

# BEACON LIGHTS

*FOR PROTESTANT  
REFORMED YOUTH*



MAY, 1980

CONSIDER THE  
CONSEQUENCES



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c/o O. P. Bookshop  
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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: Linda Kaiser  
3364 New Castle S.E., Grand Rapids, MI 49508  
Michigan subscription dues to Grace Faber  
4190 Burton S.E., Grand Rapids, MI 49506

Subscribers outside of Michigan please forward subscription dues to  
Jan Dempsey

3519 Senora S.E., Grand Rapids, MI 49508

Forms 3579 should be returned to:

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## **Editorial**

With this editorial, Mr. Harry Langerak brings to a close 5½ years as associate editor of the *Beacon Lights*. We take this opportunity to say thanks to him for the many hours he has spent in producing his editorials. His articles have reflected his deep concern for the spiritual welfare of our youth and have been a source of instruction, encouragement and food for thought for their readers. May he continue to experience the Lord's blessing.

# **GOD OR MAN?**

*by Harry Langerak*

Whom will you serve? God or man? This is the issue that faces the child of God every day of his earthly pilgrimage. It was also the issue which faced the three friends of Daniel when they were commanded to bow before the golden image set up by Nebuchadnezzar.

It was the purpose of Nebuchadnezzar to glorify his own name by gathering all the leaders of the provinces together and have them bow down in allegiance before the image he had made. And to make sure that no one would shirk his duty, the fiery furnace was promised to all who refused. By this display of pride and arrogance, he was going to let all know, including those he had conquered, that he, Nebuchadnezzar, had built great Babylon. And what better way than having all people worship him as lord. As far as he was concerned, there was no other lord; had not all other nations with their gods been destroyed by his arm of might!

This is always the purpose of man in the Babylon of this world. Man wants to be served as the lord of this Babylon which he arrogantly asserts he has built. Nebuchadnezzar is but the picture of all men everywhere as they would put God out of His creation and substitute haughty men with his ingenuity as the moving force in creation. The images we are told to bow before are those of science, medicine, along with the man-glorifying religion of humanitarianism. Further, we are encouraged to worship the heroes of the sports world—our super athletes who help take our minds off the sorry state of affairs. Man has built these gods for his self-indulgence and self-gratification as he seeks to numb himself against the horrible consequences of sin. All we have to do is bow down and serve the beast, accept his mark and everything will be all right. Woe be to the man who dares to challenge the great deceit of man in this great Babylon!

The three friends of Daniel had resolved in their heart not to participate in this ungodly celebration they had been forced to attend. There was no doubt many good reasons which could have been given to bow down in homage to man and his conquests. Nebuchadnezzar was the God-ordained authority which must be obeyed; besides what about the good position which they would lose; just once will not make a difference; everyone else was doing it; and one could go on. But they could not bow (not even in pretense) because by doing so they would be denying the one only true God, their Creator, Sustainer and Preserver, and that would be a violation of the first commandment. Rather than deny God, they would rather deny themselves, take up their cross and follow Christ. They knew full well that by refusing to bow, they would lose their earthly life. "Then said Jesus unto his disciples, If any man come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow me. For whosoever will save his life shall lose it: and whosoever will lose his life for my sake shall find it." (Matthew 16:24-25). When given a second chance, they were bold to answer the king. There was not a moment's hesitation, not the slightest doubt in their minds as to the rightness of their decision. "Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-ne-go answered and said to the king, O Nebuchadnezzar, we are not careful to answer thee in this matter. If it be so, our God whom we serve is able to deliver us from the burning fiery furnace, and he will deliver us out of thine hand, O king. But if not, be it known unto thee, O king, that we will not serve thy gods, nor worship the golden image which thou hast set up" (Daniel 3:16-18). They continued to treat God's glory as greater than their own lives. They trusted in the only One who was able to deliver the soul; the One whom their very names suggested would deliver them—Hananiah (Jehovah is gracious), Azariah (Jehovah help) and Mishael (who is comparable to the Almighty One?) They trusted in the incomparable, Almighty, faithful God who in His grace helps His own.

Where do we stand when the ruler (Satan) of the Babylon of our day requires that we bow down before his images and receive his mark? The question may not be quite so bluntly stated as with Nebuchadnezzar, but the issue is always the same. Whom will you serve? What do we say when we are asked to yoke ourselves to Babylon by joining in its worldly organizations? Do we excuse our movie attendance, our dancing and our drinking because everyone else is doing it; just once isn't going to hurt? Would we rather have the identifying mark of Babylon (our WLAV wings, our rock group belt buckles and gaudy T-shirts, our lockers plastered with the pictures and saying of the idols of our society) than we would the identifying marks of the followers of Christ (a meek and quiet spirit, speaking to one another in hymns and psalms and spiritual songs, etc.)? Do we have a greater trust in the gods of science and medicine to solve the ills of man and society than we do in the providence and will of God? Would we rather receive the humanitarian aid of the philanthropic societies of this world with their emphasis on the universal brotherhood of man, than go to receive the mercies of Christ from the Church? God forbid!

Our help is in the Lord alone who made heaven and earth. God in Christ

was the deliverance of Daniel's three friends and he is ours also. As he gave the three friends the spiritual strength to deny themselves in the face of certain death in the fiery furnace, so too He will give us the strength to deny ourselves as we face the fury of the Babylon of our day. When we are faced with the question, whom will you serve? God or man? We will be able to say, "We will serve our God and Him only will we serve. We are not careful to answer thee, O World, Babylon, beast, our God whom we serve is able to deliver us. We 'fear not them which are able to kill the body, but are not able to kill the soul' (Matthew 10:28). Our God will deliver us physically, and if not physically, then certainly spiritually in the eternal glory of heaven."

