself to see that all these people are starving and give all they have to their god, because they are frightened of the consequences. Many monks, all dressed in orange were walking around and preparing incense. When we were in these temples, everything was so eerie, and it seemed as if God was so far away. This was an interesting experience, but one that we would not care to do again.

From Bangkok we flew to Zurich with one stop in Iran. This was one stop all of us would just as soon forget. The only point of real interest was the Arabs walking around.

In Zurich, which was very cold, we took a train up to the mountains. From there we took a bus farther into the Alps. It was there that we spent a beautiful Sunday. We could see the wonders of God's hands in the beauty of the mountains and all that was around us.

This was a good rest for everybody and especially for the ministers.

Monday was spent riding by train along the beautiful Rhine Valley through Germany. We saw lots of old Medieval castles and also the cathedral in Cologne.

After going through Germany by train we went to the Netherlands. This was very interesting. We saw some of the things we had often heard talked about, but had never expected to see. We spent one night in Amsterdam. From there we went to a town named Harligen where we also stayed for a night.

We had a hard time understanding the people there. We learned and saw from our trip there that the young people weren't very interested in the things of the church. In Amsterdam we could tell from the appearance that it was a very immoral city.

From Netherlands we took a train through Belgium to Luxembourg. We arrived at Luxembourg too late and too tired to do any sightseeing.

The next afternoon we boarded our plane for home. We couldn't wait to get home and back into our churches and be able to have fellowship with loved ones and friends. We were very thankful for this opportunity to see all these different things and for God's sovereign care in bringing us safely home.

NEWS From, For, and About Our Churches

by Karla Kalsbeek

FROM OUR EDGERTON CHURCH:

The membership papers of Mrs. M. Vander Walde were received from the Christian Reformed Church.

Miss Glenyce Brummel made confession of faith on November 23.

Mr. & Mrs. Art Bleyenbergh, Jr. rejoice in the birth of a daughter, Marideth Lynn, born November 13.

Mr. & Mrs. Joe Brummel were blessed with the birth of a baby girl,

Marijo Lynn, on November 23.

On November 29, those from junior high through young married age gathered for a volleyball game and refreshments.

FROM OUR HOLLAND CHURCH:

The membership papers of Mr. & Mrs. H. C. Lubbers were received from our Hudsonville Church.

Mr. Robert Van Dyke's membership papers were received from the Christian

Reformed Church.

The membership papers of Mr. & Mrs. John M. Bodbyl and two baptized children were received from our Hudsonville Church.

At their request the membership papers of Mr. & Mrs. B. Huizinga, Jr. and two baptized children were sent to their home.

The Young Adults' Society sponsored a potluck supper on October 17.

FROM OUR LOVELAND CHURCH:

A lecture to commemorate Reformation Day was given on November 7. The topic was "The Place of Reformation in the Church Today."

A talent program sponsored by the Ladies Circle was given on November 14.

FROM OUR REDLANDS CHURCH:

The public confession of faith of Kenneth Feenstra took place November 9.

FROM OUR SOUTHEAST CHURCH:

The public confession of faith of Grace Faber, Gerald Koning and Tom Slopsma took place on December 7.

The membership papers of Mr. & Mrs. Tim Heemstra and family were transferred to our Holland Church.

FROM OUR SOUTH HOLLAND CHURCH:

The Young People's Society sponsored a hayride on November 14.

Mr. & Mrs. Egbert Holleman, Jr. were blessed with the birth of a son, James Jay.

Mr. & Mrs. John Holleman were blessed with the birth of a daughter, Kristen Joy.

FROM OUR RANDOLPH CHURCH:

The papers of Mr. and Mrs. Al Fisher have been received.

The papers of Mr. & Mrs. Duane Alsum and one baptized child have been sent to our Southwest Church.

FROM OUR SOUTHWEST CHURCH:

The membership papers of Mr. George Bodbyl from Hudsonville Church and of Mrs. Bodbyl from Standale Baptist Church have been received.

The membership papers of Mr. & Mrs. John Zandstra and one baptized son have been received from our South Holland Church.

Mr. & Mrs. G. Bodbyl rejoice in the birth of a son born on October 17.

The membership papers of Mr. & Mrs. J. Buiten, Cindy and family have been transferred to our Hope Church.

The public confession of faith of Mrs. George Bodbyl took place on November 23.

FROM OUR FAITH CHURCH:

Public confession of faith of Miss Jan Hanko and Miss Cryss Westra took place on November 2.

FROM OUR HULL CHURCH:

The baptism certificate of Laura Brunsting was transferred to our Hudsonville Church.

The baptism certificate of Duane Netten comes from the Reformed Church of Doon.

FROM OUR HOPE CHURCH:

Mr. & Mrs. James Schimmel rejoice in the birth of a daughter, Naomi Ruth.

Mr. & Mrs. Roger Kamphuis were blessed with the birth of a son, Dennis Dale.

A Young People's Societies' Thanksgiving Day Mass Meeting was held on November 23 at Hope Church.

Hope School presented a program, "Thanks be to God," at First Church, on December 11.

The public confession of faith of Miss Kathy Lambregtse and Mr. Doug Griffioen took place on December 14.

ANNOUNCEMENT FROM THE FEDERATION BOARD

The Southwest Church Young People's Societies will be the hosts for the 1976 convention and not South Holland, Illinois as was previously announced. The host societies are already busy making plans for the coming convention. Below is the first of many informative convention newsletters from them. Each individual society also should begin making plans to assist them in any way they can. This includes money-raising projects, new ideas, and encouraging their members to attend the convention. We hope the enthusiasm of last year's convention will carry over to the 1976 convention. We pray for the Lord's blessing and guidance as we as individuals, societies, and Federation Board prepare for the convention.

CONVENTION-NOTE

Greeting in Christ from the 1976 publicity committee for the 36th annual P.R.Y.P. Convention, to be sponsored, D.V. by the Young People of Southwest Protestant Reformed Church.

In the last week of August, the 24th through the 27th, the 36th annual Young People's Convention will be held, D.V. at Camp Geneva, about 2 miles north of Tunnel Park on the shores of Lake Michigan.

This convention will be held at a different type of facility than at the last couple of conventions. Whereas the others were at very comfortable, plush facilities, the 36th annual convention will be much less plush, but still quite comfortable. A much different atmosphere and style will be present at Camp Geneva.

We need all and any help we can get while hosting this convention. We would greatly appreciate your participation at any or all of the various fund-raising projects. Any contribution will also be accepted with appreciation. Send all contributions to our finance committee chairman, Randy Boone. Send addressed to:

Randy Boone
1319 Den Hartog S.W.
Wyoming, Mich. 49509

More details will be given later, both in news-letters sent to each church and in the *Beacon Lights*.

Yours in Christ,
The publicity committee
Sandra Vander Woude, Chairman