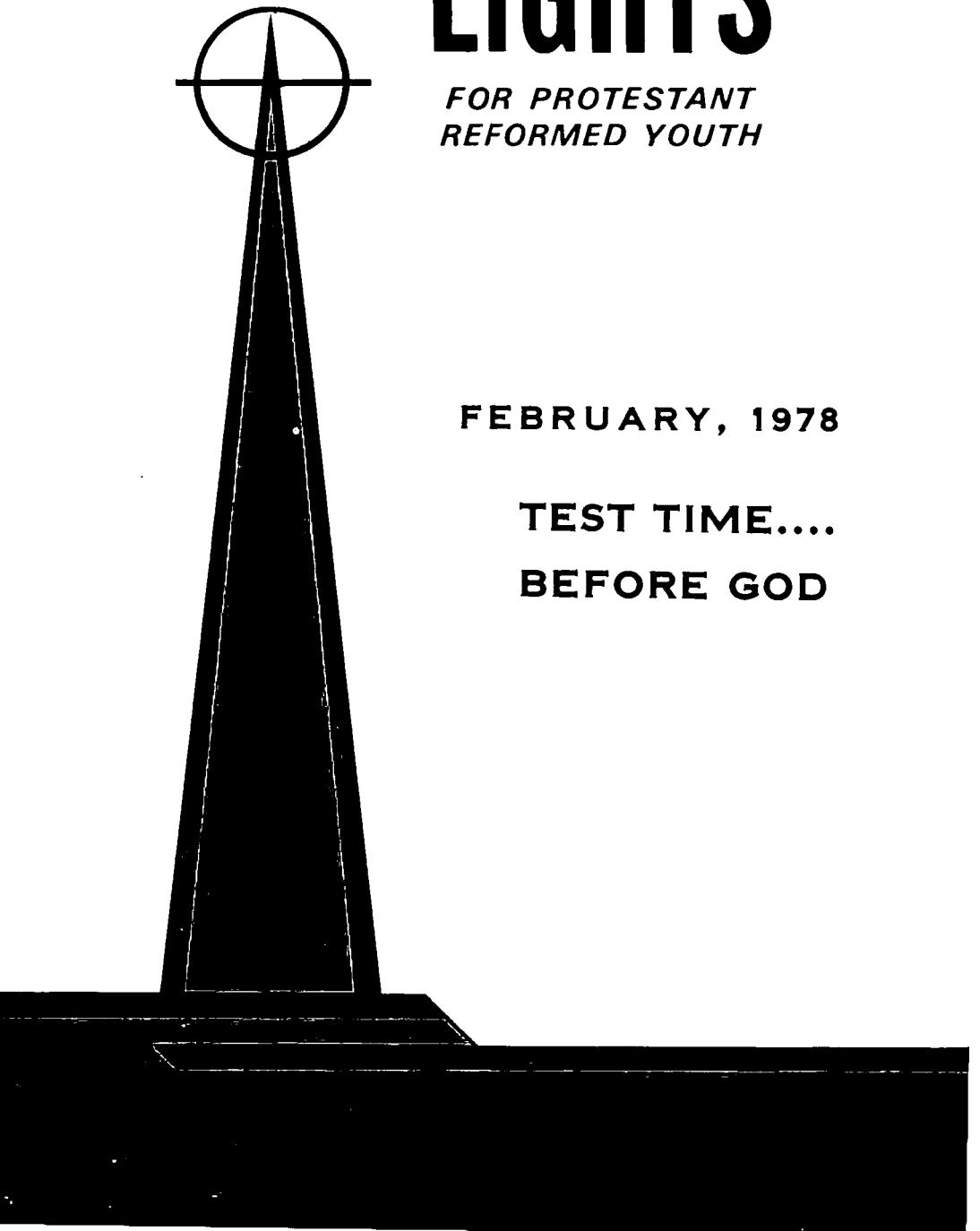
BEACON LIGHTS

FOR PROTESTANT REFORMED YOUTH



FEBRUARY, 1978

TEST TIME.... BEFORE GOD

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Editorial

An "E" Pistle

(continued)

by John M. Faber

Dear Grandchildren:

In my most recent (three months is recent?) letter to you, I wrote about the **inclines** upon which you slip and slide off the straight and narrow path of God's Commandments; and my letter got so long that it had to be continued later. Now it is later and I will try to help you, this time, to recognize some of the "inclinations to all evil" with which you are plagued in the area of the Second Table of The Law. In doing so, I will warn you against some of your friends as I give them names.

As I sat in my living room, day-dreaming, I imagined the television set had a corner leg sawn off, and the whole thing slanted (inclined) towards the floor. Of course, that made the programs incline downward, too. One program was leaning towards rebellion: against parents, consistory, police and government. It pictured disobeying father and mother; it jested about church attendance at all, saying nothing about twice a Sunday attendance. It scoffed at speed laws when "Smokey" was not about; and it even disdained the anti-drug laws. But how about your own life? Do you obey those set up by your consistory in your catechism attendance and preparation? Do you occasionally slip and slide down the **incline** of drinking and drugging? Do you enjoy watching your friend, Theatrical Vizier, display such sins on his screen?

I ask; you answer.

Another friend, Tiger-Vulture, was using that tipped over set to show a murder for entertainment. For entertainment? Yes. Romans 1:32 describes people who play-act sin, and people who "have pleasure in them that do them." Is that you? And in your own daily life do you **incline** to hate anyone? Do you sometimes wish he were out of your way? Do you "look daggers" at your brother when he displeases you? Do you **incline** to do him harm, or do you "love them which despitefully use you?" Do you ever say something under you breath against your parents when they reprimand you, which if it were said aloud, would show that you did not love, but hated them?

I ask; you answer.

Another friend, Tempter Villain, is a willing instrument in the hand of our Arch Enemy, Satan, to **incline** you to sin against the Seventh Commandment. He uses that friend like He used the Serpent in The Garden. Haven't you noticed the jokes, jests, innuendos, gestures, dress, ogling, and "whatsoever can entice men thereto?" And have you realized that those are violations of The Seventh; and that he is subtly wearing down you resistance to shun those evils? Do you enjoy that fare? Do you tell, or listen to "shady" stories? Do you in your dress or behavior entice others to sin? Do you see that in "inclining to all evil" that the sin of unchastity is plaguing you? Are you, in this area, "resolved to walk a new and Godly life?"

I ask; you answer.

Another friend, Time-Vandal, is guilty of sinning against you in the area of the Eighth Commandment. He steals from you much valuable time! I hear that some of my dear grandchildren boast about watching him until 2 A.M. When you are supposed to be studying and sleeping in

preparation for the morrow, he is robbing you. And, of course, in those late hours, he is tempting you to enjoy all kinds of sin, other than that forbidden in The Eighth. I am told that all sorts of vile sin is "played" for entertainment in those hours. Remember, sin is a terrible insult to the Most High God! But, apart from you friend's theft, is your **incline** in that direction? I hear-and-fear that some of my dear grandchildren filch stuff from stores. That phrase doesn't sound so bad? The police call it "shop-lifting". And that is punishable by law. Do you, who are employed part-time, "goof-off", stealing your boss's time? Are you one of those who try to learn their catechism questions the minute before class is called? Then you are stealing time from yourself **and** from the Lord. Do you pick up (steal) coins you see lying on the kitchen table, or on your mother's dresser, or that you find(?) in her purse? Do you ever keep for yourself (steal) part of the catechism collection furnished by your parents? Do you ever steal from your fellow student's desk, or from that of the teacher?

I ask; you answer.

