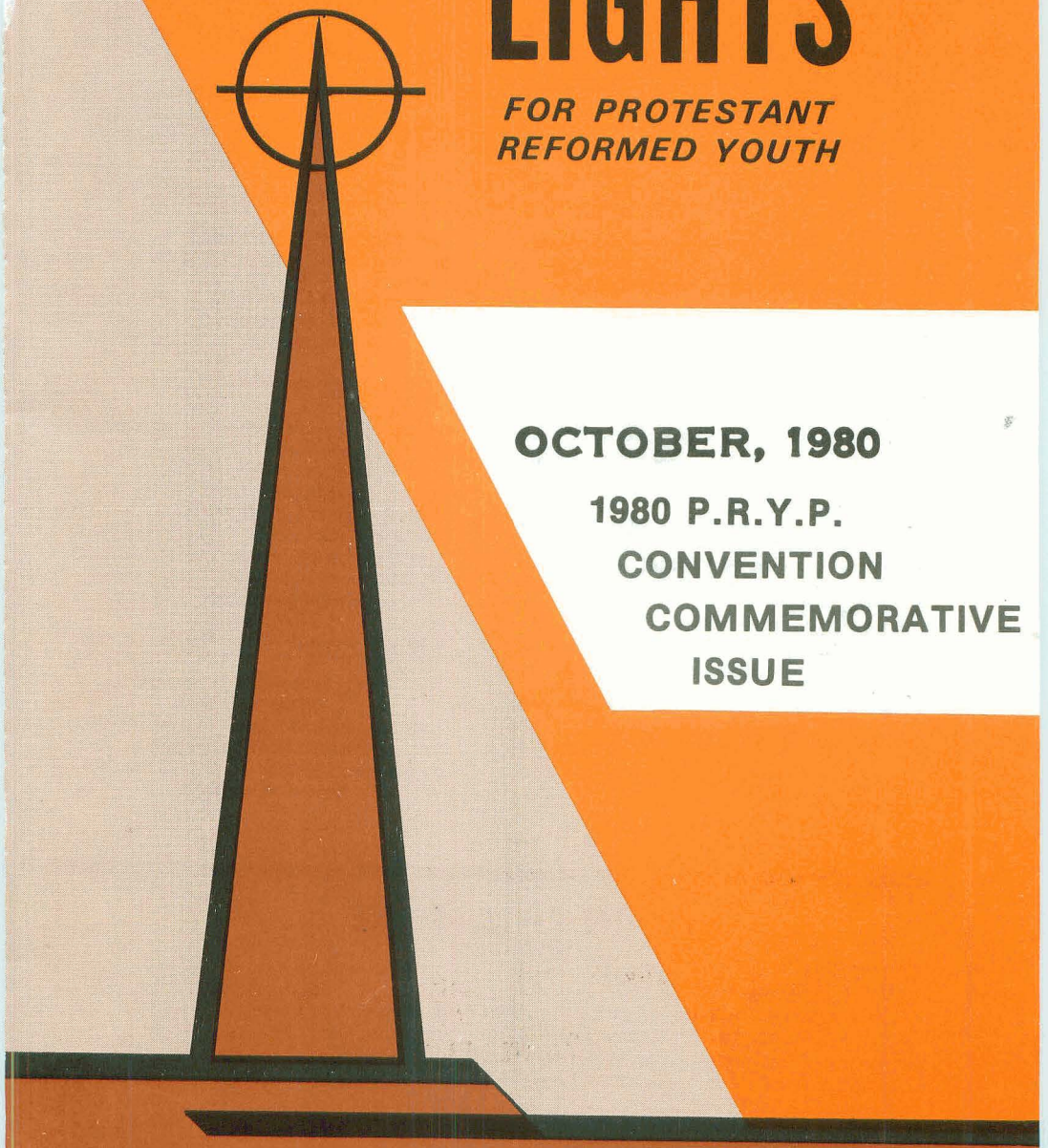
BEACON LIGHTS

FOR PROTESTANT REFORMED YOUTH



OCTOBER, 1980

1980 P.R.Y.P. CONVENTION COMMEMORATIVE ISSUE

VOLUME XXXIX OCTOBER, 1980 NUMBER 6

Published monthly (except June-July and August-September are combined) by the Federation of Protestant Reformed Young People's Societies.

EXECUTIVE BOARD
Brian D. Dykstra - President; David Rau - Vice-President; Lois Hoekstra - Secretary; Norma Westra - Assistant Secretary; Doug Dykstra - Treasurer; Mike Lotterman - Assistant Treasurer; Mary Van Baren - Librarian; Hank Vander Wal - Youth Coordinator; Rev. W. Bruinsma - Spiritual Advisor

BEACON LIGHTS STAFF
Dave Moelker - editor-in-Chief; John M. Faber, David Harbach, Ed Lotterman - Associate Editors; Gerrit Boverhof - Finance Manager; Jan Dempsey, Carla DeVries, Linda Feenstra, Ellen Hanko, Mike Rau, Grace Faber

CONTRIBUTING EDITORS
Rev. M. DeVries, Randy Groenendyk, Rev. R. Harbach, Agatha Lubbers, Rev. G. Lubbers, Ben Wigger

BEACON LIGHTS
c/o O. P. Bookshop
P. O. Box 2289
Christchurch, New Zealand

If any material of Beacon Lights is reprinted by another periodical, we will apreciate your giving the source.
The articles of Beacon Lights do not necessarily indicate the viewpoint of the Editorial Staff. Every author is solely responsible for the contents of his own article.
Contributions of general interest are very welcome

All material for publication should be addressed to:
Dave Moelker 4625 Julson S.W.
Grand Rapids, MI 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 49508
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:
BEACON LIGHTS
4625 Julson S.W., Grnad Rapids, MI 49504
Second Class Postage paid at
Jenison, Michigan (USPS 046-840)
Subscription Price $5.00

IN THIS ISSUE

Editor's Notes 1
Editorial . Ed Lotterman 1
Convention speech: Application of the Reformed Faith, Rev. G. Van Baren 5
Convention speech: The Development of the Truth, Prof. H. Hanko 12
Convention speech: Admonition to Adhere, Rev. R. Van Overloop 17
Convention speech: The Application of the Reformed Faith, Rev. M. Joosten 22
Pictures 29-30
Impressions by Chaperone, Youth Coordinator, Delegates 31
Review of Discussion Groups 41
Convention Review, Lois Hoekstra 46
Politics 80 - and Christian Involvement, Jeanne Ryskamp 48

EDITOR'S NOTES

This convention issue of the *Beacon Lights* is being sent, compliments of the *Beacon Lights' Staff*, to all of the young people who attended the convention. Our purpose is two-fold. As conventioneers, we want you to keep this issue as a momento of that week. With its printed speeches, articles, and pictures, it should hold memories in years to come. But we also want to introduce to you *your* magazine. Although we are dedicated to today's Protestant Reformed youth, the majority of our subscribers are older married adults. Our timely articles are chosen by your Federation Board and *Beacon Lights* Staff, for instruction for young people. Subscribe now. Build your library through a religious magazine devoted to you.

