

BEACON LIGHTS

*FOR PROTESTANT
REFORMED YOUTH*



OCTOBER, 1975

OUR REFORMATION



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Editorial

Another Pistle to you, My Grandchildren

by John M. Faber

Dear Kids:

You haven't had a letter from your old (I can remember when parents worried about bad boys smoking corn-silk cigarettes instead of the marijuana kind) grandfather in a long time. Now that you are back in school, I will use this letter to talk to you about your all-the-time need to be alert to your calling to make judgments about people, their (and your) words and actions. We are ever sitting in judgment - to put on trial - to 'try'. So come with me and let's eavesdrop on some conversations:

Mother: "Children, I have called you all indoors to talk to you about something that happened in our family. While cleaning in your bedrooms I uncovered a hidden paper-back book which your father and I believe should have no place in a Christian home such as ours. I will open this book at random and read the first paragraph I find on that page. (whereupon she reads that paragraph and they heard her say three swear-words and one obscene one.) I ask you now, does this book belong in our home? If you judge that it does not, I will expect the owner to destroy it before morning."

This was a very easy trial for her children. The book was destroyed. Now for another:

Father: "Tonight the whole family will gather about the television set in the living room and watch what the world has to offer us for our enjoyment. It is seven o'clock, turn it on Jim. While the commercials are on we will all write down our judgments upon the program. You must write whether it was good, bad or

neutral. You be the jury. The rules are very simple. All things in this house are to be judged by a standard. Just as when we want to know the length and width of a room we measure with a yardstick, a ruler or a measuring tape; each one of these are calibrated into inches and fractions thereof, standard over the whole country; so, the rule(r) which we use in this house is the Word of God. Simple, isn't it? We shall 'try' the TV programs with that rule(r). From 7 to 7:30 we shall watch, 'Bewitched'..... Now then, the next one is, 'Family Affair'..... What shall we watch now? Billy Graham? O.K. But that will be a little difficult for the younger ones to 'try' to see if He measures up to our Biblical yardstick..... 9:30, time for one more. Well, it looks like we have no choice. All the networks are carrying the movie, 'Three For The Road'.....there, bed time for you youngsters, and the rest of us will compare our test, I mean, 'try' papers."

Teacher: "Class, come to order. I want your undivided attention. As you walked past me into the room I detected an odor of marijuana wafting past my nose. One or more of you have been smoking pot at noon. Do you agree that the Board and the faculty of our school have the right to make and enforce rules? And do you agree that these rules meet the standard of the laws of the land and the Holy Scriptures? The law has ruled that the use of marijuana is taboo. Scripture rules that the abuse of our body is sin. Now I ask you to 'try' that offence this afternoon. Was it good, bad or neutral? How do you judge?"

Judge: "Ladies and gentlemen of the jury: You see before you this morning a man accused of breaking and entering, robbery, rape and murder. The Prosecuting Attorney will attempt to prove that he is guilty of these crimes performed in one incident in a home on the southeast side of this city. You will hear witnesses who will support this accusation, and also witnesses for the defense which will purport his innocence on any or all of the charges. The law is clear covering such crimes. It is your solemn duty to listen carefully to the testimony of the witnesses as well as to the arguments of the attorneys; you are the judges in this 'trial by law'. Mr. Prosecutor, proceed with your case.Ladies and gentlemen of the jury: You have seen the exhibits, you have heard the arguments and have heard the testimony of the witnesses. I have cited the various laws and statutes covering the crimes of which the defendant stands accused. You must now determine the guilt or innocence of the defendant in each of these crimes. You have all you need to 'try' this man. If he is innocent you must set him free; if you find him guilty on one, two, three or all of the offences you must so rule that the Court may impose sentence upon him according to the degree of his guilt. You may now retire to the jury room to deliberate and to reach a verdict."

Pastor: "I am very pleased that most of you have come to this catechism class so well prepared. Because you have learned the answers to the questions in this lesson you will be able to test the instruction I am to give you to see if it meets the standard of the Holy Scriptures.....Now then let us look at today's lesson on 'God's Work in Eternity' and further study His Decrees of Election and Reprobation, and answer the questions, 'What can you say as to God's Counsel and man's responsibility,' and, 'How about God's Decree and a General

Well-Meaning Gracious Offer of Salvation on the part of God?' Finally we should learn how we can heed the injunction of Holy Writ to 'make your calling and election sure'. We shall use our open Bibles as the final word on all these questions. Let's 'try' them before the Bar of God's Justice."

Radio Evangelist: "God loves you! Every one of you! I plead with you to accept the Lord Jesus Christ as your personal Saviour before it is too late! The mouth of Hell is wide open waiting to swallow you up if you do not make this all-important decision. Make that choice right now! Accept Him right this minute! Do it wherever you are, in your car, in your home or right there on the beach! He died for you, the least you can do is accept His gracious offer of eternal life. Say it right now: 'I accept your offer dear Jesus, save me from Hell! Hallelujah, Amen!' "

O.K. grandchildren all. Remember you are the jury hearing, determining, "trying" all your thoughts, words and deeds and testing all that comes to your eyes and ears from the outside. Especially that which comes to you in the name of religion. The First Epistle of the Apostle John gives us an earnest warning on that score. Yours is the task to "try" the so-called evangelists and radio ministers who say, "Thus saith the Lord." You must use the rule(r) of the Holy Scriptures to determine their claim whether it is true or false. I find a title to my letter in the Epistle's fourth chapter, in its first verse. What! a title at the bottom instead of the top! Your grandma used to make a pine-apple upside-down-cake: your grandfather has just now made a fine-sample-upside-down letter. The title? Oh yes:

"Try the Spirits"

Love, Gramps

.....