In conclusion, the confession of Daniel's three friends is one which comes only from a true and living faith which is constantly being exercised. It is evident that these young men knew God from the covenant instruction they had received from godly parents, through prayer (three times a day toward Jerusalem) and they knew from God's Word and believed the promises that God is powerful to save. We, too, must exercise our faith through prayer and the diligent study of God's Word. Also, we must heed the exhortation of the Lord that we not despise His chastening because it will yield the peaceable fruit of righteousness. This activity of our faith will bear its fruit in the bold confession we make in this world. May it be said of us, as it was of the heroes of faith of old, "And these all died having obtained a good report through faith,..." (Hebrews 11:39).

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## **CONSIDER THE CONSEQUENCES**

*by Ben Wigger*

Do you realize that the decisions you make today will have a great effect on your future? With this fact before our minds, we suddenly come face to face with the importance of all of our decisions. We have a responsibility, not only to ourselves and our families, but also before the face of the living God to

conduct all of our affairs today, knowing full well that these decisions will also determine our tomorrows.

As an illustration of just what I am considering with you, consider school. If you are in high school, or even if you have already completed it, I can probably assume that at some time in your high school years you would consider dropping out. That decision whether to remain in school or to drop out will have far reaching consequences for you throughout the rest of your life.

Gary didn't like the discipline and study that was connected with school work. So as soon as he was legally able, he became a dropout. The low paying job he managed to find didn't seem so bad at first. In fact, he even convinced himself that it held promise. He was able to buy an old car and have enough money to impress his friends.

As the years passed, however, dropping out of school turned out to be one of the turning points in Gary's life.

Failing to develop his talents and intellect, he boxed himself into a line of work that was reserved only for the unskilled. The self-discipline and study he escaped in high school was taking a heavy toll later on.

A few years following Gary's decision to quit school, his friends were graduating from high school, trade school, and college, and were entering the job market on a much higher level of pay.

The "wisdom" of Gary's decision slowly began to change. Living on a financial shoe string, with a second child on the way, and saddled with a low paying job from which there was not much promise of escape, the foolishness of Gary's earlier decision became clear.

We simply can not separate our future from our present.

However, it is true that sometimes things happen to us which we do nothing to create and over which we have no control.

God does indeed lead us in the way we should go. But it is also true that circumstances come up in our lives because of prior action we have taken or decisions we have made.

Gary had chosen the easy way when he was younger. A few short years later, that decision was reflecting itself in the house in which he lived, the car he drove, the food he ate, the clothes he wore—everything. The price he paid for his shortsightedness was heavy. And he really had no one to blame but himself.

This is just one example of how decisions affect our lives. There are other decisions which are usually made when we are young that will affect us deeply in our later years. The decisions we make concerning marriage, our friends, and God.

If you make the right choice in selecting your life's mate, you will add a great deal of happiness to your life. Make the wrong choice, and you will quite possibly end up hating your wedding day.

Before committing yourself to marriage, it is important that you stop, look, and listen. It takes more than love to make a marriage work. It takes character, values, discipline, a spirit of self-giving, and an awful lot of give and take.

Where these things are lacking in either one or both partners, a good marriage is impossible to create.

Shouldn't a girl have some idea of how well her prospective husband gets along with his father and mother, brothers and sisters, his boss, his teachers, and his friends? Shouldn't she give some thought to how his employer views his work? Shouldn't she know what his moral standards and spiritual values are, not what he promises, but what they have already proven to be.

The wedding, though beautiful in itself, doesn't change anyone for better or worse. What one is before the vows are exchanged, he will also be after they have been spoken. Dreamy-eyed young people who think love is all it takes usually wake up after it is too late.

To swear before God and His church to live with someone, to share your successes and failures, your hopes and dreams, your love and intimacies, your joy and pain, is a decision which shouldn't be taken lightly, or made in haste, because there is far too much at stake.

Another aspect in our lives which will affect us greatly is the friends we select. There is just no escaping it, we will probably be influenced more deeply by the company we keep than by any other thing. What our friends are, we will also tend to be. To a very large degree, you can tell what a young person is going to be by the friends he keeps.

That is why it is so important to choose friends who demand a lot of themselves, who have high moral and spiritual values. Because quite really, they have a tremendous potential for either lifting us up or pulling us down.

You must also make a decision regarding Jesus Christ. The relationship that we have with Him will determine the real happiness and peace of heart that we have throughout all of our lives.

You may find yourself successful in work, your education or any other aspect of your life, but without Jesus Christ in your life you will have nothing.

We can look back in history and see that even though natural man seems to have it all going his way, he seems to have everything his heart would desire—fame, wealth, success in every human sense of the word; yet after his death, it soon becomes evident that he lived in a miserable life in spite of what the world thought.

Scripture says that man does not live by bread alone. And nothing short of the presence of God will satisfy man's deepest need.

God did indeed create us for Himself. He designed our hearts to be His dwelling place. It is for this reason, and this reason only, that we can experience real contentment, fulfillment, and peace.

May God grant unto us all the grace and wisdom sufficient to make decisions regarding our education, our marriages, our friends, and especially about Jesus Christ, that will be pleasing to Him. For these decisions will play a very large role in shaping the remainder of our lives.

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YOUNG PEOPLE!! — Send your questions to Rev. Moore's Mailbox.

