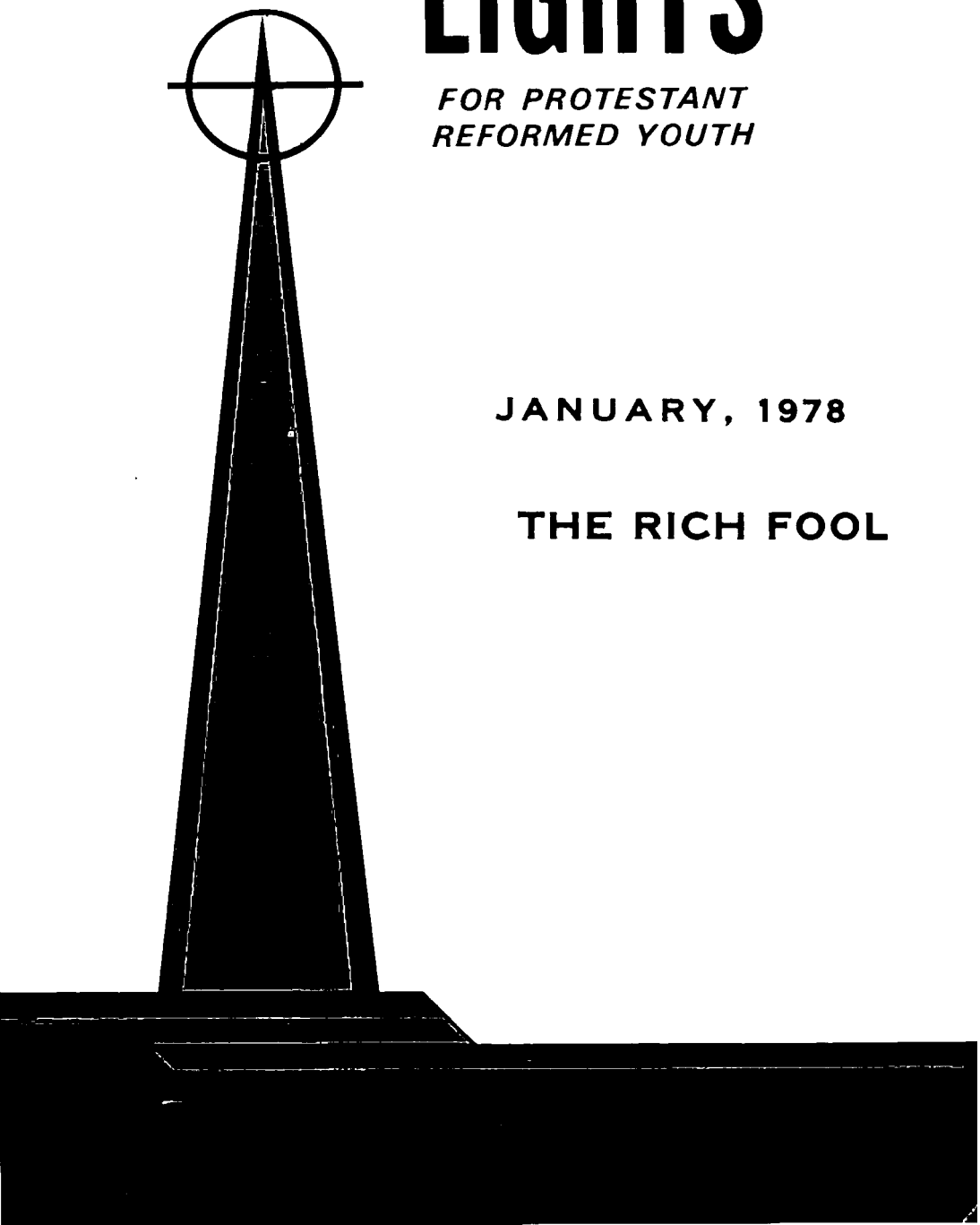
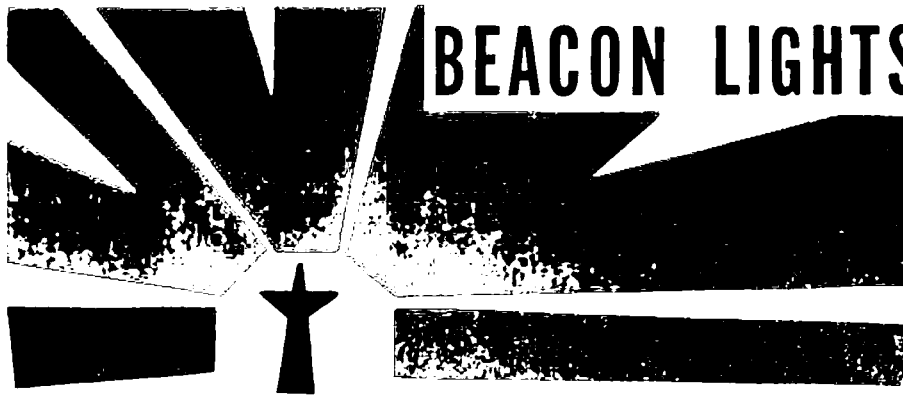
BEACON LIGHTS

FOR PROTESTANT REFORMED YOUTH



JANUARY, 1978

THE RICH FOOL



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All material for publication should be addressed to Dave Moelker 1401 Su-Lew S.W. Grand Rapids, Michigan 49504

News Editor: Cindi Dykstra 4625 Ju-Le-On Dr. S.W., Grand Rapids, MI 49504

Michigan subscribers please forward subscription dues to Grace Faber 4190 Burton S.E., Grand Rapids, Mich. 49506

Subscribers outside of Michigan please forward subscription dues to Nancy Van Dyke 3502 Bluebird S.W., Wyoming, Mich. 49506

Forms 3579 should be returned to **Beacon Lights** 1401 Su-Lew S.W., Grand Rapids, Mich. 49504

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EDITORIAL COMMENTS

We begin this new year with something old. "With a Strong Hand", is an article penned by the late Alice Rietsma some 23 years ago. When I decided to use this voice from the past, I was reminded of Ecclesiastes 1:9, "The thing that hath been, it is that which shall be; and that which is done is that which shall be done: and there is no new thing under the sun." Miss Rietsma served as teacher and principal in Hope Protestant Reformed School for many years and her remarks represent something that has been and can be applied now in 1978. For there is no new thing under the sun.

* * * * * * * * * * *

What are the ways in which God calls men to the ministry? Rev. Kortering, from Hope Protestant Reformed Church, Redlands, California gives us his account of how God used his parents to give to him the direction he needed to set a course for the ministry. This topic is not new to *Beacon Lights*, but it bears repeating now and then for this should be a primary consideration of all our young men.

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Mr. Thys Feenstra of Hope Protestant Reformed Church, Redlands, California, shares with us some of his thoughts on and memories of family visitation. Mr. Feenstra is highly qualified to write on such a subject because of his many years of labor in the church as an elder. (It would be interesting and really beneficial for our youth if some of you past and present elders could write concerning the many different aspects of elder work. How about it?)

Editorial

THE RICH FOOL

by Harry Langerak

Covetousness is a deadly sin against which every child of God must guard

against, or it will envelop him in its tenacles. This is true, in the first place, because we live in a world which has ungodly mammon as its god. Its motto is eat, drink and be merry, for tomorrow we die. It is extremely difficult to live in such a world and not be affected by it. Another reason we must be on guard is because our old man according to the flesh clings frantically to the material good and benefit that this world tantalizingly offers us. We foolishly forget that we must put off the old man and his deeds and seek first the kingdom of heaven.

In the parable of the rich fool, we find Jesus warning against this deadly sin. (Please take the time to read Luke 12:16-21). Here Jesus is warning against the utter foolishness of seeking this world's goods which will perish. "A man's life consisteth not in the abundance of the things which he possesses."

The occasion for this instruction came when Jesus is rudely interrupted by a man while He is teaching the multitude about spiritual matters. The man requested that Jesus speak to his brother about dividing the inheritance with him.

He saw Jesus as one whose words would convince his brother to give him what were apparently his possessions. It was just as apparent that the spiritual instruction into which he had so rudely intruded had no concern for him at the moment. His only concern was the material possessions which he wanted desperately.