Feature

OUR REFORMATION

by Rick Noorman

Rick is a member of our Southeast Church.

Reformation. What does it mean to you? Is it merely some historical fact that you learned in school? Is it just a day that you celebrate every year by going to a lecture? How much do we really know about the Reformation? How much do we really care? After all that was almost 460 years ago!

But wait! Let's look back and see what happened back there in 1517. It was on October 31 of that year that Martin Luther nailed his 95 theses to the door of the church at Wittenberg. This event marked the beginning of the Reformation. The church that came out of the Reformation was the continuation of the true Church of Christ of which our churches today are historically a part.

Let's take a closer look at the theses of Luther and the condition of the Roman Catholic Church at that time. The main thrust of the theses dealt with indulgences. Indulgences were pieces of paper, sold by the church to the people, that would take place of punishment for sins. It was the sale of forgiveness of sins for money! Buying an indulgence was like buying a ticket to heaven. Oh, the poor people who couldn't afford indulgences. They would have to pay for their own sins in purgatory. After all, you must pay for your salvation. You can't expect it to be given unto you. Following this same logic, if man can save himself in this way he can't possibly be as bad as everyone believed he was. Certainly not **totally** depraved! He must have some good in him if he can will to save himself.

Martin Luther, with his 95 theses attacked the practices of indulgences and more importantly the doctrines that laid behind these practices. He also fought the idea of the free will of man in his book "The Bondage of the Will". In this book he proclaimed that man's will was prisoner and a slave to the will of Satan.*

So there stood Luther and his small but growing groups of Protestants on the foundation of the Scriptures. The Infal-
lable Word of God!

But what has happened to these truths of the Reformation of 460 years ago? A large percentage of the world still claims to be Protestant. We live in a "Protestant" nation. Yet most of Protestantism lives in total disregard for the Scriptures and the truths proclaimed in the Reformation of the 16th century.

Can it be that these truths don't apply anymore? Impossible! God and his Word are eternal and unchangeable! This is why it is so important for us to know and understand the workings of not only the 16th century Reformation, but the entire history of the church.

Today, much of the Protestant world goes along with the Roman Catholic Church of the 16th century, in proclaiming that man can have a part in his own salvation. Oh, he can't buy indulgences, but he must fill certain quotas of good works. He must accept the offer of the gospel and let Christ into his heart. Even the church from which the Protestant Reformed Church was formed in 1924, is leaning in this direction when they claim in the second point of common grace that the Holy Spirit preserves some "good" in fallen man thus restraining the process of

sin making human life and society possible. Can't they see that these are the same errors that Luther, the leader of their Reformation fought in 1517?

We must see it! It is a beautiful heritage! We must know and understand and fight for it! We must fight with all that we have to preserve it. And all the while in our fight we must be thanking God, that he has chosen to open our eyes that we may see these truths.

"Therefore, my beloved brethren, be ye steadfast, unmovable, always abound-

ing in the work of the Lord, forasmuch as ye know that your labor is not in vain in the Lord." I Cor. 15:38.

"Watch ye, stand ye fast in the faith, quit you like men, be strong." I Cor. 16:13.

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*For a more detailed account of the works of Luther and the doctrines he defended, read Rev. David Engelsma's Pamphlet "The Reformation and Twentieth Century Protestantism".

Feature

TELEVISION And The Christian Home

by Phil Dykstra

Phil is a member of our Hudsonville Church.

There are many perils which threaten our covenant homes in these last days. These last days are certainly visible to the believer who reads and sees the signs of the approaching coming of our Savior. The ungodly world, with all their ungodly deeds, lusts after sin and mocks all that is good. This mockery is certainly very real and openly practiced in our day. The ungodly are murmurers, complainers, walking after their own lusts, and their mouth speaketh great swelling words; showing respect of persons for the sake of advantage, Jude 16. The ungodly are as wild waves of the sea, foaming out their own shame; wandering stars, for whom the blackness of darkness hath been reserved forever in hell. And we must see in this article about television; that these

ungodly men, who are vessels of wrath fitted for hell, are brought into the living rooms and homes of many of our covenant families.

Television; or let me say Satan, has various means and ways to try to destroy God's elect. In Satan's workings on the T.V. screen in many covenant homes, he has his very subtle programs, and also some very open programs which we can call nothing less than **SIN**. Let me mention at this point, that we are talking about T.V. with the switch turned on. There is no argument with the T.V. turned off, then it is just as any other piece of furniture. There is nothing sinful with the T.V. box just standing there, no more than the garbage can just standing in its proper place. But as soon as one turns on his T.V. it's like opening his garbage can----full of filth.