# GOOD WORKS

*by Everett Buiter*

In this present day and age, we tend to consider the world in which we live to be a totally depraved society, and rightfully so. We always see in the newspapers the stories of brutal slayings and the rebellious attitudes of many people today. We hear many reports of wars and at present we are hearing about the spreading conflict in Afghanistan. We are always hearing the cry of many citizens for their rights, and there are many oppressed people who are now rising up in rebellion. It is very clear in all these happenings that man is very self-centered and depraved. The present-day man, who is the product of every other generation of the human race, is indeed no better than the first generations of the human race. Even though man has developed and passed through many different ages, he still in the twentieth century maintains his original guilt and sin. Even though there have been many good teachers and leaders who were good examples to follow, present-day man is still self-centered. Even though there have been all types of social movements which were directed at the goal of changing man and making him better. There has been the Reformation, many different cultural Renaissances, the Scientific Revolution, the Enlightenment, and many others. Man felt that these movements could free man from his crudeness and primitiveness. However, man is yet totally depraved and in fact he is worse today than he was after the fall.

However, even though there yet remains the wickedness and baseness of man, there are some people who attempt to do good deeds for the betterment of the human race. There are those persons today even as there has been those in the past who give up many nice things and live a life of poverty and misery in order that they might make this world a better place to live. A few examples come to my mind. On December 10, 1979 in Oslo, Norway, the Norwegian Nobel Committee awarded the 1979 Nobel Peace prize to the small old nun of Calcutta, India. This small frail nun was the sixty-nine year old lady known as Mother Teresa. She has indeed attempted to do many good things for the poor and the oppressed of India. She is known as the "angel of Calcutta" and the "saint of the gutter" because of her work of tending the poor and the sick in the sprawling slums of Calcutta. She is so concerned about the poor in India that when she was given more than \$190,000 as a prize, she decided to give it all to the cause of building homes and hospitals for the poor and needy Indians. Instead of indulging in a huge feast and riotous living in Oslo, she has ordered \$5,800 to be sent to India. This was the amount of money that was going to be

spent for a banquet given in honor of her. Mother Teresa is a Roman Catholic nun and so she spent much time in prayer during her stay in Oslo. So indeed she is that type of person who has given herself for the sake of the poor and needy in the world.

Another example I have come across during my recent reading is a certain school teacher named Anne Hobbs. She is a school teacher who spent her entire career in the cold North Country of Alaska. She was nineteen when she went up to Alaska and she remained there throughout her life. She gave up a nice life in order that she might rescue the Eskimoes there from the corruptions which the white man had introduced into that area. Even though this area is separated from the big centers of the world, it nevertheless has the pollution of the world of sin in it. Here there is self-centeredness and hatred. Here full-blooded Indians hate those who have both Indian and American blood in their veins. Anne did indeed attempt to change these evil Indians, and she went to help the poor and oppressed Indians. She tried to help out the half breeds of the village whom the other inhabitants hate. She befriends a half breed named Fred Purdy and she adopts two half breed children. On account of these good deeds she is hated by the others. However she persists in her desire to show kindness to these people and does not give in to the pressures of others. So it is very evident that this young lady attempted to do good works unto all those with whom she came in contact. All of this information I acquired from a book titled, *Tisha*.

Another example of this type of human being is that well-liked leader of the Roman Catholic Church, Pope John Paul II. From his recent visit to the U.S. of A., it is evident that he is a man who attempts to do good things for every tribe and tongue on the earth. He prayed with, he performed masses to, and he admonished many different types of Americans. He went to both the poor and the rich, the leaders and the citizens, the employers and the employees. Many Catholics who were in the presence of the great father, exclaimed that this was the closest that they had been to heaven and to God. One Catholic said that "He (John Paul) makes me think that the world and the people in it are not as bad as they seem." It was evident also that he does put into practice some Christian principles. He is indeed very different from the long line of popes which have preceeded him. However, he does in no wise compare to the godly life of Peter, whom the Roman Catholics consider to be the original father or pope.

Thus, it is very evident that man today attempts to do good works. It would seem that because of his total depravity man would have nothing to do with that which is good and virtuous. However, man does attempt to find what is good and he tries to do it. Why then would a wicked man try to do this? Well, in the first place he wants other men to do unto him as he does unto them. If a man gives another man help when that person is in need, he wants that person to return that good deed to him when he is in need also. It is just the case for man today as it was for the Pharisees whom Jesus rebukes in Luke 14:12-14. In that text Jesus says that it is wrong to invite guests who will more than likely

invite you back to their house. This is what the Pharisees have been known to do and so Jesus rebuked them. He tells them that they should rather invite the poor, the maimed, the lame, and the blind. This is why we many times do good things to those around us. We will be friends only to those who return favors. Once a person is not friendly to us we will cut him out of our lives and say all manner of evil against that person. Our good deeds are quite different from Jesus' good deeds which He did to many of the poor, the maimed, the lame and the blind. Man as he is naturally is indeed very self-centered, and he attempts to perform good works for selfish reasons.

In the second place, man attempts to do good works because he wants to prove to himself, to his neighbor, and to God that he is indeed not so bad after all. He wants to show to all of society that he is a virtuous man and that he does indeed conform to a code of moral laws. He is not very honest with himself and his neighbor. This is indeed the way every human being is. It is much nicer and easier to say and think that there is something which is worthy of praise in himself. We as human beings can not stand admitting to ourselves, and to our neighbors, and especially to God that we are sinners. Man, however, knows that things are very different. He knows that he has broken God's law, and that he has not served God faithfully as he ought to have done. He does indeed know what God's law demands and he knows that he cannot keep it, and he knows that he does not want to keep it. So it is very evident that all the so-called good works of man are really not good, but they are only to be counted as filthy rags. It is very true today even as it was during the time of Noah that every imagination of the thoughts of his heart is only evil continually.