Then there is the friend, Tongued-Viper, who is especially adept in the area of bearing false witness. That is really a three-letter word, Lie. Do you know who is the father of lies? Satan, that's who! Do you **incline** to follow Satan, or Jesus, Who is The Truth? Little white lies are but babies of their father, the Devil. That same Lie-Father uses Tongued-Viper to His advantage in that transgression! Besides white lies there are the big-grown-up lies which your friend used to teach that man came from the animal, not from the Fingers of God. Other big lies can be heard from him that world peace is a product of big men, instead of the Peace which no man can obtain except from the Prince of Peace who will translate us into His Peaceful Reign in Heaven. Lies, lies, everywhere. Especially in the education of the world. Shall we then resolve in our hearts to put that sin far from us?

I ask; you answer.

Another friend, Technicolor-Vendor, is a willing agent of Satan to teach us to transgress the Tenth Commandment. Those innocent (?) games which give away thousands of dollars for guessing the right answer are a case of refined coveting. Are you **inclined**, when watching them, to urge them on; or to wish that you could give your answer to the emcee and win a fortune? The world understands that its ads are directed to our in-born covetousness. From breakfast food to lure the children to toys, to clothes, to cars, and to foreign vacations. They are appealing, are they not? But, apart from the lure and temptations of advertising, do you covet anything that belongs to your neighbor? Do you wish you had your girl friend's dress, or pretty hair, or her nice home? Do you covet your boy friend's bike, snow-mobile, his good looks, his easy way with the girls? But the Heidelberg Catechism teaches us that The Tenth includes ALL sin—all deviations from God's Law. All those which my two letters referred to. Do you covet?

I ask; you answer.

Before I sign off, I have a double question left. Do you think that the term, friend, should be changed to, enemy? Do you think that any of the friends named above (all with the same initials) is really a friend, or an enemy?

I ask; you answer.

Love, Gramps.

P.S. **An aside to parents:** When there are programs with educational value, such as documentaries, travelogues, and other worthwhile things, do you prop up that broken-legged-inclined-set upright (parental control) so that your children can be directed to good programming, and which you can underwrite? And, do you set a good example for my grandchildren in T.V. watching?

I ask; you answer.

Love, Dad

TEST TIME...BEFORE GOD

by Mrs. Harold Brands

Mrs. Brands is a member of our Edgerton Church.

Tests!!

Tests aren't always favorite occasions for us, are they? We like to talk about tests, but we scarcely like to take them.

But tests are necessary. Tests are necessary in school to determine how well we are learning our subjects. They are equally important in life to determine how well we are living our lives before God.

And that is the purpose of this article. Through four tests, this article hopes to challenge each of us to face the question of how well we are living before God in the light of what we believe.

The subject which we are testing is this: Godly knowledge. Throughout history, a pendulum has swung back and forth within the church, with groups of people first clamoring for Knowledge! Knowledge! while ignoring the lives of God's people. In reaction, other groups have clamoured Experience! Experience! while ignoring the knowledge or doctrine on which this experience must be based.

The Bible, however never separates these two. In the Bible, head knowledge and life belong together. It says we DIE if we lack either one of these two. Read these verses:

Hosea 4:6. "My people are destroyed FOR LACK OF KNOWLEDGE."

Hosea 4:14. "The people that DOTH NOT UNDERSTAND shall fall."

Romans 6:23. "The wages OF SIN is death."

Most readers of the *Beacon Lights* know this. That is, we know that we need both knowledge and a Godly life. Our danger, however, is that we LOSE this. We can lose this by losing either our knowledge or our practice of it in any of four areas. And so these tests are designed to challenge whether we truly have both sides of the swinging pendulum, both true knowledge and true Godly living. Take the tests...take them seriously. Test yourself...and your friends...and your whole church.

On each test, give yourself 10 points for each correct answer.

100% means, "I am living Biblically here."

90% means, "I need improvement here."

80% means, "I'm no example to follow here."

70% means, "I'm almost failing here."

Lower yet means, "I'd better wake up fast!"

Test 1: Do I Believe that knowledge is important?

____1. Do I think that church and preaching are important?
____2. Do I think Bible study is important?
____3. Do I think that what my church teaches is right?
____4. Do I think churches should preach doctrine?
____5. Do I think that catechism is necessary training?
____6. Do I think parents should instruct their children?
____7. Do I think Scripture memorization is valuable?
____8. Do I believe churches should have creeds?
____9. Do I secretly scorn the person who carries his Bible?
____10. Do I accept as true what the Scriptures say?

(Answers should all be "yes" except for number 9.)

SCORE: ____

Test 1 tests our THOUGHTS on the matter of acquiring Godly knowledge. If we fail here, we may as well forget the rest, for how shall we ever practice what we don't feel is important?

Assuming, however, that we pass this test, we go on. Test 2 tests our practice of ACQUIRING Godly knowledge.

Test 2: Do I try to grow in knowledge?

____1. Do I attend regularly the worship services?
____2. Do I remember the sermon afterwards?
____3. Do I carefully memorize catechism questions and answers?
____4. Do I participate in Young People's Society?
____5. Do I take family devotions seriously?
____6. Do I have daily private Bible study?
____7. Do I attend Young People's conventions (not just for fun)?
____8. Do I know (somewhat, anyway) the church creeds?
____9. Do I read the *Beacon Lights* regularly, as well as *The Standard Bearer* and other books or magazines where I can grow in knowledge?
____10. Do I discuss the sermons or other spiritual matters with friends (or at least try to)?

(Answers should all be "Yes".)

SCORE: ____

But KNOWLEDGE (Tests 1 and 2) is only half the story. Psalm 14:4 asks, "Have all the workers of iniquity no knowledge?" The implied answer is, "Of course they have knowledge, but they don't USE that knowledge!"

Living knowledge begins privately in the heart, before God. Is your knowledge a living knowledge? Take this test of your hidden self:

Test 3: Do I have God's knowledge in my heart?

____1. When I pray, do I honestly sorrow for sin?
____2. Do I love to hear the preaching because it shows me myself?
____3. When I hear someone swear, does it pain me inside?
____4. Do I feel that Sunday is actually a rather dull day?
____5. When my parents rebuke me, do I inwardly rebel?
____6. Is there anyone whom I hope fails in life?
____7. Do I enjoy, even a little, seeing a lustful picture?
____8. When I sing, do I always sing God's name meaningfully?
____9. When I see another Christian sin, rather than gloat do I feel concern over the effects of that sin?
____10. Am I ever jealous of what my friends have—of their intelligence, or clothes, or good looks, or popularity, ...or of their ANYthing?

(Answers 4,5,6,7 and 10 should be "No".)

SCORE:____

But even this—true knowledge, truly in our hearts—is not the final test. We need true knowledge, truly in our hearts, *manifested before men*. This is Scripture! Read Romans 2:17-21a with a few small—and obvious—changes:

"Behold, thou art called Protestant Reformed, and
restest in thy knowledge, and makest thy boast of God,
And knowest His will, and approvest the things that
are more excellent, being instructed in doctrine;
And art confident that thou thyself art a guide of
the blind, a light of them which are in darkness,
An instructor of the foolish, a teacher of babes,
which hast the form of knowledge and of the truth.
Thou therefore which teachest another, teachest thou
not thyself?"

The point is that knowledge is good if it is used, but is of absolutely no value—is rather, damning evidence—if we do not use it. I Corinthians 8:1 says it this way:

"Knowledge puffeth up, but charity edifieth."

And then James, in the book dedicated to the proposition that knowledge alone is dead knowledge (the "Faith without works is dead" book), writes this:

"Who is a wise man and endued with knowledge among you? Let him shew out of a good conversation (that is, a good LIFE, CB) his works with meekness of wisdom."

And so, Test 4 is deadly important. Take it, seriously.

Test 4: Do I live my knowledge before men?