Now let us look at just a few examples of how Satan uses his subtlety on the T.V. screen. First, there is the program called "Sesame Street". This is an educational program for children to learn the ABC's, and also to learn to count. Do we send our children to the public schools for their covenant instruction? Of course not! It is principally wrong to permit our covenant children to be trained by worldly men. This certainly denies the duty and privilege of covenant parents to instruct the children which God has given to them. We must strongly hold to the truth of covenant, parental, Christian education. If we believe this truth, and we do, then certainly we will not have our children educated by the world and immoral and ungodly men. Moreover; there are the geographical pictures. Some of these can be good, but there is always the subtle danger of the lie. Many times even these programs are filled with the notion that the things in nature evolved. God is certainly not taught as being the Creator and Sustainer of all things. Remember, if we place our children before these subtle attempts of the evil one, who is always trying to deceive us and our children; we are setting before them a stumbling block. God forbid that we are guilty of this! Probably more examples could be cited as subtle ways in which Satan comes into our covenant homes by way of the T.V., but this should suffice.

Now let us look at some of the open sinfulness which can be viewed on the T.V. Marriage is openly mocked, authority is something which is laughed at and made fun of. Submission to authority is something of the past. Vile language and jokes are heard repeatedly, worldly dress, or more correctly the undress and sex is just about in every program and even in many commercials.

Let me pause here and ask the question, is T.V. really all this evil? Are there not any good programs on T.V.? What about news casts? I would hasten to

answer, if one buys a T.V. just to watch the news, or maybe a nature picture, these reasons I have no argument with. But I ask, how many buy a T.V. just for these reasons? I may be wrong, but I think the percentage would be close to zero.

When T.V. is introduced into the covenant home, I believe the godly atmosphere is changed. Remember, 80% of that which we see is remembered, and we remember 20% of that which we hear. Now, if we fritter away our time in watching T.V., there is nothing more certain than that we shall lose our appetite for the Scriptures and our desire to pray. We will become weak in our souls, and even lose the joy of God's salvation, and the blessings of the confidence that our sins are forgiven. Our thought will not be those of a pilgrim and a stranger upon this earth.

Some even say, "But I would not allow my child to see everything that appears on T.V." But is it any different spiritually, if you watch these programs and not your children? Will it not effect you as well as your children? Even if you are selective in the programs your children watch will they not be so curious so as to watch those programs which you have forbidden them to watch? You can be sure, that when they are old enough to stay home when Dad and Mom go away, they will certainly view those programs which you have before forbidden them to watch. Let us not deceive ourselves. Beware! Beware of the old serpent that is entering your homes through this magic box. It carries the poison of hell! There was a day when a growing boy was not permitted to see a burlesque performance, but now Junior gets it served with his chicken dinner, and his breakfast toast. We must admit, that T.V. certainly has an influence on our covenant homes.

One more brief consideration is that of the similarity between T.V. in our covenant homes, and theatre attendance. I believe they are one and the same.

Parents who prohibit their children to go to shows are really very inconsistent. What is shown at the theatre is also seen on the T.V. screen sooner or later. Into what paths are covenant parents leading their children with these inconsistencies? Surely not into the paths of righteousness. Covenant parents are a stumbling-block to their children in this area of life.

I will not go into the discussion of the sin of dramatic productions, acting, the imitation of others, which are all presented on T.V. These thoughts can easily be for another paper or discussion.

In closing, what must we say about all this T.V. discussion? I firmly believe all our covenant homes must and should get rid of this evil, subtle and dangerous tool of the Evil One. Many problems and temptations and inconsistencies will be eliminated. In the second place, we must be admonished of this evil off our pulpits, through the preaching of the Word. God's

people must certainly be warned to flee all the sinful lusts, pleasures and entertainment which the ungodly world presents. We, as God's elect have a big enough struggle against our own flesh; to fight the battle of faith. Why then must believers introduce this charming box into our homes, which can do us no good. Remember, our homes are our Bethel, where God's presence is seen in our walk of life and in our faithful instruction to the children God has given us. Love not the world, neither the things that are in the world. We are called upon to walk as pilgrims and strangers in the midst of this world. Our power is in our separateness from the world, not in our affiliation with it. Covenant people, the coming of the Lord draweth nigh, now is our salvation nearer than when we first believed. Let us keep our hearts true to Christ, and our covenant homes free from the world.

OUR GOD, HIS PEOPLE

He is our God, a wondrous thought!
That we through Jesus have been brought
To occupy this holy place
Where we may see His blessed face.

We are His people, glorious thought!
That we by Jesus have been bought
To be His own, a holy race,
Not through our works, but only grace.

We are His people, He our God.
Let us in love His greatness laud,
And thank him oft' that we may be
His own because of Calvery.

The Savior comes and walks with me,
And sweet communion here have we;
He gently leads me with His hand,
For this is heaven's borderland.

A sweet perfume upon the breeze
Is borne from ever vernal trees,
And flowers that never fading grow
Where streams of life forever flow.

The zephyrs seem to float to me,
Sweet sounds of heaven's melody,
As angels, with the white robed throng,
Join in the sweet redemption song.

O Beulah Land, sweet Beulah Land,
As on thy highest mount I stand,
I look away across the sea,
Where mansions are prepared for me,
And view the shining glory shore,
My heaven, my home for evermore.