Therefore, if these praise-worthy works of men are not to be considered good works, then what are good works? In order to get a good answer for this question let us turn to the Bible. In order for us to get a good summary of what the Bible says concerning good works, it is proper and beneficial to turn to two of the Creeds of the Church which are based on the Scriptures. Let us first of all look at the Westminster Confession of Faith, and we will then find the definition of good works in the sixteenth chapter. This chapter gives the definition as follows:

Good works are only such as God hath commanded in His holy Word, and not such as, without the warrant thereof, are devised by men, out of blind zeal, or upon any pretence of good intention.

“These good works, done in obedience to God's commandments, are the fruits and evidences of a true and lively faith: and by them believers manifest their thankfulness, strengthen their assurance, edify their brethren, adorn the profession of the gospel, stop the mouths of the adversaries, and glorify God, whose workmanship they are, created in Christ Jesus thereunto, that, having their fruit unto holiness, they may have the end, eternal life.”

In the second place, we must look at the Heidelberg Catechism. In Lord's Day XXXIII, Question and Answer ninety-one, the definition is given that good

works are “only those which proceed from a true faith, are performed according to the law of God, and to his glory; and not such as are founded on our imagination, or the institutions of men.” These two definitions are indeed good and they are very scriptural. This is so because if one reads these two creeds, he will find that almost every clause which is written down is backed by a proof from the Bible.

Now then, if all the so-called good works of Mother Teresa, Anne Hobbs, Pope John Paul II, and many others are compared to the elements of good works according to these two definitions, what is the conclusion? It is indeed true that after they have been weighed in the balances they are found wanting and they in no wise can be considered good works. And also in the second place, if we compare many of our works which we consider to be good, we will see that they are indeed short of the mark which the Scriptures set for works to be good. These works are not done in obedience to God’s law, but they are only done in accord with man’s laws. They are not evidences of a true and living faith, but they only show that we have a feeling of love and concern for others for selfish reasons. They indeed are not aimed at showing thankfulness to God, and they are not directed at God’s glorification. Rather, all these great attempts are only done so that we men may acquire the praise and adoration of men. We only attempt to do good works because we want to be liked by others. We could care less about God’s glory or showing thankfulness to God. We also have the idea ground deeply into our hearts and minds that if we do these good works then God will be well pleased and He will give unto us salvation because of our works.

What therefore must our conclusion be to all these attempts to do good works? Should we avoid doing the things which Mother Teresa, Anne Hobbs, Pope John Paul II and others have done? Should we just be satisfied with the conclusion that all these deeds are only vain and no praise at all? Should we then settle comfortably into our own little church and put in the required time which that church demands? God forbid! But rather we must see as James says in his general epistle that “faith without works is dead also.” We must indeed be just as zealous for good works as the early New Testamental Church was. We must want to thank and praise God in all our good works. When we teach and learn the word of God, we must desire to thank and glorify God. When we give help to those in time of need, we must do it because we have faith and because we want God’s name glorified. Then and only then can we classify our works as being truly good ones.

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## *Truth vs. Error*

REV. ROBERT C. HARBACH

### **Christ's Call An Effectual Command, Not An Invitation**

We turn to the classic text of Scripture where we have "Christ's Call to the Heavy Laden."

God's Word in Matthew 11:28 states, "Come unto Me, all ye that labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest." These words were spoken by the divine Son of God. Two persons He mentions in the text: the divine "Me" (with a capital M) and the human, personal "you," thus bringing together the restless and the resting place. The personal Savior speaks, "Come to *Me* and I will give." There is a personal coming, "Come all *ye*," and a personal promise, "I will give *you* rest." It is a very personal call to a specific, particular group, the laboring and heavily laden. It also has an absolute exclusiveness about it; Come unto *Me*! It is not come unto some queen, or mshatma or guru, or some ecclesiastical star, but, exclusively, Come unto *Me*! As He himself said, "No man cometh unto the Father but by *Me*." Also there are two divine things here: a *command* (to come), and a *promise* (I will give you rest.)

A further promise He gave in, "He that cometh to Me shall never hunger" (John 6:65). This is not all so easy, as it is today often presented. For man is totally spiritually and morally impotent, so that he is incapable of doing any good and inclined to all evil, and that is why "no man can come unto Me, except the Father who hath sent Me draw him" (6:44). With that divine drawing, *then* "all that the Father giveth Me shall come to Me; and him that cometh to Me I will in no wise cast out" (v. 37).

Now, I. *The Call Itself*. Notice in these words we do not have an offer, a proposal or an invitation, which allow place for declining. It is not a sin to

decline an invitation. It would be to refuse a legal summons. An offer or proposal implies both the right and the power to accept it. It implies the natural ability of man. This is not in harmony with man's spiritual inability. An offer makes the outcome of it all dependent upon man, whether he will accept it. But this divine imperative, Come unto Me, is a most effectual order, of double efficacy, having power to bring about the result intended, and bestowing an enabling which works a willing response to it. This must be, for Christ is speaking to spiritual Lazaruses in His resuscitative demand, To Me! Hither! Out! Thus Jesus draws, and we come; and as Martin Luther put it, "I do not come of my own reason or strength." Christ's call and command endow with life, enabling me to come.