* * * * * * * * * * *

With November being election month, and since political views are everywhere and as varied as the people who hold them, we have included an essay entitled "Politics—80 and Christian Involvement." It is written by Jeanne Ryskamp of First Church, Grand Rapids. Taking part in the political process is often a very confusing and disheartening experience; if it is taken part in at all. Jeanne is knowledgeable in political issues of our day and gives us her views and opinions as to the Christian's part in the political process.

Proverbs for Young Pilgrims: Taking Hold of Instruction

by Ed Lotterman

As I begin the endeavor of being an associate editor for your publication, young people, I wish to relate several thoughts. First of all, I appreciate the opportunity which you have extended to me. It has been some time since I have had a specific function in a young people's organization. Because I have not worked with you as a group, however, does not mean that I have lost contact with you. I have maintained an interest in young people and make a point of talking with many of you.

But I wonder why you chose me, of all people, to write for your magazine. Yet, I look forward to serving you. And you should know that I, and all the people who pen words for the *Beacon Lights*, need your prayerful support.

The question arose in my mind: "What are the needs of the young people?" We hear these expressions of concern for the young people. Parents, elders, ministers, and your teachers, are willing to convey their concern for you. Prayers are made for young people, petitions that our Lord will remember you in your particular needs in the evil times in which we live.

Why is there such an emphasis on young people? Do the young people have a unique need? To serve you best, to give you what you need to hear, to edify you by means of the printed page, the question must be properly answered.

You have a need that is common to all of God's people. You must be exhorted, admonished, instructed, and comforted by the Word of God. Scripture is able to do this, for all Scripture is profitable (II Timothy 3:16, 17). Knowledge of God and of His Word, I say, is a need common to all of the people of God. But is there a need that is unique to young people?

Yes, all of God's people must be instructed. But peculiar to young people is the learning of the basic, fundamental principles of the pilgrim life. The people of God are strangers in a strange land. And you must learn and understand the pilgrim's way of life. This is a responsibility which is yours because you have been born into the church by means of covenant, pilgrim parents.

The various ways and means to aid you in your learning process are obvious. You learn at home, at school, at church, in catechism, in society, in personal devotions, and so on. That you take seriously your responsibility to learn the pilgrim way of life is evident from the fact that you publish this little magazine for yourselves.

And now you have asked me to write for you and I wonder what shall I write that will be meaningful for you. I must write something to which you can relate.

If you are to learn the basic, fundamental principles of the pilgrim life, and if I am to aid you in your learning, and if the Scriptures are profitable in giving practical information and instruction, then we shall together seek and explore His Word to discover something meaningful to which both you and I can relate.

The Book of Proverbs is filled with practical implications for young people. The viewpoint of the book is from a wise man teaching young people the basics of life. And so we wish to write our essays under the general title of "Proverbs for Young Pilgrims."

In Proverbs 4:13 we read: "Take fast hold of instruction; let her not go: keep her; for she is thy life."

All of life is a learning process. As young children, we learned what we now so easily take for granted. To walk, to talk, to count simple numbers, to read simple words; all of these we have practiced for several years. We assume that our walking and talking and reading will always be part of our daily functions. Because we have learned these functions early in life, and because these activities are so much a part of us, we take these blessings for granted. Shame on us! God could deprive us of these functions in a moment! But as children we took hold of our parents' instruction, we learned how to walk and to talk. And to the extent that we do not daily appreciate these blessings, we have let go of that instruction! We have not kept it, although it is an essential part of our lives.

Now, as young people, the learning process continues. We are now in the

advanced stages of learning the basic, fundamental principles of the pilgrim life. We have built upon our knowledge of talking and reading. This prior instruction allows us to learn more in depth the wonders of God and of His Creation. We have a growing understanding of the pits of depravity, of the miracle of the cross, of the joy of salvation, and of the peace of God!

However, we face a certain problem of life. This instruction, this learning process can be merely academic if we are not careful! And if we allow this to happen, then we lose the thrill of learning our lessons, for the spiritual aspect of learning is excluded. Then follows a lackadaisical attitude toward learning and we become easily distracted from the available instruction. We fail to take fast hold!

About the same time that this happens, we, young people, are attempting to take upon ourselves more responsibility. I want to write a little bit about this.

I remember when I wanted my parents to give me more responsibility. "How responsible I was for my age!" I was impressed with myself! Neither could I understand why my parents did not share in that impression.

Young person, can you identify this in your life? You desire that your parents recognize your responsible characteristics. You want so much that your parents could give you added responsibility.

One of our retired ministers taught this definition of responsibility: "Responsibility is the ability to respond." He taught this with regard to the concept of our being dead to sins and trespasses and that we are therefore unable to respond. Or, that our responsibility was that with wicked hands we crucified our Lord. (Cf. Acts 2:23).

But if we adapt this definition to our instruction here, then we learn proper responses for our life as pilgrims. So for our instructors, that is, parents, teachers, etc., to give us responsibility, we must receive their instruction. We want them to give us responsibility? Then we must learn to be able to respond properly to the various events of life. But the ability to respond is something we learn through instruction. And we must take fast hold of this instruction!

And notice that the proverb makes this an urgent matter! Take fast hold! Let not go! It is almost an emergency.

This should bring us back to our spiritual senses. The urgency of the matter is that, having become academically knowledgeable, and having lost the spiritual thrill of learning our lessons, we are distracted by all sorts of worldly ideas and things. And when this happens, we slow the spiritual learning process of life.

Because we are so easily distracted, and because our responsibility is not yet fully developed, these distractions soon become little idols. But taking hold of instruction we are able to respond properly and recognize the distractions for what they are: tools of the devil! Tools which he uses to stymie, if not altogether halt, our receiving of instruction.

Can you identify these distractions in your life, young person? Maybe it is T.V., or sports, or a car, or even your social life. You should take a few

moments and discover that which distracts you. And now take a few more moments to concentrate on your proper response.

When we learn to respond properly, to take fast hold of spiritual instruction, to keep it, then we have learned a basic lesson of the pilgrim life.

And the pilgrim life is what it is all about! That is the reason for the urgency of the proverb. Instruction is your life, according to the proverb. Later in life, when you have finished your instruction, and when you have learned the proper responses, and when you are responsible (able to respond), then you will use all of these tools in order to develop your own learning process.