We can well imagine Jesus' displeasure with the man, not only because he was rude, but because he had missed the whole point of the Master's instruction about the spiritual concern for the things of the kingdom of heaven that must be evident in each child of God. Jesus now uses this occasion for the instruction which is found in the parable by laying hold of the underlying sin which beset this man. "Take heed, and beware of covetousness for a man's life consisteth not in the abundance of the things which he possesseth." Luke 12:15

This warning and the parable, which occasioned by the request of this man, are directed for our instruction. All too often we find ourselves worrying about our mundane earthly possessions. Many times we order our lives giving priority to what I want in this world: cars, bank accounts, good pay, retirement programs, insurance, and the like. This is why the parable speaks to us.

In the parable, Jesus uses the illustration of a rich man who was in a rather enviable position of not having enough storage available for his bountiful crop which he was harvesting. He was already rich and stood to become much richer. He must now decide what to do. To him the answer was never in doubt. He would build new and bigger barns for his copious goods. He reasoned that by so doing he could enjoy his retirement in luxury and ease.

Yet Scripture called the man a fool. We may well ask what is wrong with the man? Is it wrong to be rich? Is it a sin to work so that you have an abundance? Was he wrong to use the abundance for the future? The answer is that in themselves these possessions and their use was not wrong. Job was rich and so was Abraham and yet we read in Scripture that they were God's chosen. They, as well as the rich fool, had been blessed by God with an abundance of this world's goods. What then is the sin of this rich fool? If we examine the passage of Scripture where we find this, we will find that there is an absence of an important ingredient which must characterize anyone who is going to call himself a steward of God. Nowhere does this rich fool remember from whom he received these goods. It is as if he actually believed he was lord over all his goods. Notice that he uses the words "I" and "my" and "soul thou" repeatedly. He had no trouble putting these goods which **he** had gained for **his** selfish,

self-centered use. Life had meaning only in terms of the abundance of goods he could use for himself. It is equally evident that he felt that peace, joy and contentment were to be gained through this abundance. He concentrated all his life's efforts to gain these material goods so that in the end he could triumphantly say "Soul, thou has much goods laid up for many years, take thine ease, eat, drink and be merry." He actually believed that his soul could be fed with these material goods. Spiritually his soul was tied to these goods of this world. His contentment was in these material things. And because he was a fool, he believed this life and the goods he had gained would last and be enjoyed by him for many years. But, God said "Thou fool, this night thy soul shall be required of thee. Then whose shall those things be which thou has provided?"

We are inclined to agree that here we have a description of a real fool. Yet we have missed the point of Christ's instruction if we do not see ourselves in the ambitions of this rich fool. How often do we not boldly assert what we will do with our time, talents, and our goods without asking our Lord what he would have us do. How often do not we get caught up in the pursuit of money, houses, cars, clothes as if they can somehow satisfy our souls. Jesus is speaking to us telling us that if these things become our sole ambition in life, we are no more than fools. We are laying up for the life that perishes, thus indicating that we care very little for the life that is eternal.

In the parable, we are warned against this form of coveting. To covet means that we deny that God can and will take care of us. It means that we do not trust in Him as the one who will supply. When we covet, we are not content with God's way of providing for us, at the same time believing we can do better. Jesus, in the verses that follow, instructs us by telling us to "consider the ravens: for they neither sow nor reap; which neither have storehouses nor barns; and God feedeth them: how much more are ye better than the fowls?" What can we learn from the ravens? That God provides. He as Lord over the creation will not withhold any good things from his beloved saints. Therefore, we must be content with what He gives us since we know that He knows what is best for each one of us. It also means that we must not worry regarding our daily needs, but will trust that, as the good and perfect giver, God will clothe and feed us as He does the lillies and the ravens.

But we seek more than just supplying physical needs for the body. We know that our souls will perish if we do not receive spiritual food. We are told in verse 31 to seek first the kingdom of God. Our souls need the instruction in Christian schools that we have gone to for many years, the catechism instruction, the correction of Christian parents, Bible discussion in Young Peoples' Society, and above all, we need the spiritual food and drink of the preaching of the Word. You see, Young People, the kingdom of God is spiritual, and therefore, to seek it requires spiritual activity on our part whereby we actively, willingly and thankfully appropriate these spiritual benefits. This activity the rich fool knew nothing about. He thought material goods would supply the need of his soul. God called him a fool. But we through faith must seek spiritual blessings of God's kingdom so that our soul will live even if the body perish.

Seeking the kingdom of God also implies that all the material abundance we receive we will use in the service of God. We will ask God "What wouldst thou have me to do?" with thy time, thy talents, thy money, thy car, which thou hast given me to use as a steward in thy kingdom. Then when it comes time to part with these earthly possessions, we will willingly do so because our treasures are those spiritual treasures that we can take with us into eternity.

FROM THE PASTOR'S STUDY

BY REV. G. LUBBERS

THE BIBLE; THAT UNIQUE BOOK CALLED "RUTH"

"And Obed begat Jesse, and Jesse begat David." Ruth 4:22

This is a great time of the year while I am writing these few lines to you from my "Study". It is the time, when, in a special way, we pause to consider the coming of the Son of God in the flesh, the Wonder of all wonders, than which there is none greater. Yes, it is a time, too, when somehow we think of the happiness of home and hearth, of spending a little time "home at Christmas". But the latter simply pales into nothingness when it lacks the heartbeat of that grand Word of God that "to us a child is born, unto us a son is given, and the government shall be upon His shoulders, and His Name shall be called Wonderful, Counselor, the Mighty God, the Everlasting Father, the Prince of Peace." (Isaiah 9:6) The wonder of the message of the Angel to the shepherds in the fields of Boaz, where Ruth garnered little barley with the reapers, on the wondrous night when the Christ was born, a Savior which is Christ the Lord. This is the good news to all the people, the congregation of God, both in the Old Testament and in the New Testament dispensation! It is, however, the good news which the Holy Spirit penned down also, and that, too, in a unique manner and emphasized in the Book of Ruth.

Well may we ponder with believing and adoring hearts those last few Words that stand as a beacon light in the dark

days of the "Judges" pointing more and more to the day when there will be a King in Israel. No more shall the doleful refrain be, "Now there was no king in Israel: every man did that which was right in his own eyes." That is the judgement of the writer of the prophetic book of Judges. (Judges 21:25) The joy of the morning greets us in the last lines of Ruth 4:22. This was the faithful word of promise even "in the days when the judges ruled." (Ruth 1:1) This you notice in the beginning of the Book of Ruth and compare the glad ending, which caused the women, the mothers in Bethlehem-Ephratah lift up their voices in hope and joy of motherhood in Israel—the Israel of God which is "great with child"? (Rev. 12:1,2) Hear them lift up their song, "Blessed be the LORD, which hath not left thee this day without a kinsman (Boaz) that his name may be famous in Israel. And he shall be unto thee a restorer of thy life, and a nourisher of thine old age: for thy daughter-in-law, which loveth thee is better to thee than seven sons, hath born him."

Great is Ruth, the Moabitess in the annals of Israel. The birth, the coming of the Son of God in the flesh "was thus" in the three times fourteen generations of the holy geneology. Ruth, a Moabitess, "Better than seven sons". (Matthew 1:1-18)

Such light and joy in the midst of such darkness of sin and shame in Israel!!

Yes, it did seem hopeless. The holy sons of Jacob-Pharez had left the land of Canaan, Bethlehem-Judah in a time of famine. Yes, it was not really the way of faith. But it was the secret counsel and will of God which overrules all things also here to "keep a great people alive." It was God's way of showing His great and wonderful faithfulness to His promise. When in all of Israel there was none, seemingly, that thought of God's promise, then it was that we see that God remembers mercy, faithful to His own. God will bring a mother out of Moab, a daughter by incestuous Lot with his eldest daughter, conceived in drunkenness of sin and shame. She will be proclaimed better than seven sons. The Lord will change all of Naomi's "bitterness" into sweetness. Her name will never more be Mara. The great dealing of the Almighty with her is not a matter really of "bitterness". For now it will be evident that Boaz is the father of Obed, who is the father of Jesse, the father of David, the great King.

It is the breaking of the dawn; it is the lifting up of the distant horizons.