This is a divine sovereign command. Who issues it? Christ, but in what capacity? As a king commands his subjects: "I say to this man, Go! and he goeth; and to another, Come! and he cometh; and to my servant, Do this! and he doeth it" (Matthew 8:9). He speaks as God who raises the dead, calling the things not being as being; as the Lord of life who in Spring renews the face of the ground, who causes the birds to lay their eggs, and the cattle to drop their young, who causes babies to be born in the issue of the Church Latent into the world! He said, "All power is given unto Me in heaven and in earth." This call goes sovereignly to whomsoever the Son wills it (v. 27). He says, "Look unto Me, and be ye saved, all the ends of the earth, for I am God, and there is none else" (Isa. 45:22).

The promise here is also unconditional. It is not the future, *I shall* give you; but the relative, *I will* give you rest. Not merely, I can, but I will! "My counsel shall stand, and *I will* do all My good pleasure" (Isaiah 46:10). It's an infallible pledge, with no ifs, prerequisites or conditions for us to fulfil. Already condemned (John 3:18) and dead in trespasses and sins (Ephesians 2:1), what conditions can we fulfil? "Come!" does not imply a condition we must fulfil. When He calls and draws, "Come, ye blessed of My Father, inherit the kingdom," then His blessed heirs enter the kingdom of glory.

II. *The Called Ones* are identified in the text—not all men, for these things are hidden from the so called wise and prudent (v. 25); and not those who "labor in the very fire", who, in pursuit of their own selfish interests "weary themselves for very vanity" (Hab. 2:13), for they "labor in vain...and *they shall* be weary" (Jer. 51:58). They are the "people laden with iniquity" who are unmindful of the burden, and so in sin they "labor for that which satisfieth not," for "what profit hath he that laboreth for the wind?" (Eccles. 5:16). Jesus calls those laboring because heavily laden and overborne with the load of sin and guilt, and who are grieved with that burden. They never found relief under the oppressive yoke of the law, nor peace in the tradition of the elders, nor rest under the law of Moses, nor satisfaction in the pleasures of the world.

The promise is then to all who come, for it is made to comers. Christ has no promise for men, whether they come or not. "He that *cometh* unto Me," He promises, "I will in no wise cast out." Jesus, you see, does not beg men to come to Him. He does not stand at the crossroads of the crowded ways of life

frantically trying to get as many as possible to listen to Him and go His way. He does not hand out blank checks, which you must accept, endorse and take to the bank to cash. He is not running around in circles handing out invitations which most cast aside and few bother to notice at all. His words are no pleading, but a pledge; no invitation, but an injunction; no proposal, but a promise; no offer or overture, but an order; no mere commiseration, but a command; no solicitation, but a summons; no entreaty, but a demand. It is not an appeal to man's will, but an imperative of God's will. "I will give" puts God's will first before man's.

III. *The Promise to the Called* is the guarantee of rest. "All ye that labor, I will give you rest." Mothers, in the bringing forth of children know what laboring is. To those laboring under the burden of sin Christ says, My rest shall end your laboring forever. I will give you rest, relief and make you recover. With so much evil in the world today, we are almost afraid to live. And man is by nature afraid to die. With these fears we cannot look God in the face. We are prepared neither to live nor to die and meet our Maker face to face. But Christ's promised rest is preparation for life now and heaven hereafter. The Lord speaks of His gift: I will give you rest. It is no standing offer of rest which depends for its enjoyment on my acceptance of it. What if I get to be too sick in the pain of dying to accept it? Can't He give me rest without my doing something? If not, what hope is there for dying men? The sinner, weak, weary, sad and worn desperately needs rest, not some more laboring to do. What He gives me is deliverance, tranquility and peace of soul. I have nothing to give Him in return. Nor is my gratitude for His rest a kind of *pay* for the gift. It is all of His pure grace and mercy. When He calls me to come into His rest out of my sin and misery and agonized laboring under sin's burden with its wracking pain then I rest, not in something I give Him, but in what He has given me. Christ's eternal, spiritual and saving rest of soul is the gift of God, not of works lest any man should boast. But he that thinks of boasting, let him boast in the Lord.

When you get to that "Me" in Come unto me, you find the place of rest. That quiet and wonderful place of peace, relief and release is not in the monastery, the nunnery, nor where some have, strangely, sought it—on a bed of nails or a bed of red-hot coals. Others, just as strangely, have sought peace and rest of soul in flagellation, self-mutilation (like the old Baal-worshippers) and in hunger-strikes. None of these things does the Lord Jesus Christ require. "Not by works of (supposed) righteousness, which we have done, but according to His mercy He saved us" (Titus 3:5), and gave us rest. Why, then, seek futilely that rest in "new thought", in *any* neology? It cannot be found in new cults or modernized philosophies. Come unto *Me!* I will give you rest. So it is limited, narrowed down exclusively to Christ. To look for rest anywhere else is to search in vain.

How shall I come to Him? Like the man with faint faith: "If Thou canst do anything, have compassion and help us!" Like the leper with quivering, questioning mind: "Lord, if Thou wilt, Thou canst make me clean." Or like the military man with full assurance: "Speak the word only, and my servant shall

be healed.” Amen!

(Prayer) Heavenly Father, Lord of heaven and earth, reveal and bestow the rest of salvation upon the poor, needy, restless sinner. Turn us from the wearying enslavement of sin, from the grueling treadmill of service to mammon. Our souls are restless until they rest in Thee. Comfort all believing souls with peace in the Prince of Peace. In His most blessed name, Amen.