Young people, do you understand?

The pilgrim life is permeated with the love of God and His Law. Out of God's Law is the knowledge of sin. This knowledge produces a hatred for and a fleeing from sin. And God's grace makes us able to respond with a sanctified pilgrim life!

This is precisely the reason for the concern of our parents, teachers, preachers, and elders. This is the reason for the emphasis which is placed upon the instruction of young people. We are concerned for the development of God's truth in the hearts and lives of His people! You, young people, are being prepared to become the new parents, teachers, preachers, and elders in the Church of God.

Do you understand the awesome responsibility which will soon be yours? How we wish to impress this upon you. But where we fail, God's Word has power to succeed. For God has given this proverb for the young pilgrim: "Take fast hold of instruction...she is thy life."

This is your calling in life. This is God's command to you.

Are you able to respond?

Appreciation of the Reformed Faith

by Rev. G. Van Baren

I would, first, thank the committee of Hope Society for their kind invitation for me to speak at the convention. Especially, do I appreciate the opportunity of addressing you, covenant young people. I appreciate, too, the opportunity of speaking first of the four speakers who address you. It is not that I want this from the point of view of the honor of being first, but rather because now there is no one who can "steal my thunder" in speaking before me.

Being first speaker gives me the opportunity of saying a few words about the general theme of the convention: "Appreciating the Reformed Faith". All four speeches will treat the subject—yet this first speech might present further explanation.

When I was assigned the subject, it was a bit unclear in my mind just what "foundation" was meant. I received the theme of my speech in two different forms. I had first understood my theme to refer to the Scriptural foundation of the Reformed Faith. However, later I rather received the impression that the committee wished to emphasize the Reformed Faith as the basis or foundation of our own faith. I will touch on both of these aspects—so whichever one was intended, each will receive its due share.

The subject: "Appreciating the Reformed Faith" is one of vital importance. Though I did not expect to see all of the young people here, sitting on the edge of their seats in anticipation of hearing four speeches on the subject, it is nevertheless of vital importance.

Perhaps I could even ask you young people here tonight just why you came to the convention. Many, if I can recall my own youth, come to the convention with the idea that we're going to get away from parents for a little while, we're going to meet old friends, we're going to have a lot of fun (perhaps we have things already lined up that we intend to do)—but most likely most of us did not come here in eager anticipation of words of wisdom and instruction concerning "Appreciation of the Reformed Faith."

I think I can understand that. Yet at the same time, I would point out that for you, young people, and for all of us as Protestant Reformed, what we have to say tonight and following evenings, is of utmost importance. We may not ignore the truths which must be emphasized. When one is young, one thinks about sports, entertainment, friends to do things with. Yet even youth is a time to consider serious matters—matters which really concern us in this life and the next.

Likely, the older generation looks at the younger with a degree of

apprehension. Looking at the young people and children of today, within the churches, one begins to wonder: "Is this what the church of tomorrow will be composed of?" One might wonder about evidences of lack of diligence, failure to use properly one's abilities, lack of attention to things spiritual. What does this mean for the future of the church? The prayer of the older generation is that you, young people, will ever receive encouragement and grace to be stedfast and faithful—walking in the faith even til Jesus returns.

It will be my task to call your attention to the "Foundation of the Reformed Faith". First, I point you to the importance of your theme. Secondly, I would show you the Scriptural foundation of that Reformed Faith. Finally, let us notice that this Reformed Faith is the basis or foundation of your own personal faith.

"Appreciation of the Reformed Faith"—just what did the committee have in mind? May I say a few things about that? First, when the phrase "Reformed Faith" is mentioned, what comes to mind is the word: "tulip". Being even now in Holland, Michigan, knowing of the annual tulip festival here, this word ought to be one easily remembered. We often use the letters of the word to point out the so-called five points of Calvinism: T for total depravity; U for unconditional election; L for limited atonement; I for irresistible grace; and P for perseverance or preservation of the saints. Yet when we have mentioned this, we have not fully described what is called, "Reformed Faith". It is an important part, but not the full measure of "Reformed Faith".

Sometimes one speaks of "Reformed" or "Calvinistic" Faith in distinction from the "Lutheran" Faith and the "Roman Catholic" Faith—as though the "Reformed" faith is but one segment of a vast array of different kinds of true and living faith. We may not say that either, however. The "Reformed" faith is the only and Scriptural faith.

When we speak of "Reformed" faith, we ought to think of the five points of Calvinism. But the "Reformed" faith intends to emphasize all the truths of Scripture, not excluding the truth of the absolute sovereignty of our God. Our forefathers had a way of expressing this when they said, "God is God". By that expression they meant that there was no better way of expressing the infinitely wonderful truth that God rules over everything without exception. God is Absolute Ruler. Nothing escapes that rule. He governs the whole of creation, over the sun, moon, and stars. He directs everything that takes place on this earth. He determines the destiny of everything: of animate and inanimate things. "God is God." This truth is an essential part of the "Reformed" faith.

Several years ago we heard an emphasis, during our churches' fiftieth anniversary, on the truth of the covenant. God is the covenant God within Himself: as the Triune One. There is a communal relationship between Father, Son, and Spirit. This covenant fellowship God determined, eternally, to reveal outside of Himself within His creation. He would establish a blessed relationship between Himself and His people in Jesus Christ whereby they are

His people and He is their God. This too is a significant part of the "Reformed" faith.

Having pointed out all of this, you must understand why we have only touched on some of the high points of the Reformed Faith. We must remember that when we speak of the "Reformed Faith", we are not speaking of something that sets forth a part of Scripture only. Nor are we speaking of something which our fathers added to Scripture some 400 years ago. Rather, when we speak of the "Reformed Faith" we do so only to distinguish the confession of our church concerning Scripture from that of other churches who also claim to be Scriptural. When we emphasize "Reformed Faith", we emphasize the truths of Scripture. I would insist upon this fact.

You have been learning Scripture (Reformed Faith) in catechism, under the preaching in church, now at this convention and throughout your lives. We ought also to appreciate the rich heritage which is ours.

Do you sense what the term "appreciate" means? We tend not to appreciate what is common or ordinary. We don't always appreciate the truths which our churches confess—because these seem to be ordinary, common-place. We hear these every Sunday. Yet, speaking to one who has recently come in contact with these truths, one begins to understand what "appreciate" means. Such a person tends to speak about these truths to everyone with whom He comes in contact. He can hardly speak enough of the wonderful heritage of God's Word!

I might use the illustration of that common element: water. We take that for granted. If we are thirsty, we turn on a faucet and fill a glass with water. We want to wash our hands, we fill a sink with water. We have all the water we want when we want it. But if one were lost in the desert, if one had nothing to drink for many days, he would well understand what "appreciation" means—appreciation of that wonderful element: water.