No, the Book of Ruth is not merely a beautiful "story", a pastoral scene in Bethlehem's barley fields, a romance at the threshing floor in that night under the stars of the "house of bread"; but it is the revelation of the coming of the Son of God. Yes, you must be enthralled by the simplicity and beauty of this all. But do not forget that such wondrous simplicity is only possible where Ruth confesses and ardently entreats Naomi to be allowed to accompany her to a land of another people, a people in the land of Israel, saying, "Intreat me not to leave thee, or to return from following after thee: for whither thou goest I will go; and where thou lodgest I will lodge; thy people shall be my people, and thy God my God: Where thou diest I will die, and there will I be buried: the LORD do so to me, and more also, if ought but death part thee and me." (Ruth 1:16,17) When such faith dwells in the heart and gives courage to a woman's breast, then you see a beautiful courtship, which excels all human beauty. It is the beauty of God's wondrous grace by which He beautifies His saints in the beauty of holiness.

Now take the shoes from off your feet when you read the Book of Ruth once more. Here one treads on holy ground, even in Boaz' barley field. For the Son of God is selecting this Ruth, the Moabitess to be one of his grandmothers. Does He not say that before Abraham

was, I am? (John 8:58) In days when there was no king in Israel and each man did what was right in his own eyes, then the glorious light of the Gospel is manifested in redemptive-history.

Yes, redemptive-history. The Christ came into this world to save sinners. He is not ashamed to call them brethren. Yes, Judah, the fourth son of Jacob, born to Leah, is the one to whom the gathering of the people shall be. Shiloh shall be born from him. The sceptre shall not depart from Judah till Shiloh comes. O, how far was this from Judah's mind when he committed incest with his own daughter-in-law, Tamar. (Gen. 38) What wondrous doings of God. Two sons are born. The one is Zarah in the Bible account. The other, "who broke forth" was called Pharez. His is the birthright by promise! Don't blush when you read this account, nor exalt yourself in self-righteousness, but adore and worship the magnitude of the love of God, who sent His Son to be a propitiation for your sins.

What comfort for poor sinners when they read all this; when they listen to the Gospel of the love of God. Now read that wondrous little bit of the "geneology of Christ" in Ruth 4:18ff, "Now these are the generations of Pharez: Pharez begat Hezron, and Hezron begat Ram, and Ram begat Amminadab, and Amminadab begat Nashon, and Nashon begat Salmon, and Salmon begat Boaz, and Boaz begat Obed and Obed begat Jesse, and Jesse begat David."

And David's great Son and Lord is Christ. David did not **beget** him, nor did Joseph. He is the begotten of the Father. "The Holy Ghost shall come upon you, and the power of the Highest shall overshadow you."

The great Mystery of Christ's birth was long in coming, but when it was revealed, it is hidden in the light of its own glory.

Great is the Mystery of godliness. Also in that wondrous Bible Book called Ruth. Did you read it?

SPIRITUAL BODY-BUILDING

by Lori Dykstra

Lori is a member of the Senior Young Peoples' Society of Hope, Walker, Mich.

How do you think of God? Is God, to you, a remote Being who is available to you when you think you need Him? Is He just a sort of institution or tradition in your home, a faraway Someone about whom you read and to whom you pray? If this is true of you and I, we'd better shake ourselves out of our apathy and become aware of this reality: God is our creator (He made us), our Sustainer (whether we live or die is up to Him; He also preserves us spiritually), our Father (He rules us and demands of us obedience) and our **Friend.**

The relationship of friendship is a very special one. Those who are friends have an intimate knowledge of each other. They know the innermost feelings of the other, they know the other's personality, his likes and dislikes, almost everything about him. So it is with God and us. Although we do not know God perfectly, as He knows us, we do have or can have a complete knowledge of Him through a study of His Word. As it is with any other friendship, this knowledge is necessary for a sincere and truly God-glorifying relation-

ship. This is why a personal study of God's Word is so important. It is true that the preaching is the chief means of grace and thus is the chief means whereby we know God, but we cannot just sit back and expect the Holy Spirit to work in our hearts and make us spiritually strong, without ourselves taking interest in learning of God. Take time to read and study God's Word, even if it is only a verse or two a night. Your own spiritual sensitivity will be greatly increased and you will grow in the knowledge and love of God.

Another aspect of friendship is communication. Friends are people who confide in each other. They share with each other their deepest thoughts, their hopes, their fears, their aims, their hearts. So we do with God. In fact, talking with God about our problems, our joys, our deep spiritual desires should be as natural as talking to our friends. And because God is everywhere-present, we don't have to wait until mealtime or until we're all alone to commune with God. We can talk to God at any time and in any place. For example, a time for communion and talking with God can be as you drive down the road on your way to work or to school. Some would not call this prayer, but no matter what you call it, it is communion with God and God does hear it as long as it is sincere. These things are necessary for true and sincere prayer or communion with God (Heidelberg Catechism, Question and Answer 117): That our prayer is from the heart and to the one true God; that in our prayer we know our need and misery so that we experience a knowledge of God's divine majesty and our own nothingness; that we pray in the knowledge that God hears us on Christ's merits even though we are not worthy in ourselves. We can see, then, that talking with God, although He is a friend, is not like talking to another of our friends. It demands a very deep respect and humble adoration, something far greater than that which we would even give a human dignitary.

There is one more thing we must say about our communion with God. With our earthly friends, communication always goes both ways. They confide in us and we confide in them. In a sense this is true of our relationship with God, too. The difference is that God's communication with us isn't for the purpose of sharing with us His problems. Rather it is for the purpose of teaching us of Himself, showing to us what His will is concerning us, how we must conduct ourselves in our daily lives, etc. From this we can see that our prayer is not necessary for God's sake, so He will be able to make wise decisions where we are concerned; but rather, prayer is necessary for our sakes, so that we may convey to God our sincere sorrow for sin and our deep thankfulness for deliverance from that sin, and also (Heidelberg Catechism, Question and Answer 116) "because God will give His grace and Holy Spirit to those only, who with sincere desires continually ask them of Him, and are thankful for them." Again we see that we may not just sit back and wait for God to miraculously give us grace. God works through earthly means. He gives us spiritual growth in the way of our striving for it. This is a fact which we as young people seem to ignore. We seem sometimes to think that being Protestant Reformed, attending church twice every Sunday, going to catechism and praying around the table with our families constitutes a satisfactory amount of "religion" in our lives. How vain and empty can we get?! This kind of an attitude is the result of a selfish and wrong perspective on life - an idea that all things do or should revolve around us. Instead, our perspective should be God-centered. We should look at life in this way: God is infinite. He always has existed and always will exist. In contrast, we are finite, in fact so finite that the whole of human existance can be represented on an unending "time line" of

God's existance as the very tiniest dot. Then we, among the huge number of all individuals that ever did or will exist, aren't even worth **thinking** about. If we think of life from this viewpoint, it will be obvious and real to us that God doesn't exist for our sakes - to make our lives easier, but we were created for **God's** sake - to glorify Him. In light of this perspective, we certainly won't be selfish and self-centered, doing things because we like to or because it's so much fun. Instead we will have God as the center of our lives and the criterion by which we will judge our actions and activities will be **God's** Word and **His** commands and **His** will.

In conclusion, let's remember that prayer is a privilege - a privilege given only to Israel. Anyone can utter a pretense of prayer, but only God's people can truly pray and only they are heard by God. So let us as young people learn to make personal use of this most rewarding privilege and thus grow in the knowledge and love of God.

Leaving Father and Mother (2)

Seeking A Life Mate

by Rev. C. Hanko

There comes a time in the life of a young man that he goes out to seek a life mate for himself. This is quite natural, for when God created us He said, "It is not good that man should be alone, I will make him a help meet for him." There is nothing sinful or improper about this going out to seek a mate. This natural drive may even be spiritually motivated. A serious son of the church is not merely interested in finding a mate, but realizes that he needs a companion and a helper to carry out his calling in God's church. To fulfill his Christian stewardship he needs the comfort of his own home, the help of his wife, and the intimate love and fellowship of his family. Thus the desire to marry can be as holy as the holy institution of marriage itself.