Dwelling in this land himself the Seer could prophecy of it and sing. "Thou shalt no more be termed Azubah (Forsaken), neither shall thy land any more be termed Shemamah (Desolate), but thou shalt be called Hephzibah (My delight is in her), and thy land Beulah (Married), for the Lord delighteth in thee, and thy land shall be married" (Isa. 62:4). Thomas Scott, in harmony with the New Testament, sees the Christian Church represented here in the virgin and her sons. John Calvin is very right when he says, "this relates strictly to the Church...God being the Husband of his Church...marries to his Church all the nations that are assembled to her." For, as the Seer prophecies, "the Gentiles shall see Thy righteousness, and all kings Thy glory" (62:2). This was historically fulfilled in the preaching of the gospel by the Church through the apostles (Acts 2:9-11; Rom. 15:9-12,16,18). Beulah (Married), says Delitzsch, is "the loving relation in which the Church (ital., RCH) stands to its God." John Gill calls this a prophecy of the glory of the Church in the latter day, when the presence of God will be very manifest in His churches, and that Hephzibah and the land of Beulah are fit names for the Church of Christ. To this agrees the whole Book of the Song of Sings, so bright with the love Christ has for His Church. So Christ delights in His

Church now, clothing it with righteousness, cleansing it with His blood, filling it with His Spirit. He will delight in His Church when it shall come down from heaven as a bride adorned for her husband, and His tabernacle shall eternally be with redeemed and glorified men. Then He will be presenting His Church to himself and delighting in it as a glorious Church without spot or wrinkle or any such thing. So Beulah (Married) signifies the Church married to Christ from all eternity, and is the house and family of God full of sons and daughters born in her to Christ, both of Jews and Gentiles. In this Connection, Isaiah 60 is fulfilled in Revelation 21. (Cp. Isa. 60, v. 3 with Rev. 21:24; vv. 4-5 with Rev. 21:26; v. 10 with R 21:24,26; v.11 with R 21:25; v. 20 with R 21:4; v. 21 with R 21:27). Beulah Land, then, is the communion of saints in the church on earth, their enjoyment of the preaching of the Word and the sacraments, their continued and faithful dwelling in her fellowship, ways and worship. Beulah Land is the local and visible church institute where the saints are united in love to her and her Lord, confessing the same faith, joining in concerted worship, and walking with her and her testimony before the world in all the commandments of the Lord. Beulah Land is no mere optional, occasional, care-free attendance of the church at one's convenience, as though it were some sort of country club organized for the casual pleasure of its members.

Who, O Lord, shall dwell with Thee
In the temple of Thy grace?
Who Thy constant guest shall be
In Thy high and holy place?

In answer to that question, dwellers in Beulah Land have such devotion to the true church institute as a young man married to a virgin, who faithfully loves her, seeks her, delights in her, keeps her, protects her, fights for her and lives with her. (Isa. 62:5). But such devotion is a rarity in this world.

When the virgin's sons are called "the holy people, the redeemed of the Lord," being "sought out," what is this but the Christian Church and her sons (v.

12)? Nor do we have in this chapter a return of the Jews to the "holy land", but rather that the Jews are restored to a place of honor with God in the Church of Jesus Christ. Not the Jews returning to Palestine, but the church becoming co-extensive with the world, is in view. This is realized in the coming of Christ as our Salvation, and the accomplishing of His will and work in the preaching of the gospel in all the world to the end thereof (v. 11), and in the gathering of Jews and Gentiles (vv. 1-2) into His cleansed and purified Church. Christ calls His ministers watchmen (v. 6), and appoints their labors, which must be for the Church, and no opposition is to hinder or stay them. Elders are also watchmen, and are aids

and overseers of the ministers to see that this labor for the Church is accomplished. When ministers and elders faithfully serve Christ, the air of Beulah Land indeed is sweet and pleasant because it is so carefully cultivated, cared for, protected and no longer Forsaken. Beulah Land is the place where the Church in its earthly manifestation is kept and delights to be kept in the unbreakable bond of covenant love.

I am dwelling in Beulah Land!

Are you?

*The last in book-length comment on places and characters in Bunyan's "The Pilgrim's Progress."

Contribution

MY TWO YEARS AS YOUTH COORDINATOR

by Jim Schipper

What an experience! And what a way to close the term with a Young People's Convention (35th), in which we helped celebrate the 50th Anniversary of our churches! What a group of young people bent on pushing instructors, leaders, and chaperones to the limit, only to see them sit down with you and discuss things pertaining to God's Word and our mutual spiritual lives.

When asked to write about my experiences as Youth Coordinator, I can't limit this article to our last convention only. My term spanned two years, most of which was spent doing things and working on projects apart from the conventions. And although I have been connected with young people apart from being Youth Coordinator (Young People's Society leader at South West Church), working

with the Federation Board to plan activities for all our young people has been something special. The Youth Coordinator not only is involved with the planning but also the activities themselves. I don't think I'll ever forget the car wash (and impromptu showers) and the pancake breakfast during my term.

But there is much more than that kind of activity experiences in being Youth Coordinator. There is the planning and thinking of activities which are fun but above all spiritually beneficial for our Young People. The Fed. Board tries to have activities which can enrich the spiritual lives of our youth. The special occasion "Mass Meetings" which are peculiar to the Grand Rapids area are only one of the ways in which the Fed. Board tries to have spiritual activities for the

young people. Outings as well, with time set aside for Scriptural discussions, are planned by the Fed. Board with the Youth Coordinator involved in these plans.

But as everyone knows, kids will be kids. Fun comes first and at the expense often of the spiritual. This causes much concern to any spiritually minded adult. However, in spite of our concern, and the apparent unconcern of the young people, God uses even these feeble means to fulfill His Purpose according to election.