You young people have your own language to describe "appreciation". It is that which "turns you on"; it is that of which one says, "I'll buy that". This is "appreciation".

One often sees concrete examples of proper appreciation of Reformed faith. One sees this in the elderly saint: an old man or woman. One beholds in them the deep desire for that which is spiritual. They rejoice in the Reformed faith. Come, once, into the room of the elderly. Notice how that usually they sit in their favorite chair. When they were younger, they were physically active. Now they sit. You see quickly, too, that these usually have glasses and perhaps a hearing aid. Their sense of sight and hearing is not what it used to be. Beside them, one often sees a magnifying glass—further to assist them in reading. But for all of these infirmities, one soon notices (at least of those saints of our own churches) an open Bible and a *Standard Bearer*. The Bible, likely, has the largest available size of print. Yet, line by line, page by page, these people still diligently read their Bibles. It is not unusual that they have read the *Standard Bearer* from cover to cover the day it is received. That's "appreciation" of the Reformed Faith.

Or I recall another instance of a man who would carefully write out the sermon outline in church while he was under the preaching. He would return home and each week painstakingly and carefully write, word-for-word, the semon he had heard. I believe this shows appreciation of the Reformed Faith.

I recall another instance. I hesitate to present it because of its very personal nature—yet I think the young lady would not mind. One day, a number of years ago, I was called to the bedside of a young married woman, mother of several small children. She had surgery—and the shocking discovery was made: cancer. The doctors told her frankly that she had but a few weeks to live. She was young. Before marriage she had been a member of the Protestant Reformed Churches. Some time after marriage, she left this denomination to join her husband in his. When children came, they were instructed in public schools. In church the children received instruction which this young mother painfully realized was not the kind of instruction she received when younger. Increasingly, this bothered her—but there seemed nothing she could do about it. Then came surgery. The terrible word "cancer" was spoken—but three weeks perhaps to live. Then the thought uppermost in her mind was to belong once more to the church of her childhood where she well realized the Word of God was properly taught. She understood that her husband and children would not join her in this, but she wanted to return nevertheless. She wanted to be part of the church where she believed the Word of God was most purely preached. I told her that under these circumstances, I could not advise this kind of action. God knew her heart and mind. God knew her love of His Word. Her salvation surely did not depend upon membership within our churches. Yet she persisted. She would have her membership taken from one denomination and brought to the church she had belonged to as a child. There she had been taught sound Reformed Doctrine—even as you are being taught now. In her own mind, she was convinced that she could have peace only in that church where she believed the Word of God was most purely preached. Without expressing judgment on the action of changing membership, I would emphasize that it illustrates well what appreciation of the Reformed Faith means. Here was one who so appreciated Reformed truth that she wanted to die as a member of that church where she believed it to be most purely taught. Do you so appreciate Reformed truth?

Examine yourselves! If it is a question of going to a ballgame or other sport, or learning of your questions—which comes first? If it is a question of watching a television program, or having your nightly devotions—which comes first? If it is a question of going out with the gang (and skipping society), or going to society where you can study God's Word—which do you do? How much do you appreciate the Reformed Faith? It is this question that I would confront you with—and so will the following speakers. I would hope that you, young people, face this in all honesty and sincerity. Do you really appreciate the Reformed Faith as you have been taught this and as you have learned it? You know how important it is: it is a matter of life or death. It involves our relationship with the living God. It involves both this life and the life to come.

It is far more important than sports, than physical activities, or any other such earthly pleasures you may seek. You should have "fun" this week at the convention—but be very sure that you did not just come here for fun. Show from the heart that sincere interest in our Reformed heritage.

The Reformed Faith to which we hold is indeed Scriptural. It might be easy to forget this. In this connection, there is a great evil seen in our own age. It is the evil of teaching that there are all kinds of "faiths" in which people serve the same God. There are many different roads to heaven. Even within the faithful church there is increasingly a resentment against the claim that those of other faiths are not truly serving God. There is not only the idea that Roman Catholic, Lutheran, Methodist, Jehovah Witness, Seventh Day Adventist—all surely go to heaven. But one hears even the claim that the Christian as well as the Jew and Moslem are each serving the same one God. One often hears people encouraged to "worship God in the church or synagogue of your choice." Related to this is the effort today of allowing everyone their "rights" to worship God as they please. It may well be that we run into difficulty with the government in the future about this too. The government might well, in the future, insist that everyone, including yourselves and your younger brothers and sisters, has the "right" to serve God—or not serve Him—as they wish. The government might well insist that no parent, at home or through schooling, may seek to direct his child in some religious path. Each must be allowed to choose for himself.

Already today many insist that as long as you recognize some kind of God, you are safe; you need not worry. In the days ahead, you will become increasingly aware of the truth of what I am saying.

We have been taught, and we believe, that there is one proper and Scriptural way of serving God: in the way of what we call the "Reformed Faith". That is indeed Scriptural. Whatever contradicts this, is wrong and must be condemned. But opposition to this singlemindedness will grow. Intelligent men will tell us that there is no one single way of serving God. You may already know some who scoffingly ask why you find it necessary to belong to a specific church as the Protestant Reformed Churches. They may ask why you should be attending a Protestant Reformed Christian School. Why? Then you might begin to wonder: why am I doing all of this? Is this right? Are my parents correct? Is the minister correct in what he says? These insist on the importance of the Reformed Faith.

Therefore may we understand well: we maintain the Reformed Faith because it is founded upon the Word of God. It is Scriptural. I have here neither the time nor the opportunity to show that this is true. But you learn in catechism the Scriptural basis for the truths we confess—and you should strive to learn more of this. I would encourage you to study the Word of God carefully to find out yourself that the Reformed Faith in which you have been instructed is truly Scriptural.

I would then encourage you, young people, to search out Scripture carefully and regularly. You might well too study our three confessions: the

Heidelberg Catechism, the Netherlands Confession, and the Canons of Dort. These confessions have, either in the margin or in the body of the text, many Scriptural passages listed. There is a wealth of material to study. Our confessions do not simply make bold claims without Scriptural support. Our fathers, the authors of the creeds, wanted to express what Scripture taught when they wrote the creeds. Study the Scriptural passages to which they refer—and see if these confessions are not true. Have you ever done that? Ought you not to be interested in doing that—if indeed you appreciate our Reformed Faith? You have heard, of course, many sermons on the Heidelberg Catechism. But have you studied the other two creeds and examined their Scriptural basis? If you appreciate a thing, you ought to put effort into knowing this thing.