Marriage, as we saw before, is the intimate bond of love that unites two persons and molds them together as one for life. We can think of this bond as a beautiful, variegated cord made up of three strands. We shall have occasion to refer to this in more detail later, but at this point I will only mention that the threefold strand is so tightly interwoven that it cannot be broken. (Ecclesiastes 4:12). There is, first of all, the physical, outward strand, or bond. A young man finds a certain young lady very attractive. It may be her figure, her hair, her eyes, her dress that appeals to him. It may be her smile, the glint of her eye, or her romantic fun loving disposition that appeals to him. This in itself is a new experience for him. Kindergarten children talk freely about the girl or the boy they like and intend to marry. Thereupon follows a stage when a boy would not look at a girl, much less be seen talking to her. What boy likes girls anyway? They are silly, fussy, and much more. A girl refuses to sit next to a boy if he is contaminated. What girl likes boys? Especially if that

boy happens to be her brother or the boy sitting across from her in school. If she notices him at all she pulls up her nose. Then suddenly mother notices that her son takes a bath without being told. He is suddenly concerned about the clothing he wears. He stands in front of the mirror for a long time worrying his hair into some unnatural position. Or else it is daughter who wants to wear her best clothing to an outing, takes a month's supply of clothing along for a four day convention, runs the comb through her long locks at every opportunity. Father and mother wisely look the other way, but both now realize why John does not hear when he is spoken to, and why Mary has that far away look.

There is also a psychological attraction of the sexes. Mary is a kind, sweet girl. She is a lot of fun. She also plays the piano well. John may have known her for years, may have lived almost next door to her and attended the same school with her. Now suddenly he realizes that she is alive, even though in times past he was as blind as a bat to her pleasant smiles intended only for him. Mary, on the other hand, likes John. He is a brain. He is also good at sports. And he has nice hair. People tend to say that, "Love is blind, and lovers cannot see the petty follies they themselves commit." I tend to think that when it comes to looking each other over and sizing up each other, both sexes have their eyes wide open. It has been said, that people should keep both eyes wide open before marriage, and do well to keep one closed after marriage. There is wisdom in that. In this connection it should be said that opposites attract. God in His wisdom brings two persons together who will serve perfectly as a balance wheel for each other. The one may be impetuous; speaking, acting before he thinks. The other may weigh her words and actions carefully. (Imagine what would happen if they were both alike!) The one may tend to be pessimistic, the other can see the rainbow in the cloud. One may be an introvert, the other may carry her heart on her coat sleeve. The one may tend to be miserly, the other may be too extravagant. Sub-consciously the one is drawn to the other as by a magnetic attraction to fill in the lack in his or her own life.

The marriages in the world consist of these two strands, the physical and the psychological, no more. Even in that respect man is usually a poor judge of himself, as well as a poor judge of others, readily influenced by outward, sexual appeal. The result is, that though from a natural and a legal* point of view these are real marriages, they still are only caricatures of the genuine **holy** marital union. The important spiritual strand is missing. The strongest tie of all is lacking, so that the other two are readily strained to a breaking point.

The spiritual strand is the bond that unites two people **in the Lord**. The Lord brings them together in His favor. The love of Christ in our hearts draws us to those who love the Lord. A Christian young man seeks his companion in the church, simply from the principle, "Thy people are my people, and thy God is my God." Even though his sinful flesh may be drawn for a moment to outward appearance and the vivacious lure of an unbeliever, his heart tells him that this is no good, is sinful in the sight of God. A sincere believer is a companion to those who seek the Lord, while, on the other hand, his heart tells him, "Do I not hate them, O Lord, that hate Thee? I hate them with a perfect hatred. I count them my enemies." One who loves the Lord avoids anyone who takes God's name in vain or uses foul language. He loathes the entertainment relished by sinners. Anyone who takes his faith seriously cannot condone defiance of those who are in authority, endangering one's life by reckless driving, or any experimenting with liquor, drugs, gambling, or the like. The child of God is drawn to one who speaks his language in

spiritual matters, who enjoys with him the things of God's kingdom. This spiritual bond proves to be the sustaining, molding power in their married life, the gyroscope of their ship in stormy seas, the compass that keeps them on a straight course to the Haven of Rest.

Seeking a life mate is a serious matter. Young men should not play the field to see how many girls will fall victims to their charm, how many shattered hearts and broken hopes they can leave along their trail before they settle down. The young woman should not strive for undue popularity, trying to see how many scalps she can collect in her belt before she marries. Dating is not a frivolous game that can be played without doing serious damage to some innocent victim. It has happened many times that after an unfortunate love affair a young man grabbed the first girl he could get, or the young woman threw herself at some undesirable person, perhaps just for spite, maybe in desperation. The outcome was a very unhappy marriage. Who is the culprit who should carry the blame? Human emotions are not playthings. Making love is not a sport. One may well remember the golden rule, "Do unto others as you would have them do unto you." There is nothing worse for a young person than to be "stood up," or plainly, to have been made the fool.

I do think that a young man may ask a girl for a casual date for the purpose of making better acquaintance. Young people in high school especially should not take their dating too seriously. They have plenty of time for that in the future. They should also remember that they are undergoing a tremendous physical and psychological change, as well as spiritual growth. More advanced education often changes a person's outlook on life, and along with that, the idea of a life mate. A high school sweetheart may not prove to be a fit wife or husband, or even a fit parent for the children. There are married folk who will tell you that they never dated another boy or girl friend, but "went together" already in junior high and in high school, and still are perfectly happy. That is possible, but young people must be sure that they are meant for each other before they become serious in their courtship. Marriage must be the goal in dating, even though this is not discussed on the first date, and even though one is only seeking to become better acquainted.

The question could arise, who should make the approach? Should the girl ask the fellow, or should she wait until she is asked? It may sound a bit old fogyish in a day of women's lib, yet I still think that it is the prerogative of the boy to ask the girl. A girl should not appear to be too aggressive. This does not mean that the girl sits quietly at home waiting for a phone call for her first date. If my observations do not deceive me, most girls have the natural ability to attract the attention of the young man that interests them. A girl does not throw herself at a man, nor does she use foul tactics to win him, as if anything is fair in love or war. Still, winsome ways, her pleasant smile can do much to attract a boy's attention.

One final remark in this connection. Do not neglect to pray. Scripture says that we must make **all** our needs known to God in heaven. Desiring a life mate is an essential need. Pray about it. Pray much. Pray that God may direct you to the mate of His choice to insure a happy marriage. In olden times, the father sought out a mate for his son or his daughter. Children had to be content with the arrangements that the parents made. You would not like that, would you? Yet be sure to read the Scriptural account of Abraham's servant going to Haran to get a wife for Isaac. Realizing that this undertaking was much too big for him to handle, he committed the whole matter to the Lord. His answer came sooner than he expected. No one could be more certain than Isaac that he had received a wife from the Lord, and

that as answer to prayer.

*This legal aspect is a new concept in these articles. I hope to refer to this in detail later.

Next time: Courtship.

WITH A STRONG HAND

by Alice Reitsma

Taken from January 1955 Beacon Lights.

A New Year's resolution is like a brand, new car. A new car looks so sleek and shiny, so durable and powerful. But - just one little collision with some other obstacle of about the same size and its beauty is gone. The fenders are crumpled, the doors are banged in, and this beautiful car has become quite a wreck. The whole thing is sadly in need of repairs.

And so it is with a New Year's resolution. It may look like a beautiful plan on the first day of the year, but all too soon it will surely collide with the general plan of that person's normal, sinful way of life. And when it does, he will be ashamed to own it as a New Year's resolution; it will be so sadly in need of repairs.

Making a resolution on the first day of the New Year is supposed to give the maker added incentive to keep it. Those who make such resolutions want to start the New Year out right. We hear such expressions as starting the New Year "with a clean slate," and "turning over a new leaf" at the beginning of a New Year. These sayings are indicative of a desire to do better in the year to come; to make the future better than the past. Those who wait until January 1 to make their resolutions and to "turn over a new leaf" seem to feel that starting their new way of life on the first day of the year will make it easier to stick to it. They feel the need for certain improvements. They see the difficulties involved in making real and lasting changes, that is, if these changes in some way conflict with their normal, sinful way of life. They determine to do better, but they find that they never do. So at the beginning of each year they resolve once more, and at the end of that year they again see that they have failed.

The Christian knows, however, that all hope for doing better in the coming year, than he has done in the past, is vain. Each morning the Christian's resolution can only be a prayer of repentance and a plea for grace.