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## Current Events and Comments

# DECADENCE

*by Rev. Michael De Vries*

The word “decadence” is from the Latin *decadere*, “to fall down or away, hence to decay.” Webster defines it as “a process or state of decay or deterioration.” A recent essay in *TIME* Magazine entitled “The Fascination of Decadence” explores the concept. It notes that the word can be used to mean many different things. “They use it to describe a “50 bottle of Margaux, a three-hour soak in the tub, a 40-hour-a-week television habit, the crowds that tell the suicide to jump, a snort of cocaine.”

And yet, the essay, maintains, “Americans mean *something* by it.” “Decadence, like pornography, may be hard to define, but most people think they know it when they see it.” And see it we do in our modern day society. Consider only the following:

\* \* \* \* \*

In a recent article in *U.S. NEWS & WORLD REPORT* it is reported that communities once noted for good schools and quality education are being scandalized by physical assaults and threats against teachers and students. Handguns, ice picks, explosives and other weapons are turning up increasingly at schools in many wealthy suburbs.

“The national Institute of Education estimates that 5,200 junior and senior-high-school teachers are physically attacked every month and 6,000 are robbed by force. About 282,000 junior and senior-high-school students are assaulted and 112,000 are robbed at school every month... Students carry blaring portable radios into classes, roughhousing and obscene language are

commonplace in hallways, food fights break out in cafeterias, and there is constant noise. Besides this atmosphere, many schools experience frequent outbreaks of brutal violence, some with deadly results."

\* \* \* \* \*

Another recent magazine article entitled, "Where War and Rebellion Are a Way of Life" highlights 23 different areas over the globe that are plagued by conflicts. According to the article, "war, rebellion, and terrorism are almost a way of life in the developing Third World." But even in some richer nations, political, religious, and economic tension is triggering bloodshed.

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A recent interview with famous film actor Charlton Heston provides a very telling commentary upon the dangers of the film arts and their grievous effect upon our society. According to this movie star, film is "the most potent social tool and social weapon ever devised." He states: "It can speak more eloquently all over the world than any politician, any ambassador, any diplomat, any arm of government. This has challenges as well as terrible, terrible dangers." According to Heston, our society is becoming increasingly film-orientated. The result? "Very few people can read—really read; even fewer can write."

\* \* \* \* \*

According to a recent article in *TIME* Magazine entitled "Sinfully Together," the Census Bureau has spotted the change in what used to be called "living in sin" but what is now simply called "living together". A recent report disclosed that the number of couples living together has more than doubled since 1970. "Now the bureau lists 1.1 million 'illicit' couples, with the sharpest rise occurring since 1977 in the under-25 category."

The report added that divorce is now so common "that nearly half of all children born today can expect to spend a meaningful portion of their lives before age 18 in single-parent families."

What about the future? One Bureau of the Census study projects that unmarried people living together and people living alone will account for 30 percent of the nation's households by 1990—a 20 percent rise over current levels. Present trends will continue: a movement of mothers from home to job, a high divorce level, and a low birth rate.

\* \* \* \* \*

A recent *TIME* article describes a pagan wedding ceremony. No, it wasn't taking place in the deep jungles of Africa or South America, but the bizarre

ceremony was performed in a campground outside Demotte, Indiana. It was one of the highlights of the Third Annual Pan Pagan Festival, “a four-day conclave that brought together a witches’ brew of 325 pagans, occultists and well, witches from 26 states and Canada.” In the past decade there has been a rather rapid spread of neopaganism around the country. According to J. Gordon Melton, an Evanston, Ill., Methodist minister who heads the Institute for the Study of American Religion, there may be as many as 40,000 practicing pagans today.

\* \* \* \* \*

The use of illegal, mind-bending drugs is rampant today. According to an article entitled “The Colombian Connection” in *TIME*, 42 million Americans have tried pot, making smoking it the most widely accepted illegal indulgence since drinking during the Prohibition. Americans now consume about 130,000 lbs. per day, quadruple the 1974 consumption, and they spend \$25 billion per year on this “pleasure.” The article points out that although marijuana is its main product, Columbia is also America’s chief cocaine supplier. Americans pay \$20 billion annually for 66,000 lbs. of the stuff and Columbia provides about 80 percent of it. This is true despite the fact that there is growing evidence that these drugs result in severe physical and psychological damage.

\* \* \* \* \*

We could speak of the recording industry with its current hits emphasizing rhythmic beat and sexually explicit lyrics. We could mention the violence within the home, the fact that as many as 8 million Americans are assaulted each year by members of their own families. We could describe the almost unbelievable statistics regarding shoplifting, arson for profit, employee pilferage, embezzlement, insurance fraud, and tax evasion. We could make reference to that most vile of sins, homosexuality, which is advocated openly today as an acceptable alternative lifestyle. We could point to legal abortions and the pervasive custom of contraception that suggest a society that has lost its will to perpetuate itself.

\* \* \* \* \*

British author Malcolm Muggeridge states: “What will make historians laugh at us is how we express our decadence in terms of freedom and humanism. Western society suffers from a largely unconscious collective death wish.” One is reminded by that statement of the judgment wrought by the sounding of the fifth trumpet in Revelation 9. We read in verse 6: “And in those days shall men seek death, and shall not find it; and shall desire to die, and death shall flee from them.”