For that reason, and the fact that our children when they chum together usually stay together in church too, I would like to encourage our parents both from the East and the West to instruct our young people to attend our Young People's activities. This means not only the conventions, but any activities put on by our Young People, such as parties, but especially programs and outings where spiritual instruction is given. I don't believe our people in general encourage their children enough to attend these things. In fact I hear some parents say to their children, "If you want to go there, - O.K. but if you don't that's O.K. too." In our family we talk these activities up with our children. And if this means we have to bring them here and there, and maybe pick them up again, we do it gladly, knowing they are with some of our young people of like faith, covenant seed. I'm convinced, that with the right kind of talking and encouragement, our young people activities would be attended much better.

The Youth Coordinator is intricately involved with our young people. This

requires time and effort. This means taking time off from work. sometimes evenings when the activities are held, and in general attending everything with our young people.

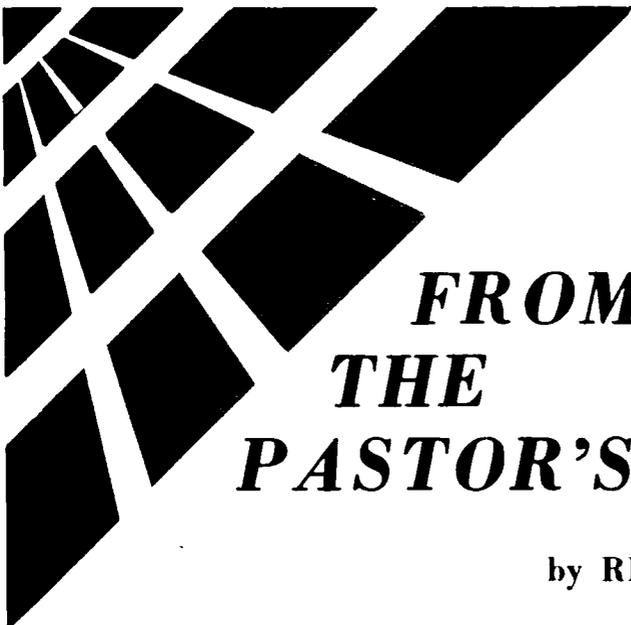
To many an adult, I'm sure this sounds either boring or like kid's stuff. And in a certain sense it is. But I'm convinced our young people need adult leadership even in their fun and games. To me it's like enjoying a good time with one's own family. The Youth Coordinator and his wife are an important part of such a big family relationship.

Our young people are our church of tomorrow. They need every bit of encouragement and direction we can give them. They need to know there is a bond of unity and a communion of saints in togetherness. And the Youth Coordinator is an aid to that end. The Fed. Board generally knows the right and proper way to go and the Youth Coordinator and Spiritual Advisor (Rev. Van Overloop at this time) helps to work out these decisions. It's been our mutual desires to see our Young People walk in the right way.

To conclude, the experience has been rewarding in many ways. I think I'm a better parent for the experience. Also in dealing with the seed of the Covenant, I've learned to appreciate them much more. I've thoroughly enjoyed the work and feel if ever our young people need help, in anything and I'm able and available, I'd be glad to help. Thanks for the opportunity to serve.

There are still plenty of records by the Protestant Reformed Mass Choir left. Anyone interested in purchasing "The Songs of Easter", send \$3.00 to:

*Pat Rau
1006 Wilson Ave S. W.
Grand Rapids, Michigan 49504*



FROM THE PASTOR'S STUDY

by **REV. M. KAMPS**

Are We Pelagian Too?

The last time we discussed this subject we recalled that our former leaders condemned the theory of common grace as Pelagianism. But it now remains to briefly demonstrate the truth of this assertion. However, before we do, I want to remind you of what essentially happened in 1924. We did not withdraw from the C.R.C., our mother Church. She expelled her faithful sons exactly because they were unvacillatingly faithful to the Scriptures and the Confessions. Our fathers were cast out of their church home simply because they would not allow their spiritual mother to adulterate or pollute the milk of the Word, i.e., that God's grace is only particular and sovereignly bestowed through Christ to the elect alone. That sacred truth the C.R.C. wanted to adulterate. The C.R.C. cast out the truth of a sovereign particular grace in 1924 when it officially adopted the theory of common grace. Remember this sad fact: the C.R.C. did not merely cast out some men, but it cast out principally the precious truth of the gospel of Christ

crucified for the elect alone.

Now to proceed with a brief demonstration of the fact that common grace is Pelagianism, which you recall is a denial of the Reformed truth of total depravity. What is total depravity? Simply this: that man by nature, apart from the saving grace of God in Christ, is wholly incapable of doing any good and inclined to all evil. (Heidelberg Cat. Q.8) Man in all his thinking and willing is completely enslaved to the power of sin. This dominion of sin and corruption man does not hate but loves by nature. Natural man always willingly, freely, gladly does the evil and he hates the good. The sinner apart from regeneration can only do the evil. Proof? Listen to the apostle Paul, "Because the carnal mind is enmity against God: for it is not subject to the law of God, neither indeed can be. For they that are in the flesh cannot please God." (Romans 8:7-8) I will not belabor the point by quoting Romans 3:9-18, and Genesis 6:5.