The custom of making New Year's resolutions on the first day of January has its roots in ancient Roman mythology. In ancient Rome, the first day of the year was given over to honoring Janus, the god of doors and gates. The month of January was named after him. He was the god of the beginnings of things. People prayed to him when they were about to start

something new. This god, Janus, was usually represented with two faces, one turned to the front and one to the back. This was so that no one could enter the gates of Rome without his knowing it. And just as the god Janus looked both ahead and backward, so the Roman people, on the first day of the month, January, looked back to what had happened during the past year and looked ahead with new hope to what the coming year might bring.

The Romans also gave each other presents on New Year's day. Many persons brought gifts to the Roman Emperor and wished him good fortune. Roman merchants carried this custom of giving gifts, as far east as Persia, which is now Iran. There the ancient Iranians, or Persians, followed the custom of giving eggs to their friends. Since an egg hatches into life, this custom meant much the same as "turning over a new leaf" at the beginning of the New Year.

The early English took over many of the Roman New Year customs and later English people followed the custom of cleaning the chimneys on New Year's day. This was supposed to bring good luck to the household during the coming year. Starting "with a clean chimney" was a way of making resolutions to correct faults and bad habits, and resolving to make the New Year better than the one just ended. Today many say they wish to start "with a clean slate" instead of "with a clean chimney".

In the history of the people of God, as recorded in the Bible, the first month of the year is also mentioned. It is, however, not the month of January, but April, the month Abib or Nisan. In Exodus 12:2 we read: "The month shall be unto you the beginning of months, it shall be the month of the year to you." It was in this month that Israel was brought from bondage in Egypt. And the people of God were commanded to keep the Feast of the Passover each year on the fourteenth day of the first month of the year to commemorate the exodus from Egypt. In that day, fathers were to instruct their sons by telling them that the reason for this celebration was "because of that which the Lord did unto me when I came forth out of Egypt-for **with a strong hand** the Lord brought thee out of Egypt. Thou shalt, therefore, keep this ordinance in his season, year to year."

As the people of God of the New Dispensation, let us approach this New Year in the spirit of the Passover, which is the Spirit of Christ. Let us see that our resolutions are vain. Let us not resolve what we will do to make this coming year a better one, but let us see what God is doing through us to give us, each day, a closer walk with him. Then we will acknowledge with humble hearts that "with a strong hand" the Lord is bringing us, day by day, and year by year, out of our bondage of sin into the Promised Land.

YEARS IN THY SIGHT

by Rev. Robert C. Harbach

For a thousand years in Thy sight
Are but as yesterday when it is past,
And as a watch in the night. —Psalm 90:4

Years to a thousand! that's ages and ages
Crowded with history for pages and pages.
Ceaseless rise, reign and ruin of empires past;
Dynasties, philosophies—they never last!

Countless events elude historian's pen;
Time, limit of history, moves on, and then
'Tis all to God as nothing, as time all gone;
Sown, grown, mown, blown, gone: like life-span of the lawn.

"Yesterday when it is past" is not as long
As the moment to come, in sigh or song.
Days gone by, they no longer exist at all.
Just a day to God, tho' a century fall!

Chiliads of time are mere points on a line;
And none mark the depths of Eternity's mine.

"A watch in the night" no sooner comes than goes;
It passes angel sentinels: where, who knows?
They stay in millenniums of service, yet
Their stint is over and a new watch is set.

Heav'ns angels scarce have time to change their watches,
When on God's clock the gears have meshed their notches.
They tick thru' the long night of Time as we dream;
Yet He slumbers not in all Time's rolling stream.

A thousand years, strung like pearls of dark and light—
That space of time makes not for God one whole night!
Just a single night-watch is all time to God;
The Eternal made it by His mighty nod.

Give our Father glory: praise His holy Name!
Thru the endless ages His is all the fame.
Only one life, tho' it be more than fourscore,
May it be for heav'n, Christ and God ever more.

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Current Events & Comments

A NEW SONG

by David Harbach

Have you ever listened to a choral practice session where the members are just beginning to learn to sing a new song? The accompanist plays the new music so that the members are able to hear their each individual part. Many of us know that those who sing either soprano, alto, tenor, or bass do not sing every note perfectly. In fact, those first few practice sessions are full of mistakes in timing and harmony. Even more evident is the fact that there are so many mistakes, one wonders whether or not they will be able to sing the song at all. After all, no one cares to hear a discordant, clashing, jarring sound, much less the same in a song. For the choral group that means practicing numerous times their separate parts, until the whole group together sings each part with near perfect timing and harmony. Then those to whom they must sing will gladly say that the singing was beautiful.

We know even after the new song is learned and is being sung to an audience that individuals make mistakes. For the most part these mistakes go unnoticed mainly because there are enough voices singing the correct note to drown out the discordant sound. Yet every once in awhile there is a rather blatant mistake, producing that discordant, clashing, jarring sound. Again more practice sessions are needed to perfect the singing of the new song.

Now one would not expect to hear many mistakes being made by a choral group that has been singing the same beautiful song for many years. Through the years of practice singing the song well known to all the members, one would expect to hear a glorifying sound, a joyful sound, a blessed sound sung from the depths of the heart, a song sung to the glory of God. Yet when someone comes along and decides to change the notes a bit to be more suitable to himself you are bound to hear many mistakes, because now the choral group is singing a new song.

For the purpose of this article, let us as young people picture ourselves as though we were that choral group singing a selection of songs. Let us also picture our life as being characterized by the singing of songs, so that one could tell from the songs we sang what our life was like. The songs that we sing must therefore be reformed songs. That is, because we are always in the process of reforming ourselves and being reformed, the songs that we sing will bear testimony of that reformation in our lives.

We practice singing those reformed songs all the days of our life here on earth. It could be said that every saint who has lived on earth has sung these same reformed songs. So for centuries these same blessed, beautiful, joyful, glorifying songs have been sung to give evidence of the fact that there exists on earth the people of God who are truly reformed in their lives by the power of God's grace.

Now suppose someone comes along and decides to change the notes to suit their way of life, which is not at all reformed. Obviously, if the group tries to sing that new song they will produce many a discordant, clashing, jarring sound. And so will we produce the same undesirable

sounds if we attempt to live our lives other than in a process of always reforming.

Perhaps we should be more clear in our thought. We have pictured our lives as being characterized by the singing of musical songs. But the songs we sing are made up of more than just notes. There are words to be sung. The words are what really enable others to know what our life is really like. You see, one could sing the same song we do and not be reformed at all because the words are different. So it is today that many young people who claim to be reformed sing the same song we do as far as the tune is concerned. But upon listening to the words, one learns that they are not reformed at all. What they have done is to disguise themselves with a song of reformation, all the while confessing with their mouth that they are far from the truth. This is not only evident in the churches around us but sad to say, evident within our own schools. You claim to be Protestant Reformed young people, than confess that by living a life of reformation. You may sing a nice song but your words are not at all reformed. Rebellion as is evidenced in the disrespect shown to teachers is disgraceful.

Whenever we learn a new song it must be reformed in character. That is, whenever we have a certain renewed zeal to reform ourselves, that zeal must be out of a love for God and not to simply please ourselves. Indeed there must be that quickening of the new man in Christ and a mortifying of the old man of sin. That can only take place because of the shed blood of Jesus Christ. Then the song we sing will witness to the truth of total depravity, unconditional election, limited atonement, irresistable grace and perseverance of the saints.

Then shall we sing the first two verses of Psalm 149, "Praise ye the LORD. Sing unto the LORD a new song, and his praise in the congregation of saints. Let Israel rejoice in him that made him: let the children of Zion be joyful in their King."

CALLED TO THE MINISTRY

by Rev. J. Kortering

The call to the ministry began before I was born.

You see, it was a process, not some heavenly experience when an angel of light stood before me with oil to anoint. I can't begin to designate a time when I first thought of the ministry. It was always with me.