We see in these examples of decadence, signs of the times which Jesus

revealed in Matthew 24. We see the perilous times of the last days as described by Paul to Timothy in II Timothy 3:2ff: "For men shall be lovers of their own selves, covetous, boasters, proud, blasphemers, disobedient to parents, unthankful, unholy, without natural affection, trucebreakers, false accusers, incontinent, fierce, despisers of those that are good, traitors, heady, highminded, lovers of pleasures more than lovers of God."

And what is the result of this decadence in society? Is the world improving, becoming a better place in which to live? Quite to the contrary, the world becomes ever more steeped in iniquity. And the judgments of God come upon it. The wicked are hardened. In the words of Revelation 9:20, 21: "And the rest of the men which were not killed by these plagues yet repented not of the works of their hands, that they should not worship devils, and idols of gold, and silver, and brass, and stone, and of wood: which neither can see, nor hear, nor walk: neither repented they of their murder, nor of their sorceries (literally, using of all kinds of poisonous drugs, MDV), nor of their fornication, nor of their thefts." Their end will be in the lake of fire.

Keep your garments clean! Defile them not in the decadence of this evil age. Have no communion with the idolatry and murder and theft and fornication and corruption of the wicked. The world will hate you, but Jesus says: "Be of good cheer, I have overcome the world."

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## **FUTURE PROTESTANT REFORMED TEACHERS AND MINISTERS**

The Scholarship Fund Committee is offering scholarships for the 1980-81 school year. An essay of 300 words written on the topic, "What have you gained from your college or seminary education", is required along with a record of high school and/or college grades, and a recommendation from your consistory. If you are interested in an application contact:

Deb Buiter  
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Applications due May 15, 1980



# THE ILLNESS OF OUR CHURCH

*by Edward Ophoff, Jr.*

In name and confession, we of the Protestant Reformed Church are very Christian. Our confessions are wholly Reformed and as a denomination we subscribe to beautiful declarations of faith. Even our name, Protestant Reformed, is antithetical.

But as a young member of our church, I see the illness in it. What we say we believe is not borne out by our conversation and actions. I am reminded of Rev. Van Overloop's article on dead Orthodoxy. We all can regurgitate Bible passages and stories and principles we learned in catechism, but do we live them? If we live to the glory of God, how can we justify skipping a night church service or "not feel like" attending a Singspiration? Both are golden opportunities to give the glory where it belongs, to God. Yet how many of us had to check the score of Super Bowl XIV?

There are many more examples of the illness in our church. When collection plates are passed, young men and women of high school age and older who have sometimes substantial incomes of their own, drop in some small change or are even handed a few dollars by their parents to put in. Is this a proper way to thank God for all his blessings, material as well as spiritual? We profess that the Lord loves a Cheerful Giver but do we give freely and cheerfully of our material gain?

Another evidence of our sickness is the amount of TV watching that goes on in our churches. Ten years ago, if someone said they had watched the late movie the night previous, most of those listening would have been shocked. Today it seems to be a good subject for everyday conversation. We spend countless hours a year watching what the world wants us to see, and tragically we have become numb to it. Most time spent in front of a TV is time wasted, never to be recovered.

While on the subject of wasting time another evidence of our disease comes to mind. It becomes harder and harder to get people to lead societies, to teach Sunday School, participate in church activities, and even to show up at important meetings. We often use the excuse that we don't have enough time. What should demand more of our time than the work of our Church? When more than 50% of a young peoples' society can't find the time to attend a meeting, one has to wonder if maybe that two hour nap is more important to

them. But consider, when these same people are chosen as leaders of the church, elders and deacons, will the same attitude prevail? We are put to shame by the young people of the GLTS in Singapore. They are so enthusiastic about belonging to Christ that if they could they would meet every night of the week!

Our enthusiasm rarely matches the joy of the saint who knows he is saved. Yet that is what we profess to believe; that in life and in death we belong to our faithful Savior, Jesus Christ! What could be more exciting?

One last and glaring evidence of the erosion of Godliness in our churches is the blatant materialism. We have many families where mother and father both work (ostensibly to pay for tuition) where children are left to fend for themselves. Some justify this arrangement because they feel it necessary, but really the refusal to do without any of the amenities of our prosperous modern-day lifestyle is to blame. Because we live in such prosperous times, it seems that everyone is scrambling to get his piece of the pie. Newer cars and newer houses in better neighborhoods are they very really the goals we are striving for? Have we in fact become the people of II Timothy 3:4—Lovers of pleasure more than lovers of God?

I fear for the generations to come if our example of worldliness and materialism is further developed and enlarged upon within the church of tomorrow. We live in the last days and we must prayerfully live in anticipation of Christ's second coming. "For the time will come when they will not endure sound doctrine, but after their own lusts they shall heap to themselves teachers having itching ears. And they shall turn away their ears from the truth and shall be turned unto fables." II Timothy 4:3 and 4

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## TEST YOUR MEMORY

1. To whom did Jesus first appear after His resurrection? Mark 16:9
2. What was Andrew's occupation? Matthew 4:18
3. Solomon in all his glory was not arrayed like what? Matthew 6:28-29
4. Which of the disciples did Paul rebuke? Galatians 2:11-14
5. What did the wise men see that caused them to come to worship the Baby Jesus? Matthew 2:2
6. Whom did Jannes and Jambres withstand? II Timothy 3:8
7. What did Paul define as a Schoolmaster? Galatians 3:24
8. When the Lord descends from heaven, who will rise first? I Thessalonians 4:16
9. How are we to run the race that is set before us? Hebrews 12:1
10. What book was written to Gaius?