We should point out that most, if not all C.R.C. leaders of the past and possibly

even many today claim to believe and teach the Scriptural doctrine of total depravity. It is one of the precious petals of the "tulip." Fact is, they claim that total depravity necessitates or occasions the need of common grace in the life of fallen humanity. For, it is claimed, without common grace life as we know it would cease to be. Man would be a devil if it was not for the operation of common grace. But the fact is, they allege, that man under common grace now does so much that is good and commendable before God. This assertion is based on their empirical analysis of society. In the light of visible facts of everyday life it just does not make sense, according to the C.R.C., to say that man by nature only does the evil. They instruct us to think of all the good that the unbeliever does, whereby the unbeliever often puts the believer to shame! Thus men reasoned.

Having rationalistically and empirically determined their position with respect to anthropology, all that was left to be done was to declare officially that their "theory" was indeed the very Word of God and in full harmony with the Creeds. Thus were born the three points of common grace adopted by the C.R.C. in 1924. The first point of this theory teaches, "that there is also a certain favor or grace of God which He shows to His creatures in general. This is evident from...which deal with the general offer of the gospel..." This first point of common grace presupposes a pelagian conception of man. Man is not dead in sin, but fully able to accept the well-meant offer of salvation that comes to all who hear the preaching of the gospel. This erroneous conception of the nature of the gospel and its preaching was alleged as proof that "there is a certain favor or grace of God" to the reprobate who hear the preaching of the gospel. Of course, this grace is non-saving.

One lie calls for another lie. The first lie is that in the preaching of the gospel God well-meaningly "offers" salvation to all who hear both to the elect and to the

reprobate. The second lie, by necessity, is that the reprobate man to whom this salvation is offered is also able in and of himself to accept the offer...which is thinly disguised free-willism, which heresy is most dramatically and forthrightly preached by zealous Arminians, who theologically have as the fountain head of their "theories" Pelagious' views as refined by Jacobus Arminius.

Incredible it is that the C.R.C. would try to prove their ideas of the preaching of the gospel as grace to all who hear by quoting the Canons of Dortrecht which were written in an attempt to root out of the Reformed church of the Netherlands Pelagianism and the general grace teachings of Arminianism.

The second point of common grace is briefly this, that there "is a restraint of sin in the life of the individual man and in the community...God by the general operations of His Spirit, without renewing the heart of man restrains the unimpeded breaking out of sin..." We certainly believe that God through various external means restrains the activity or outward actions of the ungodly as well as the actions of the devil, this is our confession according to article 13 of the Belgic Confession. But the second point of common grace is not talking about external means of restraint and of God's restraining the outward life or activity of wicked men. The second point is speaking of the Work of the Holy Spirit, of the heart of man, and of the restraint of sin in that heart! The second point teaches that the actions of men are different than we might expect them to be because God by his Spirit restrains sin in the uncleansed heart of the wicked. This alleged work of God is done as a manifestation of His common grace to man and society.

The third point of common grace is briefly, "Relative to the third point, which is concerned with the question of civil righteousness as performed by the unregenerate, though incapable of doing any saving good, can do civil good...God without renewing the heart so influences

man that he is able to perform civil good..."

The second and third points of common grace are inseparably joined together. Their inseparable relationship is that of cause and effect. Just as a nauseating odor of a dead, decaying animal must have its source in a specific maggot invested carrion, so also the odious stench of the third point has as its source and cause the second point of this Pelagian theory. Let me briefly demonstrate this cause and effect relationship of the second and third points of common grace. The third point states the effect; "civil good" or civil righteousness" is performed by the unregenerate. Man, whose heart is not renewed, has as the issues of his heart many acts of civil righteousness well pleasing in God's sight, the God who discerns the inward parts. The fact of the unregenerate's deeds of righteousness cannot be denied, for experience teaches us this obvious truth, so we are told. Think of man's love for his neighbor, his compassion for the distressed, his dedication to the amelioration of man's physical, material, and psychological state and condition. Think of all the schools, hospitals, laws for the proper ordering of society, state and Federal programs for the alleviation of the burdens of the underprivileged! All these deeds and the thoughts that lie behind them are accounted ethically good and as civil righteousness well pleasing to God. Further, think of unregenerate man's labor unions and the good they have accomplished with the sanctioned power of rebellion. Think of unbelieving man's entertaining and amusing "good movies" and television programs. Experience teaches us all about the ethical good, the righteousness, of the ungodly.

How does a totally depraved man, dead in sin (Eph. 2:1-2), do all this good in the eyes of our holy God, you ask our mother church? Here is her answer: God restrains sin by the common grace

operations of His Spirit as He influences unregenerate man for good. Thus points two and three of this Pelagian theory are joined by a cause and effect relationship.

You understand, reader, that the "totally depraved sinner" of the C.R.C is an abstraction. He really does not exist. Man **would be** wholly unable to do the good if it were not for the presence of common grace. Man is not dead in sin, wholly incapable of doing the good and inclined to all evil, he only **would be** such. There never was a man who actually only performed evil in the sight of God...well maybe one exception...Hitler, who resisted successfully the almighty Spirit's influences. But for the rest of the unbelieving reprobate they must be considered as having done much good, acceptable to God.

When the apostle Paul wrote that man is unable to keep the law of God, he described reality. i.e., as things really are with sinners fallen in Adam. (Romans 8:7-8) When Paul said that "there is none that doeth good, no not one," he was not declaring what unregenerate man **would be**, if it wasn't for common grace. Paul was declaring in God's name, who alone discerns the heart of men, what man really is by nature in all his thoughts, desires and deeds.