____1. When in a restaurant, does it embarrass me to pray?
____2. Do I apologize to others for our "strict" doctrines such as election and reprobation or "no divorce"?
____3. Do I not swear myself and, further, rebuke swearing I hear?
____4. If Monday's school assignments are unfinished, will I use Sunday, God's day, to get them finished?
____5. If I am caught speeding, do I laugh about it to others?
____6. Do I watch T.V. programs for my own enjoyment even though these programs dishonor God?
____7. Do I enjoy (or nonetheless smile at) off-color jokes?
____8. Do I put in a full six days per week of hard, honest work? (Schoolwork is work, too!)
____9. If someone tells me a derogatory rumor, do I reply by asking him whether he is speaking in love?
____10. Do I give liberally but known only to God of my material goods to support Kingdom causes?

(Answers 3,8,9 and 10 should be "Yes".)

SCORE:____

Do you see the development of knowledge into true living in these series of tests? It's like this:

1. I have to believe that knowledge is important.
2. Believing this, I have to try to acquire knowledge.
3. Acquiring knowledge is of no value unless it enters my heart.
4. If knowledge lives in my heart, it must also show before men.

This is the way in which Godly knowledge usually developes: conviction, acquisition, volition, and expression. And in this development we find rather than DEAD ORTHODOXY, LIVING KNOWLEDGE.

What happens if we fail the tests? In other words, what is the result of dead orthodoxy, of having knowledge which we do not live?

The Bible gives three results of dead orthodoxy.

Result 1: The name of God is blasphemed. Hear the end of the passage from Romans 2:

"Thou that makest thy boast of the law, through breaking the law dishonourest thou God? For the name of God is blasphemed among the Gentiles through you, as it is written."

Do you see what happens? The closer we are to true knowledge of God, the more our impure lives give rise to blasphemy of God by others. Knowledge without Godliness in life results in blasphemy!

Result 2: We lose everything in our generations.

Hosea 4:6. "Because thou hast rejected knowledge, I will also reject thee...seeing thou hast forgotten the law of thy God, I will also forget thy children."

Result 3: We ourselves are in danger of eternal judgment.

Romans 1:28. "Even as they did not like to retain God in their knowledge, God gave them over to a reprobate mind..."

Hebrews 10:26-27. "If we sin wilfully after that we have received the knowledge of the truth, there remaineth no more sacrifice for sins, but a certain fearful looking for of judgment..."

Forty questions, four tests...but these tests only scratch the surface of testing our hearts. The truth is, we must give ourselves regular tests. We must try our hearts (or more accurately, see how GOD tries our hearts) each time we hear the preaching of the Word. We must be trying our hearts and lives at family devotions, at personal devotions. And each night before bed, we must kneel before God and test our lives by the Word we've heard in that day, thus in honesty asking God to test our lives. And, oh no!, we won't have any scores to brag about on these tests, not if we're honest. But God will take those failing scores which we repent of, and to our astonishment His verdict on our lives will be 100%, SINLESS. That 100% SINLESS is God's verdict as He sees us in *Christ*. Christ has fulfilled all the requirements of the test of righteousness for us! Christ now gives us the grace to begin living righteously before Him, honoring Him in this life on earth.

Acquire knowledge, yes indeed.

And then LIVE it, in our hearts and before men.

In that way we are saved and God is glorified.

TEST YOUR MEMORY

1. What prophet was blind in old age? I Kings 14
2. Who said, "Am I my brother's keeper? Genesis 4:9
3. Name one person whom John baptized. Mark 1:9
4. What was the price of a horse in Solomon's day? II Chronicles 1:17
5. What was the first time-piece called? Isaiah 38:8
6. What time of the year did "kings go forth to battle"? II Samuel 11:1
7. Who wanted to preach in Spain? Romans 15
8. Name two whom Paul baptized in Corinth. I Corinthians 1:14
9. Of whom was it said that they "seemed to be pillars? Galatians 2:9
10. Complete the verse "Be not deceived; God is not mocked: for...." Galatians 6

George M. Ophoff (21) As Church Historian

by Prof. H. Hanko

In our last article, we talked about the work which Rev. Ophoff did in the field of pastoral instruction; and we quoted briefly from his notes which he prepared for his students in school. You will recall, that our purpose in all this is to demonstrate to our readers, not only the fact that the professors in the Seminary did a vast amount of work in teaching a large number of different subjects, but that they did original work in these fields. Even though they had to spread their labors into many different areas, they nevertheless became competent in these areas and prepared material which was of abiding worth.

In this article, I want to make some quotes from an article in the **Standard Bearer** which has to do with Church History, and more particularly, with the history of the Reformation. Rev. Ophoff did a tremendous amount of work in this field and, in fact, wrote three complete syllabi--one each on Ancient Church History, Medieval Church History and Modern Church History. He also wrote extensively in the **Standard Bearer** on various aspects of the history of the church of Christ. He became thoroughly acquainted with his field and was competent to teach these courses.

But the reason why I am quoting from this particular writing is not in the first place to demonstrate his competence. The reason is somewhat different. When Rev. Hoeksema and Rev. Ophoff took a stand against the heresy of common grace, they were aware of the fact that the heresy of common grace was not a matter of one or two isolated doctrines of Scripture which were in dispute; but they knew that this heresy was a principle departure from the truth which would have its effects not only upon the whole body of the truth, but also upon the entire field of learning and life. They were men who could see the implications of this heresy in the whole of what we may call a man's "world and life view." When they took a stand for sovereign and particular grace, therefore, they saw also that this had implications for the whole of one's "world and life view" and that they bore the burden of developing these ideas in every area of learning.

The whole matter of the Reformation is a case in point. Though I have read many books on the relationship between the Reformation and the Renaissance, I have yet to find a book which deals properly with the relation between these two movements which ran side by side in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries. All without exception take the position that the two movements were essentially the same, although differing in some peripheral details. This is basically the position of common grace. Our readers understand that the Renaissance was the revival of learning which brought all the knowledge of Greek and Roman civilization to Europe after the "Dark Ages"; while the Reformation was the establishment of the Church of Christ in the truth through the labors of Luther and Calvin and their contemporary reformers.

Common grace takes the position that because the unregenerate is able to do good, the Renaissance produced much which was basically identical with the Reformation.

One of the most lasting truths which I learned from Rev. Ohphoff's Church History classes was that this is not the truth. He saw clearly the need to point out the truth of the matter from the viewpoint of sovereign and particular grace. Here follow exerpts of what he wrote on this matter in Vol. xviii, pp. 130-132.

> The Reformation was a movement that exalted the Bible as the sole infallible source of doctrine. According to the literal meaning of the word, the Renaissance was a re-birth. It denoted that new zeal for pagan literature, learning and art, which sprang up in Italy toward the close of the Middle Ages.... Of this movement the Reformation was neither a phase nor a product. The two movements...differed....
>
> The subjective principle of the Reformation was the life of regeneration, the true faith and love of the men of God by which this movement was represented. The objective principle of the Reformation was the truths as God's believing people possess it in Christ Jesus....
>
> But these certainly were not the principles of the Renaissance....
>
> The subjective principle of the Renaissance was unbelief, hatred of God and His Word and positively, the love of the world, of the things in it.... Its objective principle was the lie, in particular this lie that the world passeth **not** away but abideth everlastingly, that this life is all that there is; that therefore the thing to do for man is to make the most of this life by improving it to the best of his abilities and by drinking deeply of its pleasures. And this verily was the theory of knowledge of the Renaissance, namely, that the source and criterion of man's knowledge of man, of God and of all things is man himself--his mind, reason, (rationalism); his feeling experience (mysticism); or his will (moralism), and that therefore the sole rule of life and all conduct is the will of this same man....
>
> The Reformation, it ought to be plain, was not a product of the Renaissance. Yet the two movements are being identified the one with the other. It can be expected that the Modernist student of history insists that at bottom the two are one and the same. The Modernists deny that there is a people--God's believing people--in whose essence and energy there operates a new and holy principle of life and that there are movements in history of which the only tenable explanation is that they are the function of this sanctified energy, and that the Reformation in distinction from the Renaissance was such a movement....
>
> (Although the Renaissance had as it aim the destruction of property in matters of faith,) it was moved by a hatred of **all** authority, whether as expressed in the decrees of councils, in the pronouncements of the popes, or in the doctrine of the Scriptures. Thus its aim was to emancipate the mind of man from the reign not merely of tradition and the dogma of the church but of the Scriptures as well.... Humanism, therefore, was skeptical, rationalistic....
>
> On the other hand, the aim of the Reformation was to emancipate the Scriptures from the reign of tradition and dogma and to subject human reason to the reign of the Scriptures. The Reformation loved the Bible. To the Bible it went back in the original languages....
>
> But if all things work together for good to them that love God, must the

stand not be taken that in some ways the Reformation was benefited by the Renaissance? It was benefited, but only negatively, thus in the same sense that Moses was helped by the pleasures of sin which he encountered at the Court of Pharaoh. The sight of these pleasures turned him consciously and intensely against them. No true believer can revel in paganism.