# **NEWS** From, For, and About Our Churches

*by Linda Kaiser*

## *BIRTHS*

Mr. & Mrs. Keith Bruinsma of South Holland were blessed with the birth of a son, Gregg Henry.

Mr. & Mrs. L. Huisken of Redlands rejoice in the birth of a son, Jan Henry, on February 14.

Mr. & Mrs. Daniel Boone of Southwest were blessed with the birth of a daughter, Erin Beth, on February 22.

Mr. & Mrs. Gerry Dykstra of Hope were blessed with the birth of Heather Marie on February 29.

Mr. & Mrs. Larry Bertsch of Hope were blessed with the birth of a son, Jonathon Marinus, on March 4.

Mr. & Mrs. Rich Van Baren of Southwest were blessed with the birth of a son, Kevin Scott, on March 10.

Mr. & Mrs. Larry Koole of Hope were blessed with the birth of a son, Brian Michael, on March 12.

Mr. & Mrs. Jack De Vries of Southwest were blessed with the birth of a daughter, Kendra Maria, on March 19.

Mr. & Mrs. Dave Groeneweg of Hull were blessed with the birth of a baby girl on March 19.

Mr. & Mrs. Larry Kooienga of Loveland rejoice in the birth of their son, Mark Daniel, on March 25.

Mr. & Mrs. Robert Hook of Covenant were blessed with the birth of a baby boy.

Rev. & Mrs. Cammenga of Hull rejoice in the birth of a baby boy, Charles Mark, on March 29.

## *MARRIAGES*

Norb Alsum & Sandy Regnerus of Randolph were united in marriage on March 7 at Randolph.

Mr. Gary Noorman & Miss Joyce Kuiper were united in holy marriage in Faith Church on March 13.

The wedding ceremony of Mr. Richard Van Til & Miss Jane Schipper took place on March 14 in Hudsonville Church.

Miss Dorainne Payne & Mr. Ken Camobell were joined in marriage on March 15 in the First United Presbyterian Church of Loveland.

Charles Booth & Pamela De Haan were married on March 21 in East Cutlerville Christian Reformed Church.

Mr. Don Terpstra & Miss Mary Van Baren were united in the bond of holy marriage on March 21 in South Holland.

The marriage ceremony of Timothy Rus & Sharon Bylsma was solemnized on March 28 in First Church.

#### *CHURCH MEMBERSHIP*

The membership of Mr. & Mrs. Bert Korhorn was received in Faith Church from First.

First Church has received the membership by baptism of Mr. Timothy J. Rus from the Haven Reformed Church of Kalamazoo.

Southwest has received the membership papers of Mr. & Mrs. Joe Brummel and three baptized children from First and Mrs. Sandy (nee Lubbers) Alsum from Hudsonville.

#### *YOUNG PEOPLE'S ACTIVITIES*

The Young People's Societies of Hull, Edgerton & Doon had a skating party on March 10.

The Young People's Society of Hull held a Soup Supper on March 24 at the Hull Community Center. The freewill offering was for their Organ Fund.

The Young People's Society of Loveland sponsored a singspiration on March 30. The offering was for the convention.

The Young People's Societies of First Church sponsored their annual Senior Citizens Spring Coffee on April 3.

The Young People's Society of First Church served refreshments following the Good Friday worship service on April 4. Donations were for the 1980 Convention.

#### *OTHER ACTIVITIES*

Hope Choral Society presented their program on March 2.

A Choir Easter Program was held in Hudsonville Church on March 16.

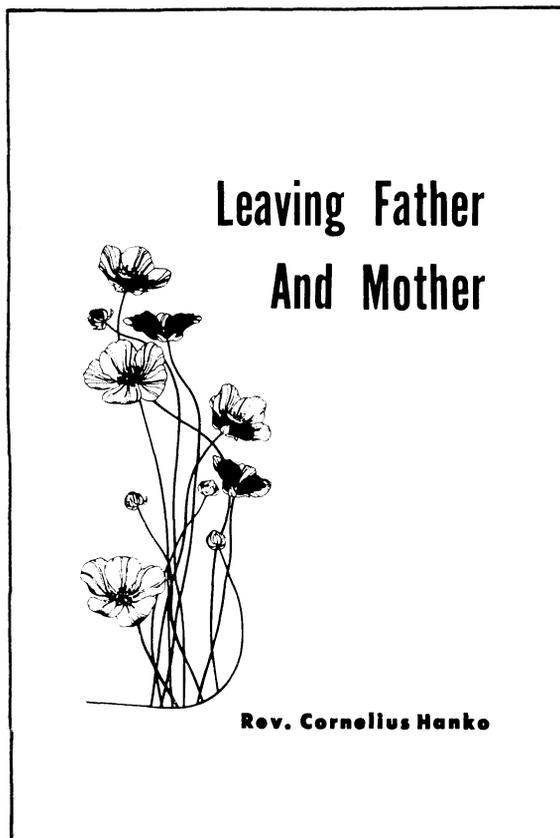
The All-Star Basketball Games were held on March 28 at Unity Christian in Hudsonville. The area East Church Leagues vs. the area West Church Leagues. All proceeds were for the convention.



# CONVENTION CHAPERONES!

Hope Y.P. Society is in need of responsible adults from our denomination to serve as chaperones for the upcoming convention. In addition to enforcing rules, their duties will include leading discussion groups, devotions, and being active in all other phases of the convention. If you are interested in being considered, contact:

Mike Lotterman  
1382 Su-Lew  
Walker, MI 49504  
(616) 453-6552



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