But the C.R.C. said "no" to Paul. They said "no" to the testimony of the Spirit of Christ in His Church, for the Church confesses that this is what man is by nature: "Are we then so corrupt that we are wholly incapable of doing any good and inclined to all evil? Indeed we are." (Heidelberg Cat. Question and Answer 8) And, importantly, this confession knows of only one exception...regeneration. But the C.R.C. claims that there are two exceptions...common grace that enables the unbeliever to do ethical good or civil righteousness **and** regeneration which enables the elect to do a so-called saving good. The theory of common grace is a myth. It stands as an attempt by men to

contradict the God declared reality.

But there is an internal logical problem in the second and third points of common grace. It is this, how does a restraining action in the heart of the sinner produce or make possible something good? How are the unregenerate enabled to do good by a restraining force? We can understand how it is, when men "cap" a foul fountain of bitter water that these bitter waters are not allowed to flow forth. The bitter water is held within by force. It is restrained. But how would it be possible by capping a foul fountain of bitter water that one could cause the fountain to produce "sweet water?" In other words we cannot understand how the alleged restraining influences of the Holy Spirit as the agent of common grace, causes the depraved unregenerate heart to manifest itself in civil righteousness.

Pelagianism of old taught that Adam's sin and punishment did not affect his posterity. Human nature was not corrupted. Man is able to do much good. The theory of common grace established

and maintained by the C.R.C. teaches that Adam's sin and punishment did affect his posterity. We are by nature guilty in Adam and under the death penalty and corrupted by sin, but there is more...God restrains this operation of His curse upon man by common grace, which activity of the Spirit "somehow" causes man under the curse of death to do much civil good or righteousness.

So the conclusion of the whole matter is this - that the theory of common grace and Pelagianism ultimately teach the same thing: natural man does much that is ethically good and well pleasing in God's sight; and man is not in fact, really totally depraved performing only evil. Thus the common grace theory hatched in '24 denies the reality as it is declared to be in God's Word concerning the truth of total depravity. The theory of common grace, which Hoeksema, Danhof and Ophoff could not sign for conscience sake before God, is a Pelagian idea condemned by the Church of Christ on the basis of the Word of God.



A Cheerful Giver

by Jan Hanko

In his second letter to the Corinthians, chapter nine verse seven, Paul writes: "Every man according as he purposeth in his heart, so let him give; not grudgingly, or of necessity: for God loveth a cheerful giver." This is God's command to us, also. In the Heidelberg Catechism

we read in question and answer 103: "What does God require in the fourth commandment? First, that the ministry of the gospel and schools be maintained... and that I...contribute to the relief of the poor as becomes a Christian..." This most certainly includes supporting the church

with our money, not grudgingly but with a cheerful and willing heart as Paul instructs the Corinthians.

How easy it is for us as young people to forget this Christian duty, or simply leave it up to our parents. How often, when the collection plate is passed at church, singspirations or catechism, don't we just quickly pass it by. When society dues must be paid it seems that the money must be forced from us and when we do pay it's only because the treasurer keeps a record. But yet, how readily we can spend money for a new car, motorcycle, or fancy clothes. Shouldn't we as God's Covenant Young People be much more willing to give to the ministry of God's Word?

In the Old Testament the Israelites are commanded; "Thou shalt truly tithe all the increase of thy seed, that the field bringeth forth year by year." Deuteronomy 14:22. A tithe was then considered to be one tenth of their income. The Israelites were required to give God one tenth of all that He had given them. Today we are freed from this Old Testament Law, but does this mean that we can give less? It should not: it should rather encourage us to give more. Give more, not grudgingly, but cheerfully and in the fear

of God.

We must give everything in the fear of God, only then is it true giving. To give in order to get something in return is not giving. We must give simply for the sake of giving. We cannot give with the attitude of "I have to but I really don't want to". If we give grudgingly we are misusing God's gifts, for all that we own is the Lord's. We must give as the Lord has blessed us always remembering that "The earth is the Lord's and the fulness thereof; the world, and they that dwell therein." Psalm 24:1.

We are called upon to give what God has entrusted to our care. God created man, gave him dominion over the earth, and blessed him; we are therefore called upon to serve God, walk in His fear and maintain the ministry of His word. We can trust that God will continue to bless us with earthly goods as long as it pleases Him to keep His church here on earth. God will bless us with enough for our own physical needs and for the maintainance of His gospel. We however have the duty to give cheerfully of God's bountiful blessings. The child of God who is truly thankful for his salvation will give with a cheerful heart.

Book Review

THE GOLDEN BOOKLET OF THE TRUE CHRISTIAN LIFE by John Calvin; Baker Book House, Reprint June 1965; 96 pp.; \$1.45

by Bill Lafferty

Bill is a member of our Faith Church.

This is a booklet that Calvin included as part of his Institutes and because of its easy reading and practical information it has become a popular work. The booklet is broken down into five chapters and each heading deals with the conduct of a true

Christian in the midst of a crooked and unrepentant world.

Much emphasis is placed on true spiritual progress with warnings to shake off false piety and lip service. "The Gospel is not a doctrine of the tongue, but of life. It cannot be grasped by reason and

memory only, but it is fully understood when it possesses the whole soul, and penetrates to the inner recesses of the heart." (p. 17) But progress must show itself if a Christian is manfully fighting temptation and attempts to live aright.