Many of you attend catechism classes: especially one on the Heidelberg Catechism or one on Essentials of Reformed Doctrine. Both of these classes use workbooks or memory books which have texts from Scripture to support the instruction given. You ought to examine these texts carefully—see if they do prove the answer which you are required to learn. We must see from Scripture that the Reformed Faith is truly the teaching of the Word of God.

This Reformed Faith must be the basis or foundation of our personal faith. The objective confession of the church must be the foundation of our subjective confession of the truth. Our faith is directly tied to the Reformed Faith. By faith I confess, or say the same thing with, the church of all ages. That living faith within the Christian does not simply "happen". It is not somehow poured into one. The conscious, living faith of the Christian develops under the preaching and instruction of Scripture. All other things being equal, the more one knows of Scripture (and the Reformed Faith), the stronger is his personal faith. The more he understands, the better can he confess his union with Jesus Christ.

Jesus emphasized this too when He gave His "missionary command". He sent His disciples into all the world and required of them that they "teach and baptize". They had to teach first. On the basis of what one knew, a knowledge applied to the heart, that one could confess and be baptized in Christ's Name.

Therefore, young people, learn well the truths of Scripture as these are summarized in our Reformed Confessions. If you never learned Scripture nor the Reformed Creeds, there could be no belief. Learn, learn, learn these truths in your youth. These represent the substance of your confession of faith. He who knows and understands and believes the truths set forth in Reformed Doctrine, cries out to God for mercy—even as the publican of Jesus' day.

You say, perhaps, that you believe—but you don't have much time to read your Bible. You really, truly believe, you are convinced you are a Christian—but you don't have time to study for catechism, to prepare for society, or to read the Creeds of the church. You claim to believe—even though you know hardly anything about our Reformed Creeds. But what kind of Christian is that? At the very best, this kind of Christian is very weak; he is "wishy-washy". He understands only what might be called a "thumbnail" gospel. He knows that there is God; he knows that there is a Savior to save

from sin. Beyond that, he knows hardly anything. Is that the kind of Christian you are?

Such a Christian never really knows his own mind. He is in such a state that he is not always sure what is truth and what is the lie. He is ready to sacrifice the truth for earthly conveniences. He does not hesitate to forsake the Reformed Faith in order to enter into a marriage union with one of another "faith". He is ready to forsake his church for the sake of a job. It does not make much difference to this one if he goes from one church to another—perhaps even to a Roman Catholic Church.

Rather, he who studies and knows the truths of Scripture, he who understands the Reformed Confessions, he who studies the Creeds of the church—grows in the faith. He is strong in the midst of a hostile and evil world. He resists the evil even when this should mean imprisonment or death. That's the kind of Christian we want you to be.

So we would encourage you, young people: know the Reformed Faith; study the Word of God which is the foundation of this Reformed Faith. See for yourselves how that you are strengthened in your faith as you faithfully apply yourselves in this way.

Neglect this faithful study of Scripture and the Creeds; choose instead the corruptions of this world, its pleasures and lusts—and you show the evidence of being an unbeliever. All such as reject the pure Word of God and deny the confessions of the church, will also be cast forever into the depths of hell—where there is weeping and gnashing of teeth.

But one who knows and understands what Scripture teaches, one who confesses the truths of the "Reformed Faith", grows ever more deeply aware of his great dependence upon the living God. He who understands and appreciates the Reformed Faith, looks then at himself and declares, "I know now that I am nothing. I cannot deliver myself from sin and death. It is not my nature to desire deliverance. I can find no other creature to deliver me. None, of all creatures, can satisfy the justice of God because of my sins." That same child of God recognizes that without some way of deliverance, there would be only the certainty of eternal punishment in hell.

Yet we also understand, for such is the teaching of the Reformed Faith, that there is but one complete way of salvation: the cross of Jesus Christ. He paid fully for the sins of His elect. There is nothing these need add. God is satisfied with His suffering and death on the cross. The payment is complete. Ah, what a wonderful sense of joy and peace floods our souls because of such deliverance! We now can stand in God's blessed Presence eternally.

That truth makes one humble, doesn't it? We say it: God is Sovereign. We know it: man is nothing. We confess it: saved by grace alone and completely. What a wonderful salvation is ours. He who confesses and believes, also then appreciates deeply the Reformed Faith. It is the basis of our own living faith. Is that your appreciation of the truths of the Reformed Faith? I pray that it may be so. Thank you.

The Development of the Truth

by Prof. H. Hanko

Introduction

There are times, I think, in the lives of all of us when doubts and questions arise in our souls concerning the truth which we confess as Protestant Reformed people. Sometimes these doubts are simply due to our own weakness of faith—as the Psalmist sings: "These doubts and fears that trouble me / Are born of my infirmity." Other times, however, these doubts arise out of the fact that we are a very small denomination—one of the smallest in the world. Yet we profess that we, of all the denominations which we know, have the purest manifestation of the truth. And therein lies the difficulty. It is this sense of loneliness which often raises the question in our minds whether the truth we confess is indeed the truth of Scripture. Are we, among so many thousands and millions, right? If there are so few who maintain the truth, could it be perhaps that we are wrong while the other millions are correct? Is there not a certain strange pride in a couple of thousand people standing up among the world's billions and claiming that we, small handful though we are, hold the truth in its purest form?

I have found, over the years, that there is a great comfort in the study of the history of the Church of Christ. This comfort lies in the fact that the Church of all ages has confessed this same truth which we confess. There is an unbroken line of the truth, beginning with the apostles, and continuing to today which is a line drawn according to the Scriptures. There were many that departed, many who held strange doctrines; indeed, those who maintained the truth were usually in the minority—as we are. But the fact remains that the heritage of the truth continues in unbroken succession till this very day. We stand in the company of great men of bygone years and of every age and join our confession with them. I find this to be of great comfort and help in maintaining the faith once for all delivered to the saints.

I. How It Takes Place

When Jesus and His disciples were in Ceasarea Philippi, Jesus asked His disciples whom men said that Christ was. After giving the various answers which were given in those days, Jesus asked His disciples whom they thought He was. To this Peter made the confession: "Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God." Jesus immediately reminded Peter, however, that flesh and blood had not revealed this to him, but His Father in heaven.

The truth of this Jesus made clear in a more direct way when He was eating the last Passover with His disciples on the eve of His crucifixion. The apostle John records a long discourse which Jesus made at that time. In this discourse, there are no less that five references to the Spirit of truth which Jesus promised to give His Church. So often is this Spirit of truth mentioned

that it really constitutes the main theme of what Jesus had to say. These references can be found in John 14:16, 17, 26; 15:26; 16:7, 13.