THE BEAUTY OF SNOW

Miss H. J. Kuiper

February, 1977 "Hope School Highlights"

It came - - the whirling, shuddering gusts of white - -
One afternoon, through dusk and into the coming night.
Winds blew, ever increasing in their strength,
And spread huge drifts of snow in every breadth and length.
The storm raged on. By day and night it grew;
Roads drifted shut, were plowed, were filled anew.
Businesses and schools were closed, activities were stilled,
As every corner and crevice with ice and snow were filled.
The temperatures stayed near zero almost night and day:
Winter clutched the world in whiteness and held undaunted sway.
And when 'twas over, the sun made our awe-struck eyes to see
Blue shadows on broad, scintillating expanse of white virginity.
What says the church while winds will shriek and moan?
"Thou art God Almighty and Thou art God alone!
The pathway of the storm Thou holdest in Thy hand,
The floods, the quakes, the famines...all in every land.
Teach us then to see Thee in this snow-filled world below
As One who cleanses, makes His own as freshly fallen snow:
Cleanses from sin, adorned in white, to stand in heaven above,
Redeemed by Christ, saved by His grace and His unfailing love."

The Decline of Excellence:— A Proneness Toward Mediocrity

by Agatha Lubbers

The public schools of the U.S. are under fire! But, why?

Do you recognize the apathy and disorder of this classroom in your school? I hope not.

"Morning at a West Coast high school. The first-period bell rings, barely audible above the classroom din. 'O.K., everybody settle down,' says the soft-spoken teacher of the course called Modern Problems. Her two dozen students, grouped around seven tables, pay scant attention. She switches on a video machine by her desk; a neatly categorized outline flashes on the board. 'Have you already copied this down?' she asks, pointing to the topic headings. A few heads bob yes, several more shake no; the rest of the students merely carry on with their private conversations. The subject of the day is not terrorism, energy, or Watergate. Aptly enough, the topic is 'The Problem of American Education.' "

* * * * * * * * * * *

It appears that the chief problem in American Education is apathy and mediocrity. Neither the teacher nor the student comes to school to do that which the school is intended to do. The teacher does not come to teach and to discipline or disciple the student, and the student does not come to be discipled—i.e., to be taught. We live in a day of anarchy when everyone does that which is right in his own eyes.

American democracy and its exaltation and glorification of the twin doctrines of man's inherent goodness and individual freedom has defied the more excellent way.

However we must not point the finger and then be complacently swept along with this seemingly irresistable undertow of mediocrity.

The paragraph describing the West Coast high school is, I fear, a "normal classroom" in many a high school in the U.S. This paragraph begins a major feature article which every reader of **Beacon Lights** ought to read. **Time** magazine, November 14, 1977, contains a documented description of the educational scene in the U.S. today. This frightening scene found in the high schools portrays a

severe indictment of education in the U.S. This is particularly true when one contrasts education in the U.S. high school with that given in similar institutions in European countries.

The conclusion one must inevitably reach after reading the Tale of Three Cities—Medford, Mass.; Coos Bay, Ore.; Iowa City, Iowa" in **Time**, November 14, 1977, and the article "Why American Education is Failing", **Reader's Digest**, January, 1978, is that schools, and not just the big city schools, are not doing the job they should. American education in the '70's according to these writers is in deep trouble. There are 25,300 high schools in the U.S., which enroll 19 million students and carry a million teachers on their payrolls. Public education will cost $144 billion in 1977. This 152% increase over the 1960's is more than the country spends on national defense. The higher teacher's pay and the soaring costs per pupil coupled with tumbling test scores have caused Americans to become justifiably concerned about the decline and what seems to be the eventual fall of American education to complete mediocrity. **Time** writes, "...never have more Americans worried about whether they are getting their money's worth from the institutions that were once the symbol of the nation's dedication to democracy."

But what are American analysts and leaders going to do about this educational malaise? Can a system that is fathered by the American way of life really be corrected? Can the society which spawns the system and the failings of that society which cause the failures in the system correct the system?

Former Secretary of Labor Willard Wirtz has headed a panel of experts that has spent two years studying the problem and has "concluded this fall that U.S. education has been 'off stride for ten years.' " President Carter in his campaign for the presidency called for a creation of a separate Cabnit-level Department of Education to help remedy the situation.

What, however, will a proliferation of federal departments do to correct the problem which exists at the grass-roots of American society and causes failures in our public systems of education?

What according to **Time** and other analysts are the most serious problems today?

The most serious problem is **declining performance!** Declining performance is at least the most noticeable symptom of the real problem. Inspite of the advances made in textual teaching materials and audio-visual materials, today's students are more poorly equipped in basic skills than were their predecessors. Simply stated, this means that students who graduate from today's high schools cannot read, write, and cipher as they could have, if they had graduated from the high schools of the past. In addition, they lack the other basic study skills such as map reading and graph reading which they need in order to gather information. They depend almost entirely upon electronic gadgets and calculators and lack the ability to compute accurately the smallest column of figures in arithmetic classes. The average scores on the College Entrance Examination Board's Scholastic Aptitude Test (SAT) have been falling slowly but steadily since 1962. Verbal ability (ability to read, write, and speak correctly) has fallen by 10% while average math skills have declined by 6%. Despite the infusion of vast sums of money and technological skills into education, the number of high achievers on SAT tests (those scoring over 600 on a 200-800 scale) has been dropping. Graduates, who claim they are illiterate after thirteen years of schooling, have taken school boards to court. This has been emphatically dramatized in the last year in the State of Florida where graduates claim they are functionally illiterate. Colleges complain of entering freshmen who read at the sixth grade level.

Other indictments, which indicate the deviant preoccupations of the American student, are rising violence and mounting absenteeism. The problems caused by the student are compounded by the teachers who band into unions and through strikes, cause school shut-downs.

James Fenimore Cooper writing "On the Disadvantages of a Democracy" pessimistically, but correctly, said a century ago at the outset of the American experiment, "The tendency of democracies is, in all things, to mediocrity, since the tastes, knowledge, and principles of the majority form the tribunal of appeal."

Although optimistic educational reformers want to think Cooper was wrong and believe that the U.S. Commissioner of Education, Ernest Boyer, is correct when he sees and applauds "a new commitment to excellence in education," I personally have no such faith in the American educational enterprise at the public school level.

Reformed Christians in America have for the past century realized the need in America for excellent schools where the demands of the covenant may be realized in all areas of instruction. Such excellence places great responsibility upon the Christian school teacher and upon the parents. This may mean that our teachers will have to work extra hard so that they will not be swept along with the proneness which is in their own nature and in the nature of their students to mediocrity. We are in a certain sense products of our age.