It all began when the Lord reached down into the life of my father before I was born. Both my parents were born and raised in the Reformed Church of Overisel, Michigan. After their marriage in 1919 they decided to strike out on their own and head west to the far off state of California. Dad had a trade, buttermaker, and he wanted to use it to full advantage, make money and see the world. Uprooted from the protected environment of a quiet Dutch village and living in the culturally different and worldly cities of Riverside and Sacramento, Dad drifted spiritually. He neglected attending church and lived away from the Lord. Mother however persisted. Even though the umbilical cord of the parental home was cut, they both had a longing to return to Michigan. They moved to Louisville, Kentucky and eventually to St. Louis, Missouri. The butter-maker was on the move. After a ten year absence they finally moved to Holland, Michigan and there settled down. The Lord provided a job at the Artic Ice Cream Co. While working there he

met a fellow employee who was full of heavenly zeal. She had read a copy of the **Standard Bearer** and was impressed and wanted my father to read it. This initial contact with Revs. Hoeksema and Ophoff started my father to think and read. He purchased a subscription to the **Standard Bearer** and read all the literature he could get his hands on. It fell like water from heaven upon his parched soul. By now the First Protestant Reformed Church of Holland was organized as a small congregation. He sought out the fellowship of others members. Soon our family was settled in a church home, Dad was all aglow and Mother was quietly happy.

Seeing the truth was like a conversion experience for my father. He saw for the first time the real meaning of the sovereignty of God. It was more than a doctrine, it was a way of life! God owned everything and required obedience in all areas of life. This became the governing principle of his life: God was sovereign, grace was absolute. He couldn't read enough and he was always reading. He sent to England for sovereign grace material. It came by the crates full. He sorted it out, saving the good Reformed material, burning the rest.

Through it all my father had one inner desire, that the Lord would call his son to the ministry. He could envision nothing more glorious than seeing his own son preach the gospel of the sovereign God. These hopes were dashed to pieces three years later when his first-born son, now six years old became ill with the crippling disease—spinal meningitis. He didn't die, but after severe fever and repeated convulsions it left him with permanent brain damage. He wasn't able to continue his schooling, he had to be cared for at home.

Not till four years later did I appear upon the scene. Hearing my mother describe it, it must have been some scene: born with two club feet, ears folded forward, covered with red curly hair. I must have looked like Esau. Even that didn't deter a zealous father. This would be his preacher son.

Reaching into the distant past, I remember my folks telling me that I was going to be a preacher. I had to speak loud at the Sunday School Christmas program-like a preacher. I had to sing loud—like a preacher. I even had to play the piano—like a preacher?? I marvel that all this emphasis on becoming a preacher didn't somehow turn me off to even wanting to become a preacher. Yet, it had the opposite effect. I thought **preacher!** This carried through to scheduling my high-school courses, college preparatory, Latin, German, speech, etc. Four years at Calvin were dominated by pre-sem. I eagerly attended some classes at the seminary even while I was still at Calvin, I just couldn't wait. I loved the three years in sem and was the happiest man on earth when the synodical exam was completed and I received the call to Hull, Iowa. God had confirmed my inner call to preach the glorious gospel of the Sovereign God.

If there ever is an example of a minister being influenced by parents to enter the ministry, it is in my life. Both parents earnestly desired this, encouraged me to study for it, prayed about it.

The Lord used my parents, especially my father, as the means to confront me with the serious consideration to become a minister. I wasn't forced to be a minister, I wanted to become one if the Lord willed it. The spiritual environment of the home made it appeal to me very much. We discussed the current problems in the church, we read books and discussed them together. My appetite for reading and study was whetted at home. God used that spiritual environment to lay the call upon my young heart.

May the accounting of this remind us that God does use parents in influencing their children. It was not of them, it was of God. His will prevailed.

For that I give Him thanks.

George M. Ophoff (20)

by Prof. H. Hanko

His Work As Professor

Last time we talked a bit in general about the work of Revs. Hoeksema and Ophoff in the Seminary. In this and a couple of other articles, I want to talk a bit more specifically about some of the work which Rev. Ophoff did.

You must understand that in a Seminary where there are only two professors and where a full Seminary curriculum is taught each professor must teach an enormous number of different subjects. In most larger Seminaries (and colleges) a professor teaches in one specific field. He may, e.g., be a professor of history; he then teaches only history courses. He can then concentrate his attention upon this field to the exclusion of others. This was not (and is not now) true in our Seminary. Generally speaking, Rev. Hoeksema taught in the areas of Dogmatics and New Testament Studies and Rev. Ophoff taught in the areas of Practical Theology, Old Testament Studies and Church History. Although these men received some help from other ministers (Revs. Vos, Heys, Schipper and Veldman taught one or more subjects in Seminary from time to time) this meant that Rev. Hoeksema taught something like twenty-six different courses and Rev. Ophoff something like twenty. They did not, of course, teach all these courses every year; but the point that needs to be made was that they had to become expert in a number of different fields of study. Rev. Ophoff, e.g., had to become expert in Hebrew, Church History, Church Polity, Old Testament History and the more practical subjects of Poimenics. This involved an enormous amount of studying and development.

In this article and a couple of others I want to quote from some of Rev. Ophoff's writings. There are several reasons why I am going to do this. One is that, quotations from some of these writings will show that these men did become masters in their fields. Another reason is that brief quotes from these writings will also show that they did their own work in their fields. They developed their subjects along distinctively Reformed lines and in areas where development had not taken place before. They did original work which remains of abiding value to the Church. And the final reason is that I have some hopes that at least a few of our readers will, having tasted slightly the flavor of these writings, will be persuaded to do more reading in all the excellent material that was produced.

Poimenics is a study of the principles of pastoral work. It concentrates especially on that aspect of the minister's labor which are of a pastoral kind: family visitation, sick visitation, personal counselling, etc. We have noted before that Rev. Ophoff's strengths were not in pastoral labor in the congregation. Nevertheless he produced a syllabus which was extremely worthwhile. In fact, several years after I was in the ministry, I still re-read Rev. Ophoff's notes simply to refresh my mind. I would often read the section of family visitation before this work was again begun in the Fall of the year. (This old syllabus is no longer in print. Prof. Decker has prepared a new syllabus. But this is based on the work of Rev. Ophoff and can be obtained from the Seminary. It would perhaps be wise if all our elders purchased this work.)

There are a few quotations I want to make from it to give some idea to our readers of the nature of it. The following paragraph deals with some aspects of family visitation.

> Family visiting should lay hold on the whole of life — civil, economic, family and church life, and personal religious life. The last mentioned is of chief importance. If it is well with a man's soul, all is well. But it is not advisable to begin with spiritual, personal life, to set out, for example, with questions such as these: "Are you assured that you are a child of God?" or "Are you a Christian? and do you believe you are?" And if the answer be in the affirmative, to continue with a question of "why". These are difficult questions and often prove confusing. They should be reserved for a later point in the conversation, to which the conversation should lead.
>
> The thing to do is to put those visited at ease by natural, easy spiritual conversation. The confidence of the sheep must be won. It must be made easy for them to speak about themselves, about matters that concern them personally. The pastor must make it easy for his sheep to open their hearts to him. He must remove the distance that separates him from them; he must truly draw nigh unto them and they to him, in order that there may be actual spiritual contact between pastor and sheep.
>
> To be sure, so much depends upon the pastor in the achievement of this purpose: we may name the following. 1) The approach of the pastor. 2) His deportment in the family circle. 3) The tone of voice, even, in which he speaks. 4) The expression of his face. The pastor should be mindful of these things; he should speak in a well-modulated tone. His voice should be free from harshness. His person should radiate true kindness, sympathy, understanding, of which the fear of the Lord is the source. The sheep must be able to feel that the pastor is genuinely interested in them, that he wants to help them in a spiritual sense, if only they will let him. It means, of course, that the pastor must truly love his sheep, i.e., love the work of Christ in them. And this means that he himself must be a true child of God, and a spiritual child of God. The latter must certainly be added.

Even after Rev. Ophoff gave full time to the work of the Seminary, he nevertheless still labored in this work, for he was, for many years, elder in the congregation of First Church and there had the opportunity to put his own principles into practice.

To quote but one more brief paragraph: Rev. Ophoff writes in connection with "the importance of true knowledge of human nature for the preaching and the preacher."