Concerning these passages a few points ought to be noticed. The repeated reference in them to the Spirit of truth or the Comforter is a reference to the Spirit whom Jesus poured upon His Church on Pentecost. By this Spirit, Christ Himself promised to be with His Church so that His own words would be fulfilled: "Lo, I am with you alway, even to the end of the world." This Spirit Christ will use to lead His Church into all truth so that they will always know and understand, confess and defend that truth throughout the whole New Dispensation until Christ Himself comes again.

There are two points about this which need our attention now. The first is that by the work of Christ through His Spirit, we will indeed be able to know the truth. It is true always that we cannot know that truth of ourselves. It must be given to us, revealed by a power in us greater than ourselves. But it is also true that, by this work of Christ's Spirit, we will indeed come to know that truth. Those are wrong who say that the truth of Scripture cannot be known with any certainty. We always seem to have that problem. We often take the position that every man has a right to his own opinion as long as he is sincere. We often state that it really does not make very much difference one way or the other what a man believes. The truth of Scripture is too complicated and difficult to understand for us to be absolutely certain of it. But all this is wrong. The Spirit of Christ does reveal the truth so that we do know it. And the Church which possesses that truth must be very intolerant of it.

The second point which needs saying in this connection is that the Spirit of Christ dwells in the *whole* Church. The whole Church, from the least to the greatest of the saints, can and does know the truth. It is therefore, the business of the whole Church to defend and develop that truth. We must not assume the rather strange position that the defense and development of the faith is the task of ministers and Seminary professors. It is everyone's business—yours too. In fact, there will be no successful defense of the faith and no successful development of the truth unless all God's people are vitally involved in it. The Spirit dwells in you as well as in me. It reminds me of what Rev. Ophoff used to say when we would argue with him in Seminary classes concerning a certain point of doctrine. In exasperation, I think, he would finally blurt out: "All right; have your own way; you are all prophets anyway." But so it is. The truth is defended and developed only when the whole Church is interested in, studies and discusses, and grows in knowledge of the truth which is in Scripture.

So, first of all, the truth develops by the work of the Spirit of truth in the hearts of God's people.

There is another point here concerning the development of the truth to which we next turn our attention.

It is sometimes maintained that the truth develops much like a wall is built. The figure is of the Church as a city with the truth forming a wall of defense around it. The foundation for this wall is laid by Christ in the Holy

Scriptures. Each generation of the saints adds a layer of bricks to that wall so that, as the years go by, the wall gets higher and higher and forms an increasingly better defense of the Church. Thus each generation builds on what the Church before her has done and the walls which guard the city of God become increasingly strong.

Now, it is evident that, from certain points of view, that picture of the development of the truth is a good one. But the fact is that it is incomplete. If the figure were good, the conclusion would then be that the Church never has but a part of the truth while certain doctrines remain unknown. And it would seem that in all the history of the world, the whole wall is never built.

It would perhaps be better to compare the development of the truth with the growth of a tree. In the early history of the Church this tree of the truth was a very small sapling. Over the centuries, this sapling has continued to grow until it stands today as mighty oak—so strong and sturdy that all the efforts of men to chop it down are unsuccessful. They dull and break a thousand axes, but the oak stands unharmed.

But it is characteristic of a tree that, whether it be a sapling of two feet tall or a mighty oak of sixty feet, the whole tree is there. The sapling has every part of the tree that the mighty oak has. So it is with the development of the truth. The church always possesses every doctrine which is found in Scripture and which belongs to our faith. It may be that some doctrines are present in the Church only in germinal form so that there is little else than a bare statement concerning that truth. And it may be that that one truth develops and grows and comes to clearer expression with the passing of the centuries; but the whole truth is there nevertheless.

We confess nothing today which the Church, immediately after the apostles, did not already confess. Although we confess that truth in fuller and richer form. This is why, e.g., we read yet today in every evening church service the Apostle's Creed.

II. The Evidences of It.

If what we have said is true, then it follows from this that the truth is always the same throughout all time. There are, as you know, those who deny this. We live in a time of doctrinal relativity. It is almost as if Einstein's theory of relativity has been applied to the truth of Scripture. It is claimed, e.g., that the truth changes with every generation. The old truths of past years are no longer important or true. They were fine for people in earlier years, but are not valid for us. It was all right for people in the Middle Ages to believe in a "three-tiered" universe of heaven, earth and hell. It was all right for them to believe in devils and angels, in miracles and wonders. But we live in a scientific age when science has shown all these things to be untrue. And so we must realize that the truth undergoes change. We must have a gospel for the Twentieth Century which fits the needs of men in our enlightened age. We must have a gospel which abandons doctrine and comes to grips with the social problems of our world.

This is sheer nonsense. The truth always remains the same whether it is confessed by a washerwoman in the court of a Roman nobleman or a minister of the gospel living in Chicago, Illinois. The truth is the same whether it is confessed by a barbarian in Gaul or by a lawyer in New York City. The truth is confessed in an identical way whether it be confessed in an age when people thought the sun went around the earth or in an age when we know that the earth goes around the sun. The truth never changes.

It does not change because the truth is of God Who is eternally the same. It does not change because the truth is centrally Christ Who is the same yesterday, today and forever. The truth is the same always because it is the truth of Scripture from which one jot or one tittle shall never pass away.

This truth comes down to us especially in our confessions. It is not a surprise that confessions were written over the years. The Church of Christ has always loved the truth dearly. The Church has always lived in the consciousness that she must live in obedience to her Lord Christ. The Church knows that Jesus says, "He that confesses me before men, him will I confess before my Father in heaven." And the Scriptures tell us that he that believes with his heart and confesses with his mouth will be saved. Out of a living desire to confess that truth in the world our confessions were born.

But then again, confessions were born out of bitter and fierce controversy to defend the truth overagainst heresy. In fact, this struggle to maintain the truth is, more than anything else, the reason why confessions were written. God's people know that if the truth is taken away, the Church goes down to defeat. And if God's people know this, Satan knows it better yet. And so He tries at every opportunity to take that truth from the Church. But the Church knows that her life is at stake; her very existence is the issue. She is not arguing and fighting about abstruse points which no one cares about—about truth which roughly approximate the Pythagorean theorem. She knows that she is fighting for her very life. It is a life and death struggle in which she engages. And so she not only loudly shouted of her faith in the truth, but she also wrote it down so that all might know what the truth of Scripture is. These confessions come to us therefore as the fruit of a bloody and bitter battle in defense of the faith.

Yet even that is not all. Sometimes, in an almost literal way, the confessions of the truth were written in blood. This is especially the character of our own precious Belgic Confession. It was written when the Roman Catholic Church was butchering Protestants in the Netherlands. They were being slaughtered by the thousands for the faith which they loved. One man, brave and courageous in the faith, wrote this Confession and said: "Look, here is what we believe. Either admit that this is the truth of Scripture and stop persecuting us; or show that we are wrong and we will recant." As his mutilated body turned slowly in the wind at the end of a rope he gave testimony to all generations following that this was the truth and that he would pay the ultimate price to defend it.