In a day when the schools of America are hearing a call from the conservatives to "return to the basics" and progressive forces refuse to "mandate students to march through an educational maze", Reformed Christians, who maintain distinctively Christian schools, must resist the inevitable tide of mediocrity.

The vigilance we need as Christians in being perfect is epitomized for us in the Word of God. Jehovah God calls His believing children to perfection so that they will be thoroughly fitted unto every good work. There is a sense in which each of us must go "on unto perfection or completeness" in our day to day tasks as well as in our spiritual life of sanctification. In this way, we can be thoroughly perfect in every good work.

God does not call us to mediocrity! (cf. Matthew 5:48)

God calls us to resist the inroads of mediocrity!

There is an ultimate standard that urges us to excellency!

THE INCOMPREHENSIBLE GOD

In the course of everyday living
In a world with it's angry pace,
Some are blind to the beauty of God's creation
They deem it as commonplace.

Take a look at the crimson sunset
With it's ever changing hue.
Then see the purple twilight
Gently erase it from view.

In the Spring we see living tendrils
Emanate from motherearth's breast.
The earth again verdant with new life
As it awakens from Winter's rest.

Take a look at the aurora borealis
Stretch lact fingers across the sky.
Or hear the wind in the treetops,
Now moaning, then whisper a sigh.

And look at the smallest of spectrums,
A tiny drop of dew.
It holds within it the colors
Of the rainbow, all anew.

Yes, great is The Lord of Creation,
Who sits on the mercy seat.
This earth, we read, is His footstool,
The place where He plants His feet.

And we, who are a drop of a bucket
And of this footstool merely dust,
We raise our hearts in pride and conceit,
We boast in our carnal lust.

But God, in His infinite mercy,
Sent His Son to set me free.
He wrought, for me, salvation
On Calvary's accursed tree.

Oh Lord God Of Creation,
Thou who knowest my frame,
I am now thy new recreation,
HALLOWED BE THY NAME!

by Mrs. Jake Mantel, Sr.
Redlands, California

CORRECTION!!!

The poem in the January *Beacon Lights* by Sue Porte should have the following for the 4th line of the thirteenth verse, "I have overcome the world, be of good cheer."

WHY I BECAME A MINISTER?

by Rev. C. Hanko

In answer to the question, why did I become a minister of the gospel, a threefold answer comes to mind.

First, God in His providence and goodness directed my life, so that the way was opened for me to study for the ministry.

Second, my God-fearing parents had a very strong influence upon me since my earliest childhood, encouraging me and making it possible for me to attain that goal.

Third, as long as I can remember, I had a growing desire to take up that calling as a life task. It never seemed to have been a question to me as to what I wanted to be when I grew up apart from the desire to be a minister of the gospel.

Let me tell you a bit more about this.

As the youngest child of the family, it was my privilege, and mine only, to study beyond the eighth grade. My father was a painter. With a family of eight to support, he had to regulate his finances rather carefully. What was also to my advantage was the fact that the Grand Rapids Christian High School opened its doors for the first time when I graduated from the eighth grade. The old, red brick building that had served for many years as the seminary of the Christian Reformed Church, located at the corner of Franklin and Madison, was our first high school building. In those days, young folks walked or rode bicycles from all parts of Grand Rapids to get there. A few took the street car. Automobiles were not seen until some time later. In the winter, we often arrived at school with frozen ears and numbed fingers. But the Lord had made it possible for me to obtain a high school education, which was more than the older members of my family could enjoy.

It was shortly after the split of 1924, in the spring of 1925 that I approached Rev. Herman Hoeksema with the suggestion that I would like to attend our seminary, which was to open in June, as soon as the other schools closed for the season. His first remark was that there were others who had expressed the same desire, but that we should bear in mind that as yet there were no churches for us to serve. I informed him that I had always had a strong desire to become missionary rather than minister. You see, for years we had brought our nickels and dimes to Sunday School for the Rehoboth mission. A few times Rev. J. W. Brink had come to our Eastern Avenue congregation, the calling church, to tell us about his labors there. Besides, I had heard and read about mission work in the Sudan, in Newfoundland, and many other places, all of which intrigued me very much. So, as a matter of course, I informed Rev. Hoeksema of this desire, upon which he responded that our churches would need missionaries also. So again the Lord opened the way for me to prepare for the ministry. The next four years were difficult years. Of the twelve that began, only three finished the course. Often we had to take our lessons and prepare them in some home in Iowa, preaching on Sunday and studying during the week. There was such a shortage of supply, that during the years I was in the seminary, I never was able to take my final examinations with the other students; but, except for the classical exam, always took them

by myself after returning from the churches. We received practical training as well as education from books. Today I am the only one of the students that graduated in 1929 still with our churches. I am thankful to my God that I may still be a member of the Protestant Reformed Churches.

I mentioned before that my parents had a strong influence on my life. Although my mother never told me in so many words, I still wonder whether she had not desired, maybe even before I was born, that I should devote my life to the work of the ministry. I am sure that she often prayed about it. She herself felt so inadequate, because she had never had the privilege to learn to read or to write. Yet her influence upon her children was great. Most clearly before my mind stand the noon meals that we ate together. I lived but a short block from the school, so I could readily come home for lunch. Many lessons were taught, much advice was given, many admonitions were poured out in Christion love. My father could have used me in his business, especially after my brother died, who was a partner in the business. Yet he was willing to struggle along alone and see his business gradually fall apart, rather than prevent me from obtaining the education I sought. Also his prayers, his concern, and his support linger in my memory. Little does one realize when he is young what a powerful influence God-fearing parents have upon their children. All our lives, we profit from their pious example, from the early forming and training we received at their hands.

Never will I forget the time when, having been made candidate for the ministry, I waited for my first call. Two ministers, including the late Rev. G. Vos, had been sent out to serve for a time in churches that had been established in northwest Iowa. These men were coming back to school, their places had to be filled. Also other churches had been organized in other areas, which had to have ministers. Never will I forget the night when the churches in Iowa were meeting to call their own pastor from the trios of candidates. The phone rang, Rev. Herman Hoeksema's voice came over the line. He had had a long distance call from Iowa, and, with a break in his voice, he informed me that I had received the call from our Hull congregation. He seemed as happy and excited as I was. Now my desire was fulfilled, my call to the ministry was now an objective fact. Little did I feel qualified for the tremendous task that awaited me, yet, leaning on the Everlasting Arm, I looked forward to it with eagerness. Little did I realize what demands are often made upon the shedherd of the flock, impossible demands, that only his Chief Shepherd in heaven can fulfill. True, I never became a missionary. Yet the very fact that I could serve on the Mission Committee, repeatedly help to organize new churches, and, as a climax to all that could visit the churches in Australasia with Prof. and Mrs. Homer Hoeksema, has greatly compensated for the life-long desire. I realize now that God had planned my way, quite different from anything that I could ever have imagined. And it was good. To Him be the glory.

For Thou, Lord, hast made me glad
through Thy work:
I will triumph in the works of
Thy hands.

—Psalm 92:4

Truth vs. Error

REV. ROBERT C. HARBACH

DINAH'S DEBUT

"There are three things which are too wonderful for me, yea, four which I know not: the way of an eagle in the air, the way of a serpent upon a rock, the way of a ship in the midst of the sea, and the way of a man with a maid" (Prov. 30:18, 19). The way of an eagle in the air! When that mighty bird takes to wing and with great speed flies off to quickly become a tiny speck in the sky then to disappear altogether, who can trace its orbit or predict its direction and path? The serpent on a rock is not like one on sand, the path of which can be traced. But who can trace the approach of the serpent to and up onto the rock? Who can by sight or scent trace its direction of exit from the rock? The ship in the midst of the sea leaves a wake which quickly blends with the smoothness or the swells of the sea. The ship then drops over the horizon, leaving not a trace of whether it went either north, east, south, west, or to the bottom of the ocean. Then what of the way of a man with a maiden? What is the way of a man with a virgin? Sometimes it is in a sinful or immoral way. Of a woman associated with her husband, or even with a man not her husband, it may be said that we know what she in either case would probably do. But this maiden, or **virgin**, as the very word implies, is not a harlot, for every one knows how such a woman would act in regard to "the way of a man". Yet who can tell whether a young virgin in her relations with a man will keep her virginity? Many a strong principled virgin has succumbed to the more dominating male personality. Dinah should have set her friends straight with words like these: "I charge you, O ye daughters of Jerusalem (of the land), by the gazelles and by the hinds of the field, that ye stir not up, nor awaken love till it please" (Song 2:7).