> It will spare (the minister) many surprises and discouragements as he contacts and moves among the members of his flock; and sees them in their daily living. Knowing what man is apart from grace, and knowing that God's redeemed people in this life have but a small principle of obedience, and that in their flesh there dwelleth no good thing, he will know what to expect from his sheep, and what not to expect. He will certainly not look for perfection in them. As armed with this true knowledge of human nature, the pastor will not stand amazed at the rioting of sin in his flock. When he sees a good man fall into sin, as did David, he will not be astonished and confused. The many infirmities of God's people will not discourage him, and he will be on his guard against the "pious" people in his flock.

Truth vs. Error

REV. ROBERT C. HARBACH

CLOWNS AND CALVINISTS

We know a lot about Calvinists. We've heard of Calvin cadets or young male Calvinist-to-be, student Calvinists in training. We've heard of Calvinettes, little female trainees in Calvinism. At least that is what the names denote, although one wonders just how much, if any, training and practice in real Calvinism is involved. We, happily, rub shoulders every day and week with genuine, great Calvinists, and, sadly, with some who are only nominal Calvinists, that is, very small Calvinists (in the sense of a **nominal** fee being a very small fee). In fact, **their** Calvinism is so small, an electron microscope is needed to find it. Indeed, there are many, today, claiming to be **Calvinists** who talk and act more like **clowns**. But despite lies and propaganda flying around everywhere, this is an age of almost blatant honesty among the flagrantly wicked. Their language is not as esoteric as it used to be. They obtrusively confess to being "gay" or homosexual. Will, then, certain ones finally openly admit to being the religious clowns they have gotten to be?

Who would not prefer a bowl of corn-flakes to a plate of saccharin-treated sawdust? Even if the sawdust be thinly shaved down and so honeyed up that it smells and tastes like corn-flakes? Yet we are not surprised to find many feeding themselves and their children on a sawdust diet, a diet of error. How does such a poor, strange, spiritual state come about? Something like this: the sawdust trail is introduced into the church. Through utilization of the invitational system the people are urged to leave their pews, come down the sawdust trail and "give God a chance." In many bizarre ways, spiritual sawdust is being sprinkled all over the floors of some churches. What is happening? These churches have been infiltrated with an underground which is avidly turning the church into a three ring circus, and its members into boobs and clowns. Where once Calvinists, now clowns. Heartrendingly sad, but true.

It is heartening, however, to meet a Protestant Reformed elder, a patriarch of the Reformed Faith, who knows what is going on in the world **and** in the churches, both politically, racially and religiously, a man better informed than a John Bircher and subscriber to **American Opinion** and **Time** Magazine on the one hand, and a devotee of Charles Hodg's **Systematic**

Theology on the other. He could tell you things about the false ecumenical church, about the World Council of Churches, and the National Council of Churches (he knew all about it when it was called the Federal Council of Churches). He could tell you how, not too many years ago, this would-be ecumenical cabal, at a World's Fair, represented Jesus Christ as a clown. Not too many people are aware of this fact. Naturally, it shocked many respectable souls, and was, and is to God's people a horrible blasphemy. What is the significance of this? It means that the church in many an instance has been penetrated by its enemies who have the avowed purpose to satirize God and His Christ as a couple of clowns in order to turn His Christ into a glorified circus and its membership into a royal order of clowns. Are such insidious attempts and attacks successful? You know it! Generations back, Calvinists. Now a generation of Clowns.

In these clownish times the term "Calvinists" has in many circles fallen into disrepute. People prefer the name "charismatic," or they'd rather be known as "Pentecostals," or as "evangelicals," but most of all they label themselves "Christian." We are just Christians, they tell us. "They shall know we are **Christians** by our love," they sing. So there is "the Christian Church" and there are a great number of "Christians." It is now a popular thing, being a "Christian." Some are card-Christians, some are dance-Christians, some theatre-Christians, some "Rock"-Christians, some are back-door night club Christians, some are pot-Christians, some opium den Christians! Some are play-boy Christians, good-time-Charley Christians. Some are hippy, freaked-out Christians. Others are commune-Christians. As "evangelicals" they are carnal "evangelicals." They are crazy charismatics. Why don't they become blatantly honest and admit they are clown-Christians?

It gets to be pretty literally true. Instead of catechism classes there are sort of daily vacation Bible school hobby and handicraft groups. Some of them actually learn to use theatrical cosmetics to make up their faces in the painted gargoyle grimaces of the clown. The theme of their handicraft class is not "The Knowledge of God," but "Let's All Learn to be Happy," laugh! have fun; be silly sometimes. Learn to make others happy! The other day there was actually a red-neck, cowboy, "Christian" clown, standing in a pulpit in a **church** (mind you!) and making people simultaneously "edified" and happy with his Tomfool version of preaching. You see what and how much nominal (very small) Christians will tolerate? Next thing you know, the so-called "minister" or preacherette will appear before the congregation with minstrel-show elders and deacons all accoutered in full clown regalia to serve the "blue-footed boobies" in the audience their own natural, proper elements of cookies and soda pop. You think this is all reprehensible sarcasm, and that in the extreme? Not so; but an exposure of current evils and their trends in the churches historically known as Presbyterian and Reformed.

Just as some of our sound government and civil institutions have been infiltrated with "plants", with spies, actually, which the enemies of our nation have succeeded in planting in key offices and central positions to gradually and stealthily attack and seize control from within, so there are "plants" in the church. They are trained in the liberal, modernistic seminaries and then foisted on and palmed off on gullible congregations. Or if a church is not being duped by a cunning "plant", there may be a deceiver (himself deceived) who is a sort of "fellow-traveler," a constitutional gossiper, who can easily be "programmed" with a bemusing line of clever nonsense which will becloud the minds and bedazzle the unwary, to lead them like the blind

leading the blind into the most ridiculous and unbelievable follies. No wonder, earlier in this century, the churches were full of cryto communist-front members! Now the churches are thronged with the weirdest human oddities this side of Barnum and Bailey who shamelessly parade and spread their corruption and degeneration.

Where there is "no truth nor mercy, nor knowledge of God in the land" (Hos. 4:1), nor especially in the church, to remain complacently for years under such spiritual famine will starve souls, starve whole families, and the membership will become corrupt and corrupting. They will drag each other down, not build each other up. They will no longer recognize the truth when they see it and hear it. They will suppose their Bedlam the temple of God, their cacophony the choir of heaven and their Sunday School chatter the Reformed gospel. They are "Rich, increased with goods, and have need of nothing" (Rev. 3:17). They never know what it means to cry out in agony of soul, "Ik ellendig mensch!" much less to come to, "Ik dank God, door Jezus Christus..."

So it comes to pass, "My people are destroyed for lack of knowledge. Because thou hast rejected knowledge, I will also reject thee, that thou shalt be no priest (not stand in the office of believer) to Me. Seeing thou hast forgotten the law of thy God, I (and this is a terrible, fearful judgment!), I will forget thy children" (Hos. 4:6). It is very easy, in the interest of "looking out for the young people", to really forget our children and what is best for them. Then the Lord threatens, "I will forget thy children." "If a son shall ask bread of any of you that is a father, will he give him a stone? or if he ask a fish, will he give...him a serpent? Or if he ask an egg, will he offer him a scorpion?" (Lk. 11:11-12). What father would do such a thing? This is unnatural! If a son asks for bread of his father, will his father respond by taking him to the circus and stooping down to the sawdust floor, come up with a handful and cram it down his son's throat? If the son, or daughter, asks for bread, will the father feed him, or her, with gravel? But suppose the son does not ask for bread, nor for an egg, nor for a fish! Some children don't want any of that. Children in the public schools lunch programs are, in some places, given not good, hot, healthy food, but are allowed for themselves to choose their own diet. So they choose "junk food," foodless food, and they get it. This is probably a sample of "modern technology." So the most modern schools are producing a long assembly line of little fatsoes, and yes, fatheads. But if the child claims to like the refined, honeyed sawdust labelled corn-flakes, are we to give it to him? No, that's for clowns, not Calvinists. We are not raising our children for the devil, nor for the world (the state), nor are we training them to learn how to manipulate and exploit the world for their own advantage and livelihood. We are raising them for God in the fear of the Lord. We want them by the grace of God to be, not male chauvinists, but male Calvinists, and their female counterparts, worthy, virtuous wives and mothers like the wives of the Reformers.