And so the Church has, almost without her will, impelled from within,

confessed her faith and written it all down so that we might have it as our treasure.

III. The Benefits of Knowing It.

The truth is of supreme importance in all our walk. We may not separate doctrine and life. We may not take the position that what we believe does not count for much while how we live is the all-important question. To do so reduces our faith to a mere moralism along the lines of Norman Vincent Peale and his power of positive thinking and Ann Landers and her wisdom which is earthly, sensual, devilish. This is true, after all, in every area of life. If you need to take your car to a mechanic for repairs on the transmission, you are going to want to take it to a man who thoroughly understands all there is to know about transmissions. And it is perfectly obvious that the more he knows about transmissions, the more likely you will be to bring it to him to be fixed. If you are looking for someone to do your cooking for you, you will not hire on someone who does not even know how to boil water. But the more one knows about cooking, about nutrition, about the value of foods of different kinds, the better cook that person will be. Doctrine is the same way. The more we understand and love the truth, the better we will know how to walk as God's people in the midst of the world.

All this does not mean that we rest upon our collective doctrinal laurels. There is altogether too much of that today. There is a certain attitude around that we are Protestant Reformed; that we have the truth; that we can, therefore, live as we please. The trouble is that those who spout the loudest this kind of language haven't a knowledge of even the abc's of the Reformed faith. And the result is a godless and wicked walk.

The truth must be a living confession. We must know and understand it; but we must love it with a passion that will send us to the scaffold to die for it if that is required of us. It must burn in our hearts and be a confession which shines out in our walk. Then it will put steel in our hearts and iron in our backbones. It will fill our souls with courage and hope.

It makes no difference then how many believe the truth or how few. The truth is not decided by majority vote. The truth which we confess is the truth which the saints have always confessed. I cannot be long on this point. A few examples will suffice. The old patriarch, Anthanasius living in the Fourth Century, was exiled five different times in the course of his life for the truth that Jesus Christ is the son of God. The truth of infant baptism, whatever the Baptists may claim, is a truth which goes all the way back to the apostles. Predestination, with both election and reprobation, was taught by the great Augustine in the Fifth Century and Gottshalk rotted in prison in the Ninth Century for confessing the same thing. That Scripture is the infallible Word of God and belongs to all the people of God was not only the ringing battle cry of the Reformation, but it was the truth of Wycliffe in the Thirteenth Century, the truth of John Huss who was burned at the stake because he confessed it and the confession of the Waldensians in the fourteenth century which led to such

terrible persecution at the bloody hands of Rome that the blind poet, John Milton, could write of them: "Avenge, O Lord, thy slaughter'd Saints, whose bones / Lie scattered on the Alpine mountains cold, / Ev'n them who kept thy truth so pure of old."

And so we stand in our confession in the noble company of saints and martyrs who have believed and confessed what we do. What would you? Are you content to sell this glorious heritage for a mess of spoiled pottage? Are you prepared to turn your backs in cold scorn upon the blood of thousands before you? Do you find solace in standing in the company of the wishy-washy church of our day? though they number in the millions? Let it be then. Stand with them. As for me, I find my joy and delight in joining that battalion of heroes of faith who have now gone to join the souls of just men made perfect and whose confession is that of mine. With them I shall live. In their company I shall die. And God grant that with them I shall be in glory forever.

Admonition to Adhere

by Rev. Ron Van Overloop

I would like to take this opportunity to thank the Host Society and the Steering Committee. These two bodies are acknowledged as having performed a great task in preparing for the convention. But I also want to thank the adult advisors who guided and helped the Steering Committee at all times. Very unselfishly and very willingly they gave of their talents. This group of advisors consisted of Mr. and Mrs. Pete Koole, Mr. and Mrs. Stan Dykstra, Mr. and Mrs. Gord Terpstra, Mr. and Mrs. Roger King, Mr. and Mrs. Chuck Kalsbeek, and Mr. and Mrs. Harry Langerak. On behalf of all of us, I thank you.

* * * * * * * * * * *

The theme for the convention this year is "The Appreciation of the Reformed Truth". On earth it is the Church which maintains that truth. There is always an intimate relationship between the truth and the Church. The Church serves the purpose of the development and preservation of the truth.

God will forever preserve the truth. Also He will fulfill His promise to keep the Church as the apple of His eye.

Therefore, you and I never may doubt that the Reformed Faith will be preserved pure. Nor may we doubt whether the Church will fall from the face of the earth. But I sometimes wonder whether that faith and truth will be kept pure in our denomination. And I sometimes wonder whether our churches will long be a part of that living body of Christ.

The Reformed faith possesses the truth in a beautiful system. Truth is the revelation of God and of His work. Therefore, Jesus (Who is the perfect revelation of God) can say, "I am the truth" (John 14:6). Being the revelation

of God, truth as a mirror reflects all glory back to God. As such the truth is very precious to God and He will keep it pure for the sake of His own glory.

A couple of weeks ago it was asked me, "Is a split in our denomination the only way a deep appreciation for our heritage can return?" That is a most serious question. It is also rather frightening. The idea behind the question was that the history of the Church shows that the Lord has used such divisions in denominations and congregations as a means to preserve the truth. The motivation for the question was great concern for the lack of appreciation for Reformed Truth.

Most of this audience has not had to experience a schism. It is like war, only without guns. It is the horror of seeing a living body being divided into two. It is a most gruesome and repulsive experience.

But unless the appreciation for Reformed doctrine is high and sincere, we will experience a split. This will occur not because anyone desires it. I say, May God forbid. But it will occur whether anyone wants it or not. God will bring it about as a way to preserve His truth. His truth, you see, is far more important to Him, than you or me. Before such severe measures will be used, God gives us gentle admonitions. He sends those gentle admonitions in the preaching of the Word and in the speeches of this convention. But if those gentle admonitions are not heard, the Lord will knock louder on the door of our churches. If His knock is ignored, then God will work a split for the preservation of His truth and for the well-being of the Body of Christ.

Let us consider this more carefully in the light of all Scripture, but especially from the perspective of Jeremiah 6:16. "Thus saith the LORD, Stand ye in the ways, and see, and ask for the old paths, where is the good way, and walk therein, and ye shall find rest for your souls. But they said, We will not walk therein."

A figure of speech is used in this text. Our life is compared to a way, a trip on that way. This "way" is the life of man as he worships and serves God. The way how to live in this life, serving the Lord, is clearly marked out as a well-worn path.

You have no difficulty knowing where this way is, and where it leads because it is so clearly marked. That is why it is called an "old" path.