"Dinah, the daughter of Leah, whom she bare unto Jacob, went out." Dinah is referred to as the daughter of Leah to bring to mind the mother's amazing boldness in intruding herself into Jacob's marriage bed, as a rebuke to her fraudulent sexual escapade. That Dinah went out means that she wandered off from the sphere of her father's altar as allured by the attractions of the fascinating city of Shechem. She was young,

and a spirit of youthful vivacity with the lure of new, unknown places drew her onward. So she sallied forth, an innocent, inexperienced girl, with no fear of the snares of "the big city," for she never had witnessed nor known any of the world's evils.

One would think that she must have known the history of her own family, and so must have known better. For her grandfather, Isaac, had taken his wife, Rebekah, down to Gerar and passed her off as his sister, which rash and foolish act had exposed her to the lusts of strange men. Her great-grandfather, Abraham, had made the same mistake, jeopardizing the purity of his wife, Sarah, and, in fact, of the covenant line. But Dinah went out with even more careless and unprotected exposure to the world of men than had her grandmothers.

"Dinah...went out to see the daughters of the land". to have a friendly visit, to socialize and engage in "girl-talk" with females her own age. Out of curiosity she went forth to catch up on the latest doings in the world, to see, to be seen, to win admiration, to take in the latest fashions, how the young people dressed, how they talked, how they danced, what were the latest shows and popular diversions, and, probably, what were the latest "crushes" on the "cute" sons of the land. She was like a moth fluttering about a flame. For soon, from what was undoubtedly frivolous company, she was spirited away by Prince Shechem to his house. Perhaps, as so often the case, it began as a sort of romantic flirtation and "date" made on the spur of the moment, with her giddy, giggling girl friends gayly urging her off with a new found "boy friend". But a gadding girl and a young man who has never been away from home are both liable to fall before the lightest temptations. Neither of them fit the picture in Titus 2:5, "to be discreet, chaste, keepers at home, good, obedient to their own husbands, that the Word of God be not blasphemed."

Many young people today think they can do anything. No longer taught in Reformed theology, and undisciplined in morals, they seem to have no gift of continency or decency. Not only their inexperience, naivete and intoxicating susceptibility to flattery, but also their insuperable pride, worldly vanity, and youthful lusts expose them to many imminent dangers. Unchaperoned, they are their own worst enemies.

"And Shechem the son of Hamor the Hivite, the prince of the land, saw her, and took her, lay with her and ravished her." What nearly happened to Sarah by Pharaoh and to Rebekah by Abimelech did actually happen to Dinah by Shechem, **prince** of a country, but a **slave** to his own lusts. What he did was plainly rape. He "saw her," ogled her, feasted his eyes on her (as in Job 31:1b, ASV), and seeing what a beautiful person she was, he became enamored with her. They dallied, then "he **took** her," i.e., by force, the word clearly implying the idea of force from its use in v. 28. So it was rape, yet it was not entirely without Dinah's consent, as v.31 implies (a harlot gives consent), and as this verse itself implies. For "he took her" (forced her), and "lay with her" i.e., inclined himself upon her, ravished her (30:16; Song 4:9; Gen. 18:12b), and "defiled her" i.e., ravished her (Lam. 5:11; a word which means both in the Hebrew and the Arabic "to exercise oneself in; to plow"). He not only took advantage of a very young and comparatively helpless girl, but also of his own rank and station, which made him doubly responsible in the many aggravations of his seduction. Goodness belongs with greatness.

"And his soul clave unto Dinah the daughter of Jacob, and he loved the damsel, and spake kindly unto the damsel", which proves that Shechem's act, as bad as it was (a crime, Job 31:9,11), was not one of mere, base lust

(as in II Sam. 13:15). For he loved the girl he had seduced, he longed (a word meaning "to fasten together in love", "to have a desire for", Dt. 21:11; v. 19, "he had delight in" her.) for her to be his wife, and did his best to repair the wrong he had done her. For "he was more honorable than all the house of his father" (19). He loved her, his soul strongly adhering to her. Love is a matter of the soul (v. 8; Song 1:7), and certainly not, **never**, merely of the body. For "he spoke kindly unto the girl", i.e., he spoke to her **heart** (50:21), which ardency deeply touched and moved her.

So Dinah fell. It was her fault. It was Shechem's fault. But it was also Jacob's fault. He had left his house at Succoth and had pitched his tent before the city in the country of Shechem, thus exposing his family to the temptations of the world. He had let her go out without proper escort. More likely he had not warned her against the loose-living Shechemites with their easy morals and godless manner of life. Perhaps in his lapse at Shechem he had thought of them in terms of a sort of common grace. "They are worldly, godless and depraved--true. Yet they are friendly, honest, peaceable. They never molest (!) any one. Surely their good qualities are not to be written off as nothing more than glittering sins! They are better people than some of my own relatives. There should be no harm in Dinah's making their acquaintance!"

Dinah's absence was obvious. She had not returned home. Soon the shocking news reached Jacob. But he merely sat in stunned silence until his sons came in from the pastures. Shechem, somewhat commendable, because he had fervent and sincere love for Dinah, twice tried to right matters by asking for her in marriage, first through the mediation of his father, and then later he personally appealed to Jacob and his sons to agree to a matrimonial alliance. But to say the least, this was putting the cart before the horse. The honeymoon ought not to have been celebrated before proper and honorable marriage.

Shechem "had wrought folly in Israel in lying with Jacob's daughter." This vehemently burned up Jacob's sons. But they seem not to have appreciated the exceeding shamefulness of sin, only rather to have been more offended over the opprobrium brought on the family name. However, it is sin which deserves to be branded with a bad name, the deservedly bad name of **folly**. Folly in Israel ought to grieve every member of the true church; and every daughter of Israel ought to take care lest she betray herself to this same folly.

Young modern Dinahs, with wanton eyes and mincing walk, burn with lust for a young Shechem. By their dalliance and flirtatious manners they set off a spark which starts quite a fire not originally expected or planned. The lusts of modern Shechems are easily stirred, and for a voluptuous Dinah they will sacrifice money, position, religion, social and racial advantages. The young people of the world will sacrifice whatever religion they have, or change their creeds, as a chamelion changes colors, in order to enter a marriage relation based on passion. When the novelty of mere erotic interest wears off, they tire of one another, divorce each other, and then go awhoring after new sexually attractive mates. Their eyes and bodies are full of adultery that cannot cease from sin. They make their life one continual round of fornication.

"He had wrought folly lying with Jacob's daughter, which thing ought not to be done," literally, "it is simply not done!" Why it ought not to be done is clear from the commandments of God. It is plain, too, from this early history, that God's people had the spirit of the law, long before Sinai, written on the fleshly tables of their hearts. Their conscience accused them of transgression of what later

became the seventh commandment. "Which is the seventh commandment? The seventh commandment is, 'Thou shalt not commit adultery.' What are the duties required in the seventh commandment? The duties required in the seventh commandment are chastity in body, mind, affections, words and behavior, and the preservation of it in ourselves and others; watchfulness over the eyes and all the senses; temperance, keeping of chaste company; modesty in apparel, marriage by those that have not the gift of continency; conjugal love, and cohabitation; diligent labor in our callings; shunning all occasions of uncleanness, and resisting temptations thereunto." (Larger Catechism of the Westminster Assemble).