"It is sad with the church when those cannot stand that should stand up for it" (Matthew Henry), tumbling like clowns, instead of standing like soldiers. Clowning with the gospel is rebelling against the Light and ends with perishing in the dark. The church of Jesus Christ with its one great identifying mark, the **pure** preaching of the gospel, is to Calvinists so serious a thing as to be a matter of eternal life and death. (2 Cor. 2:14-17). Calvinists (and not just nominal ones) will not take this truth for granted, will never allow themselves to be robbed of the truth, and will never stop spreading the truth, proclaiming the whole counsel of God and advancing the cause of Christ. Amen (let it be so!) and Amen (it shall be so)!

THOUGHTS ON FAMILY VISITATION

by Thys Feenstra

I have been asked to express my personal feelings toward the important pastoral work of family visitation. Family visitation is a Reformed Institution of long standing according to Church Order (commentary of Monsma and Van Dellen). It dates back to the Convent of Wezel, 1568. Also it belongs to the area of our church polity as required by our Church Order - Art. 23.

Both of these articles speak of the purpose of family visitation as being that of edification, of comfort and instruction, guidance and admonition. Family visitation is based on Scripture, I Thessalonians 5:12-14, Hebrews 13:17 and many more. It is the work of the office bearers who are sent by Christ Himself, **Who is the Office Bearer in God's house**. This means that it pleases Christ to work His work of salvation, also by this labor.

Although this is all true, my feeling towards family visitation, as a child, was fear. As children we were scared of the minister and elders. In the "Old Country" they came to the house dressed in black and a high hat, and the visit was conducted in a room that was hardly ever used. They called it, "de pronk kramer" or parlor. We as children felt very uneasy.

In later years some of that fear was still with me. To me it was an hour of questions and answers, and often I felt a sigh of relief when it was all over for another year.

Even after we had made confession of faith, were married, and had a family, we often felt uneasy, wondering what kind of questions would be asked.

Sometimes family visitation was conducted as some kind of inquiry or inquisition. This kind of questioning often created in me a reaction of resentment. Some questions were embarrasing to the whole family, and were to my mind out of place, and therefore did not receive an honest answer. That kind of family visitation to me is useless.

The only time I feel at ease at family visitation is when Christ speaks, through His Word, and the Word of God has the central place in every visit. If we do not hear Him, the family visitation is in vain.

That Word of God is the only light, and therefore the only rule of life, and that light exposes the spiritual condition of the well being, or the lack of it.

When therefore the Word of God is the center of the visit, then both they that visit, and they that are visiting, have the assurance that this labor is not in vain, and becomes a reason for joy and thankfulness. Then there will be no more fear in the hearts of the sheep, and a looking forward to the visiting minister and elder.

Young People! Are you reading our Protestant Reformed Publications?

Read *Beacon Lights*. Don't be left in the dark!

NEWS From, For, and About Our Churches

BIRTHS

Mr. & Mrs. Calvin Kalsbeek rejoice in the birth of a daughter, Dawn Rene.

Mr. & Mrs. Richard Peterson of Hope Church, Walker, Michigan, rejoice in the birth of a daughter Elizabeth Joy.

Mr. & Mrs. Ronald Brands of our Edgerton Church, were blessed with the birth of a daughter, Ronna Joy.

A daughter was born to Mr. & Mrs. John Heys of our Loveland Church.

Mr. & Mrs. Robert Brands of our Loveland Church, were blessed with the birth of a daughter born Dec. 11.

Mr. & Mrs. John Dykshorn of our South Holland Church, were blessed with the birth of a boy.

Mr. & Mrs. William De Jong of our South Holland Church were blessed with the birth of a daughter, Brenda Renee.

Mr. & Mrs. Alvin Bylsma of our Hull Church, rejoice in the birth of a daughter Belinda Kay.

Mr. & Mrs. Tim Maurey of First Church, Holland, Michigan, rejoice in the birth of a son.

Mr. & Mrs. Larry Van Putten of First Church, Grand Rapids, were blessed with the birth of a daughter Nov. 20.

CONFESSION OF FAITH

Mrs. Peter Schipper of Hope Church, Walker, Michigan, made public confession of faith on Dec. 11.

Daniel Lanting and Jeanne Lanting made public confession of their faith on Nov. 27 in our Loveland Church.

Robert Faber, Jane Looyenga, Roger Meyer, and Charles Reitsma made public confession of their faith on Nov. 20.

Ruth Schimmel and Doreen Kamps made public confession of their faith on Dec. 4 at Hope Church, Walker, Michigan.

Edwin Westra made public confession of faith in Hull Protestant Reformed Church on Dec. 4.

CHURCH MEMBERSHIP NEWS

Hope Church, Walker, Michigan, has transferred the membership papers of Rev. and Mrs. Kenneth Koole to our Randolph Church.

Loveland Protestant Reformed Church has received the membership papers of Mr. & Mrs. M. Hettinga and son Jason Douglas, from the Third Chr. Ref. Church of Denver.

The H. W. Kuiper family has transferred their membership to the Southwest Prot. Ref. Church, Wyoming, Michigan.

At their request the membership papers of Mr. & Mrs. Jay De Wit have been sent to their home from our Hull Church.

The baptismal papers of Mr. Peter R. Hoekstra have been sent to his home upon his request.

Hull has received the membership papers of Mr. & Mrs. Bernie Postma and baptized son James from the First Chr. Ref. Church of Sioux Center, Iowa.

Our Hull Church has received the baptismal papers of Mike Kooistra from the First Chr. Ref. Church of Rock Valley, Iowa.

First Church of Holland, Michigan, has transferred the membership papers of Mr. & Mrs. H. Kampuis and two baptized children to First Church, Grand Rapids. It has also received the membership papers of Miss Carolyn Peterson from Hope Church, Walker, Michigan.

First Church, Grand Rapids, has sent the membership papers of Mrs. Hildrene Smith and four baptized children to our Faith Church.

The consistory of South Holland has received the membership papers of Miss Barbara Zandstra from First Church, Grand Rapids.

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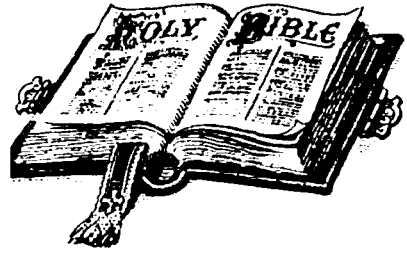
TEST YOUR MEMORY

1. What king of Israel made a house of ivory? I Kings 22:39
2. In John 18:10 we read that Simon Peter drew his sword and cut off the ear of the high priest's servant. What was his servant's name?
3. What woman of Joppa who was full of good works and almsdeeds, did Peter raise from the dead? Acts 9:36-41
4. After raising that certain woman of Joppa from the dead, at whose house did Peter stay?
5. What were the names of Jesus' four brothers? Matt. 13:55
6. What animal saw an angel? Num. 22:23
7. What penalty was there for cursing father or mother? Ex. 21:17
8. Who was Paul's teacher? Acts 22
9. When did one man's covetousness cause an army to be defeated? Josh. 7
10. Who was hired to discourage Nehemiah? Nehemiah 6:10-14



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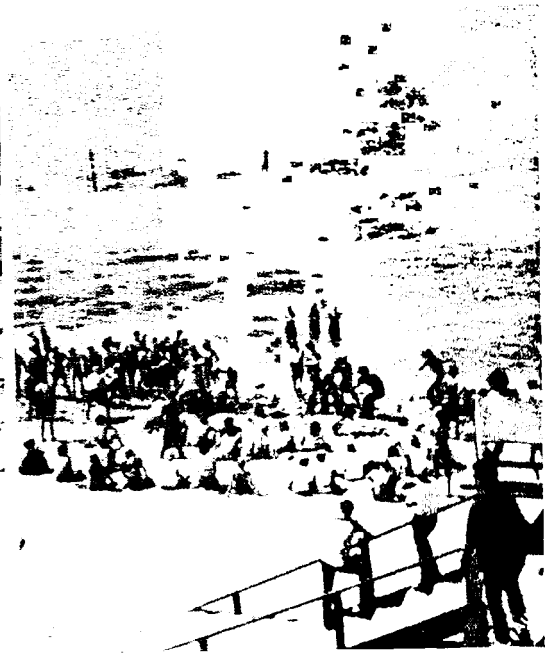

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