Especially important and beautiful is the chapter on self-denial. In this section Calvin points out that in order to fulfill the royal law, one must abandon himself in the service to others and seek the welfare of the neighbor above his own. "How extremely difficult it is for you dutifully to seek the advantage of your neighbor, unless you quit all selfish consideration and almost forget yourself." (p. 30) And it is by forgetting ourselves that we also learn the virtue of humility. We have to go against the grain in this respect because we are first only interested in our own merits and accomplishments. And in a sense we all have "I" problems. "To live happily, the evils of false ambition and self-love must be plucked from our hearts by the roots." (p. 29)

We are told to prepare ourselves for difficult lives as **Christ** has told us to take up our crosses and follow Him because in cross-bearing we learn patience and in patience - humility. And it is humility we Christians need in order to quench the pride of the flesh. The Cross strengthens, overcomes laziness, prevents backsliding, brings us into subjection and restrains our arrogance. And it is through loss of relatives, personal and business failures, loss of wealth and comforts, disease, famine that we realize how really frail we

are. Under these burdens we turn our eyes to Christ and learn to rely on Him for strength and relief. We also accept the fact that, "The Lord planned our sorrow, so let us submit to His will." (p. 63)

On a positive note we must show thankfulness for all God's gifts to us and learn to use them without taking sinful pleasure in them. This life, he states, is not to be looked upon as having no good thing in it; and we may not hide and isolate ourselves from the world. We must live in this valley of tears until we are removed by God's hand.

The closing chapters of the book deal with the subject of the death of believers. This subject is avoided by philosophers and scientists. But the Christian looks upon death with anticipation and longing. "But this we may positively state that nobody has made any progress in the school of Christ unless he cheerfully looks forward towards the day of his death, and towards the day of the final resurrection." (p. 79) While we are called, each one in his own particular area of life, to live here as witnesses of God's goodness and mercy, we must radiate and reflect those attributes to people around us. This is so difficult while we go about our daily work and we get so bogged down with our own problems that we forget the message we are supposed to relate to others. "It will be no small comfort for his cares, labors, troubles, and other burdens, when a man knows that in all these matters God is his guide." (p. 96)

It is an inexpressible grief to me to see the church spending its energies in a vain attempt to lower its testimony to suit the ever-changing setiment of the world about it.

Benjamin B. Warfield

The above is an example of a poem or short saying that is nice to put in fill places. I thank the reader who sent these in. We urge more readers to send some in.

NEWS From, For, and About Our Churches

by Karla Kalsbeek

FROM OUR SOUTHWEST CHURCH:

Mr. and Mrs. E. Lotterman rejoice in the birth of a son.

The Convocation service of our Seminary was held on September 3 in Southwest Church.

The membership papers of Mrs. Judith Brands, nee Hoving, have been received from our Hudsonville Church.

The membership papers of Mr. and Mrs. John Hilton and one baptized child have been received from the Orthodox Presbyterian Church of Cornville, Maine.

FROM OUR HOPE CHURCH:

The public confession of faith of Cindi Dykstra and Jeanne Zandstra took place on September 14.

The membership papers of Mr. Daryle Kuiper have been received from the Christian Reformed Church.

The membership papers of Mr. Len Dykstra and his baptized son Brian have been received from our First Church.

The membership papers of Mr. and Mrs. Bill Kamps and their baptized son, Earl, and of Mr. Henry Kamps have been sent to our Southwest Church.

Mr. and Mrs. Robert Kuiper rejoice in the birth of a daughter, Amy Lynn.

The membership papers of Mrs. Don Kamphuis, nee Mary Faber, have been received from our First Church.

The membership paper of Mrs. Jon Engelsma, nee Floretta Hoekstra, have been received from our Hudsonville Church.

FROM OUR SOUTHEAST CHURCH:

Mr. Peter Vander Schaaf and Miss Dorothy Spriensma were united in marriage on August 14.

Mr. and Mrs. Bruce Bomers rejoice in the birth of a daughter born September 1.

Mr. Steve Ophoff and Miss Karen Flikkema were married on September 19 in First Church.

Mr. and Mrs. John Flikkema Jr. rejoice in the birth of a son born September 12.

FROM OUR HULL CHURCH:

Miss Donna Hoekstra and Mr. Jay De Wit were united in marriage on September 19 in Hull Church.

FROM OUR SOUTH HOLLAND CHURCH:

The membership papers of Mr. and Mrs. John Haak and five baptized children have been received from our Holland Church.

The membership papers of Miss Carol De Jong were transferred to our Edgerton Church.

The membership papers of Mrs. Joyce Fischer were transferred to our Randolph Church.

Mr. and Mrs. James Lanting rejoice in the birth of a daughter, Jessica Anne.

FROM OUR FAITH CHURCH:

The membership papers of Mr. and Mrs. Gary Kaptein and family were received from our Hope Church.

At her request, the papers of Mrs. Beth Elzinga, nee Westra, have been sent to her home.

FROM OUR EDGERTON CHURCH:

Mr. and Mrs. James Bleyenbergh were blessed with the birth of a son, Heath James, on August 18.

The Beacon Lights Staff would like to Welcome Vickie Brower of our Hudsonville Church to the staff. She will be proof reading for the magazine.

MR & MRS JOHN ZANDSTRA JR.
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