So Dinah's debut ended in disaster. When daughters go out to see the daughters of the land, they usually have it in mind also to see the sons of the land. There is something regrettable about it when our sons and daughters must "go out" to see one another. It used to be that they could do so in our homes. It is wonderful when children and young people love home. It is good when parents make home a delight. It is the children's responsibility then to delight in it, and to go in and out of it in harmony with its covenant centered atmosphere and structure.

Leaving Father and Mother (3) Courtship

by Rev. C. Hanko

Someone once said that in spring a young man's fancy turns to thoughts of love. There may be something to that, but I doubt very much that this particular fancy is limited to one season of the year. Whether this be in the season when flowers begin to bloom and the birds seek their mates, or at any other time of the year, a young man and a young lady should take the matter of courtship seriously.

I spoke before of the young man and his girl friend going out together to become better acquainted. Getting acquainted is more important than we often realize. To one who has fallen frantically in love, it may seem strange that he does not know his girl friend. The very thought of her brings stars to his eyes, while she sits mooning over her school work as if she were miles away. Not know each other? Listen. There are many young people who plunge into marriage only to realize that they have never learned to know each other. Living together in the most intimate relationship of husband and wife is far different from living with your brothers and sisters, far different from associating with your friends and school mates. Seeing one another across the breakfast table in the morning, and greeting each other after a harried day's work is quite different from the formal meetings before marriage when you are

dressed in your Sunday best and on your best behavior. More than one married person has thought, and maybe even said, "My father married my mother, but I married a stranger." It would be nice if these polite formalities, these kinds words, these little gifts that make the day before you are married could also be continued after married life has become a daily routine. Getting to know each other, even down to personal idiosnycrasies, is most essential for a happy future. Marriage is for life; rushing into it threatens nothing less than total disaster.

Therefore, for a good courtship rule number one is, **get to know each other.**

This is all-important. I have had young people, after a hasty exciting romance come to me to talk about wedding plans. When I asked them about their different backgrounds, different family ties, different church connections, I received about one answer, "We are in love." If you were to suggest that this "love" appears to be nothing more than heated passion, and that this vessel will never weather the storms on the sea of life, you would be branded as a dried up old fogy, who didn't really know what the word "love" means. If you would make bold to suggest that this "love" should be tested a while before these young people dash into marriage, you would be frowned upon in total disgust. My experience has been that these same people, a few bitter and disillusioning years later, were ready to admit that they made a bad mistake. They reached the conclusion that they were not meant for each other at all, yet, unless they learn to love each other in the Lord, they are compelled to live with their mistake the rest of their lives.

Get to know each other. You cannot attain that by going out for a ride, spending long hours at some lonely spot, embracing and making love far into the night. The "now" generation may not like to hear this, but it is still a sound rule that no good ever came from being together after midnight. Parents should insist, and I mean insist, that their fledgling be home at midnight, or be able to give a good reason why not. You will never get to know each other by sitting together whispering sweet nothings into each other's ears, or trying to show with your actions how much you care. If you want to know each other, you must seek entertainment and friends that you can share and enjoy together. You must be able to discuss subjects which interest both of you. It is a bad sign when young people can find no outside interests that they share together, whether that be in church affairs, music, books, or whatever. I do not mean that they will always agree on everything they talk about. A little spat or a warm argument occasionally is refreshing and enriching. But one thing they must agree on, and that is an absolute must; they must agree on their doctrine and their religious convictions. Do not postpone coming to that agreement until you become so emotionally involved that you cannot discuss your faith freely any more. Religious convictions and doctrinal principles cut deeper than anything else. Never try to convince yourself that you love each other so much, that religious differences will not interfere with your happiness. If you agree doctrinally, and are together spiritually minded in your outlook on life, you already have a sound basis for a happy marriage. Common interests, and at the same time your differences in character and opinions will enrich your companionship, cause you to enjoy each other's company, so that you cannot wait for the next opportunity to talk together.

Rule 2 is, **Get to know each other's family.**

It is true, of course, that you are marrying the boy or the girl, and not the family, but the fact remains that you are marrying **into** the family. Besides, your prospective life mate comes from that family, has lived with that family for some

twenty years, and will remain an integral part of that family. Is the fear of the Lord in that Home? Is there a Christian attitude amoung the members of the family? A Christian atmosphere in the home? If not, you will have to make doubly sure that your friend is of such sturdy spiritual caliber that he or she can stand alone and maintain strong religious principles throughout your life together, even in opposition to the home that opposes these principles. If your friend's family is a Christian family, make sure that there are no serious differences on doctrine, on godly walk, on a world and life view. You are safest when you marry within the Protestant Reformed denomination, that is, if you marry a sincere believer within the denomination.

Too often a young man ignores Christian principles, brushing them aside with the confident air that all problems will be straightened out after marriage. Too often the young woman, (is it the mother instinct in her?), will pride herself with the notion that she can reform her husband after they are settled down, and undo what home influence did to him for twenty years. The young man may well watch his girl friend's mother. What kind of wife is she to her husband? How does she treat her children? Is that the kind of wife, mother, cook, housekeeper, companion that he is looking for in the daughter? If not, is he sure that the daughter does not take after her mother in this respect? The traditional picture of the mother-in-law is that of an interfering, miserable person. Don't put too much stock in that. There are many very considerate, kind, helpful mothers-in-law, who are appreciated for what they are. When the young lady goes to her friend's home to make acquaintance with the family, she may well take a good look at her prospective father-in-law. Is he a husband who shows genuine concern for his wife, or is he the self-centered individual who thinks that the whole world should revolve around him? Is he a father who is interested in his children? Does he have time for his family, or does he stow himself away behind the newspaper or in front of the "boob-tube"? Maybe your boy friend does not take after his father, maybe he has his mother's nature, but it is well to be sure, before you become too deeply involved.

Rule 3, **Take time to enjoy your courtship** without hastily plunging into marriage.

Do not marry too young. I leave it to you to determine just exactly how young is **too** young. Some young people mature sooner than others. Be sure that you are not too young when you take on the grave responsibilities that are involved in married life. The mature teen years are the happiest, most care-free time of life. Enjoy them; make the most of them; they never return.

Plan for your marriage carefully. Make the most of a pleasant, useful courtship, preparing yourselves for the biggest venture you will ever undertake in your life, the venture of holy matrimony. Boys who marry too young find themselves cut off from all the fun that other young people of their age are having. There are two mouths to feed, a home that must be kept up, burdens that are far too great for young shoulders to bear. Young girls may soon find themselves pregnant, with a fear that drives them in desperation into mother's arms, saying, "I never knew it would be like this!" Young fathers often treat their first baby like a toy, something to be played with and then abruptly put aside. Young mothers regard their little ones like a doll, and seem helpless in handling them as real people. I have often marvelled that the babe survived as well as it did. No, do not rush into marriage. Sage advice is not to see each other too often, especially not every night, not until the final plans for the wedding are being made. Prepare for your marriage with a level head, with a heart spiritually attuned

to God and to His Word. Prepare yourselves for the future, not only by buying silverware and furniture, but also by prayerfully seeking that two hearts may truly become one in the Lord.

Rule 4 is, **Build up a strong esteem for one another**, keeping for yourself a good conscience.

Negatively, do not let your sexual impulses get out of hand. A young man may entice his girl friend to see how far she will let him go in giving vent to his sexual urge. A young woman may be afraid of losing her boy friend if she acts too coy, too cold, too prudish in matters of sex. Besides, scant clothing, short skirts, open blouses, trips to the beach, close physical contact with each other, many other factors arouse the passions to an extent that they might be out of control. Solomon speaks of the dumb animal that allows itself to be led to the slaughter. Carnal lusts can cast all reason to the wind with the result that sin breeds sin, passion builds passion, and a good courtship is ruined, even though careful efforts are put forth to prevent pregnancy. Still worse, both are troubled with a bad conscience and a troubled soul. Neither one is happy any more. One tends to blame the other, while the mutual self-respect and self-esteem have disappeared. Most of the problems that arise after marriage stem from the passionate courtship before marriage. Husband and wife soon realize that what they mistook for love was nothing but lust. When that desire is satisfied, their very marriage is threatened with disaster. No sound marriage can be built on anything as flimsy as physical attraction. The only solution is that, even at that late date, they meet at the cross, confess their sins to one another, seek forgiveness of God and of each other, and find a sound spiritual basis for their marriage in the Lord. Sadly, after marriage is rather late to be discovering all this.

Positively, build up a strong esteem for each other. Be spiritually minded in your courtship. We must not hold a double standard of morality, as if liberties are allowed to lovers, which are not allowed to other single persons and to the married. The commandment, "Thou shalt not commit adultery", with all its implications, applies as much to single as to married persons. Love one another, not only as boy and girl, but also as you are drawn to each other by the magnetism of your different personalities, and above all by your love and devotion to your God. As a young man, do not become the Tempter's tool to the one you love. Love her so much that you want to admire her for what she is. Preserve her purity for herself and for you. As a young woman, do not lure with sexual appeal, suggestive words and actions. If you love your boy friend keep his conscience pure before God. Admire him for his moral strength and convictions. If you plan to wear a white gown on that long dreamed of wedding day, be sure that your gown reflects the truth, that you come to your husband as a virgin, a picture of Christ's Bride, and not as a possible cast off, a second hand, polluted maid. Build up esteem for one another before your marriage, that afterward you may, as husband love and cherish your wife as your very own possession, and as wife may respect your husband as worthy of your trust throughout the years to come. Pray, pray constantly, "Lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from the Evil One." With all the emphasis on sex in magazines, books, on TV, and everywhere else, it cannot be stressed too strongly that young people in their courtship must keep themselves unspotted from the world. God blesses a pure courtship with the assurance that He preserves us from evil, and will bless us also when we venture out upon life's sea in the ship of holy matrimony.

CORRESPONDENCE

Our society discussed the article, "Approving the Disobedient?" by Phil Dykstra, for an after-recess program. We found that we do not agree with the opinion Mr. Dykstra holds in this article.

We should vote. It is not right to remain silent. The leaders of the nation encourage people to vote. And in Romans 13:1-2, it says, "Let every soul be subject unto the higher powers. For there is no power but of God: the powers that be are ordained of God. Whosoever therefore resisteth the power; resisteth the ordinance of God: and they that resist shall receive unto themselves damnation." We are commanded to obey the higher powers. Therefore, if the leaders of the nation encourage us to vote, we should do it because it is our duty before God to be good Christian citizens. We give a president the office, but we do not give him any power. He receives all power from God. God uses people to set up rulers. So we should vote and try to the best of our ability to get into office men that we believe will best fulfill the office.

Just because we vote for a man does not mean that we approve of his evil. We vote for a man because we think he is the best man for the job. We can't be held responsible for what he does while in office. We are responsible only for what we know about him. Before we vote, we should look at a man's past actions and at the ideas he presents in his campaign. Then we should pick the better of these men for the job. That is all we are responsible for.

We should not remain silent instead of voting for something, such as abortion or the death penalty, either. By remaining silent, we are not showing our disapproval of the issue, but instead we are making others wonder what we really believe about it. When we vote, we are showing to others that we either approve the bill or disapprove of it. And then, even if it passes against our wishes, we can still feel that we have done the best we could to prevent it.

So therefore, we must vote for what we believe to be right, whether it be for someone or something.

Southwest Junior Young
People's Society
The Committee- Steve Groenendyk and Linda De Kraker

REPLY

I will make a few brief comments in connection with the article drawn up by Southwest's Junior Young People's Society. They are as follows:

I) First of all it is a good reflection on our young people to respond to articles which are written in the **Beacon Lights**. This shows that they not only read their magazine, but also talk about it. Keep it up!

II) In connection with the article itself, Romans 13:1, 2 as I see it, really is no basis for your disagreement of my article dated, Feb., 1977. Romans 13 teaches we must obey those in authority, for they are put there by God. (Unless they command of us something which is contrary to the Word of God.) And to my knowledge, we are not commanded by our government to vote. We are free to vote or not to vote. Indirectly, are we not being partaker of other men's sin if we vote for ungodly men? (I Timothy 5:22) I know, even in the church we vote, and we vote for sinful men, but this is quite different. In the church we vote for sinner-saints, those

who have the life of Christ implanted in their hearts, those who hate sin, and desire not only, but also walk in good works. This you do not and cannot find in the world of ungodly men. Therefore we should not vote for them.

III) I do agree that we should vote for or against "things". I'm glad you included this in your article. You mentioned abortion and the death penalty, and I'm sure we could add a lot more to the list. For this you are correct.

Yours in Christ,
Phil Dykstra

NEWS From, For, and About Our Churches

BIRTHS

Mr. & Mrs. Peter Boer of South Holland were blessed in the birth of a son, Jason Peter.

Mr. & Mrs. Leon Griess of Loveland were blessed in the birth of a daughter on Dec. 26.

Mr. & Mrs. Joel Zandstra of Hope were blessed in the birth of Emily Kay on Dec. 27.

Mr. & Mrs. Bob Van Til of Faith were blessed in the birth of Karen Fay on Dec. 29.

CHURCH MEMBERSHIP

Edgerton has sent Mrs. Glen Arp's membership papers to her home at her request. She plans to affiliate with the Chr. Ref. Church of Luverne.

The membership papers of Glenyce Brummel have been transferred from Edgerton to Southwest.

First Church has received the membership papers of Mrs. James Pastoor nee Jane Vander Wal) from the Sacramento Chr. Ref. Church in California.

Hope Church has received the membership papers of Mr. & Mrs. Jon Smith who come from the Faith Presbyterian Church of Birmingham, Alabama.

South Holland has received Mrs. Charles Zandstra as a baptized member from Calvary Reformed Church.

CONFESSION OF FAITH

Barb Van Den Top made public confession of her faith in Hope Church on January 8.

MARRIAGES

Gene Van Den Top and Karen Van Engen were united in marriage on Nov. 25 in Calvary Chr. Ref. Church of Rock Valley.

Tom Van Overloop and Vicky Klamer were united in marriage on Dec. 1 in Hope Church.

YOUNG PEOPLE'S ACTIVITIES

South Holland's Young People's Society held a singspiration on Nov. 20. Proceeds went for the 1978 Convention.

An ice-skating party for Grand Rapids area young people was held at Jolly Roger ice rink on Dec. 10. Films and refreshments followed at Adams St. School.

The Edgerton young people sponsored a Christmas Singspiration on Dec. 18. A special offering was received for the 1978 Convention.

Loveland's young people sponsored a Christmas Singspiration on Dec. 25.

OTHER ACTIVITIES

A singspiration was held on Dec. 4 at First Church. Its theme was "The Glad Tidings of Joy".

Hope School presented a Christmas program "The Light of the Messiah" on Dec. 13 in Hudsonville Church.

Covenant Christian High School's choirs presented a concert on Jan. 15 in First Church.

PLAN NOW!

to attend!

THE 38th ANNUAL P.R.Y.P. CONVENTION

August 21-25, '78

THE SOUTH HOLLAND P.R.Y.P. SOCIETY

(HOSTS)

* * *

WATCH FOR MORE DETAILS LATER!!

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