The paths are old, first of all, because so many have walked that way before. That way is well-traveled. Thousands upon thousands of footprints lie in the dirt of that path. As Prof. Hanko so excellently pointed out last night, giants of the church passed that way and the blood of martyrs is sprinkled upon that path.

Also that path is old because from eternity God ordained that way. God prescribed that way from of old. From the beginning God has told us, This is the way you must walk. Therefore, these are not merely good paths tried by men, but they are God's paths.

For the nation of Judah that way was prescribed and defined by the Mosaic legislation, as found in the first five books of the Bible. Through this inspired Word, God told them, "Walk in this way; walk in the way of

obedience to My prescribed commandments. Don't leave that way. Don't stray from it, but walk entirely upon that path."

The beauty of that old path is the fact that the heart of the divinely prescribed way was the promise of Jesus Christ. It was in that way that they would be able to see the answer to their difficulties and problems. That was why God came through the Judges and Prophets commanding, "Walk this way, because this is the way of your salvation. This is the way of truth. Jesus is the way and the truth."

For us that way in which the Lord would have us walk is contained in the Scriptures. But that way is also shown us in the creeds. Of this Rev. Van Baren and Prof. Hanko beautifully spoke. The old path is clearly marked out in the systematic setting forth of those truths of Scripture in the creeds. We need only pick up the creeds and therein find a very clear definition of the old path. This is the way you and I should walk. This is the way of salvation in Jesus Christ.

Of this James Bannerman spoke in his excellent work entitled *The Church of Christ*, when he says, "That which will unchurch a church is the lack of that apostolic doctrine which alone marks out a church of Christ." To rephrase that, that which tears down a congregation or denomination piece by piece is the lack of truth, the lack of appreciation of the truth. Not to know the creeds manifests a lack of appreciation of the Reformed truth.

The Church was instituted by God for the sake of the truth, not the truth for the sake of the Church. The Church is the pillar and ground of the truth. It is for this reason that God keeps the Church of Christ pure and true. To hold and preach the truth faith and doctrine must be paramount to the Church. Without the truth, the Church is no longer the Church.

As the keeper of the precious deposit of the truth, you and I, as members of the Church, must see that the truth does not perish from the earth. We must see that it is passed on faithfully from generation to generation. How often do we pray, "Preserve the truth in our generation"? We must defend the truth against all forces of ignorance, of unbelief, and of error.

The chief instrument the Church has for maintaining and developing the truth is the preaching of the gospel of Jesus Christ. God gives the Church the preaching in order to equip fully the saints for the work of ministry, with a view to the edifying of the Body of Christ. Confer Ephesians 4:11-13.

Only the Church with a firm grasp of the truth can become a powerful missionary agent.

The necessity to appreciate the truth is great.

* * * * * * * * * * *

The admonition to adhere to the truth is very urgent. The urgency that we truly appreciate the Reformed faith of our fathers arises from the fact that God gives this admonition. Jeremiah 6:16 begins with, "Thus saith Jehovah." It is not Jeremiah's word; nor is it mine. But it is GOD'S Word.

Jehovah says, "Stand! See! Demand the old paths where is the good way!

And walk therein!" That is the command of God. It is inescapable. Either stand upon the old way and find rest or reject them and be in danger of perishing in hell. That is the urgency.

In the days of Jeremiah the old paths (appreciation for the Reformed truth) were being set aside. Judah was wearying of the old ways. "My people is foolish, they have not known me; they are sottish children, and they have none understanding: they are wise to do evil, but to do good they have no knowledge." The old ways they considered intolerable, outdated, and old fashioned. They wanted something to enliven their worship. They wanted to get away from the same old thing week after week.

God chastized them, "but they refused to receive correction: they have made their faces harder than a rock; they have refused to return." "Were they ashamed when they had committed abomination? nay, they were not ashamed, neither could they blush."

The Church of today is not much different. And our denomination also is characterized by some of these same things. The Confessions are not as familiar as they should be. Do you know the Nicene Creed or the Creed of Chalcedon? These beautiful creeds are yours and mine. They are a part of our heritage, but do we know them? How great is the appreciation you have for the Canons of Dordt or the Belgic Confession?

Are catechism questions learned at the last minute and quickly forgotten because things of greater importance stand in the way?

Are the conflicts we have with personalities within the Church considered more important than the truth and allowed to interfere with the unity and communion of the Church of Jesus Christ?

How many of us dare to take the oath, "If I forget thee, O Jerusalem, let my right hand forget her cunning. If I do not remember thee, let my tongue cleave to the roof of my mouth; if I prefer not Jerusalem above my chief joy."

How restless do we become when we think the sermon is getting too long? Are we just as unhappy when a basketball game goes overtime?

Jehovah commands us to stand upon the old ways. Yet how many of us find greater joy in singing good hymns rather than the versifications of the Word of God as we have it in the Psalter? Over half of the songs sung at this convention were hymns. Does this not indicate that we are losing our appreciation for the Reformed faith?

The attitude behind this apparent lack of appreciation for the truth is that the history of the Church is the work of men only. Not so, for it is the work of God. God, by the Spirit of truth, leads the Church into all truth. If we remember this fact we will not scornfully push aside our heritage nor ignore it, for to do so is to push aside and ignore God.

Positively, we must stand upon the ways of the Reformed faith. These old ways have Christ crucified and raised as their essence. Let us remain fixed upon these ways and build our personal and family and congregational lives upon that rock.

Do this by insisting on the old paths in the preaching. Demand that Scripture be faithfully expounded and applied. In other words, learn why the old way is the good way. Also, if we are to walk in those ways we must know what they are. This is not only the simple truths, but diligently study the more profound and wonderful truths confessed by the Church. To be satisfied with a superficial knowledge is to be doomed to die. Cf. Hosea 4:6.

Having asked for and inquired into the old paths, "Walk therein!" This refers to a personal study of the Scriptures and creeds by every Christian. This is first done in personal devotions. Never be satisfied with a subjective and superficial study.

Walk in these old truths (our Reformed heritage) for they are not abstract, intellectual exercises, but a living reality. That Reformed faith requires a specific walk of life. Oh, how practical is this heritage. How imminently useful is this Reformed faith. How foolish is the cry for more practical rather than doctrinal preaching. Truely doctrinal preaching is practical. Preaching which is true to the Scriptures will always point out the way required by each truth.

* * * * * * * * * * *

When we walk in that way of appreciating the Reformed faith, then we will find that innumerable people of God before us have also walked in that same way. These are the beaten paths trampled by thousands of feet. Then the faith of our fathers truly is living still. Then with sincerity we may sing, "Oh how our heart beats high with joy when ere we hear that glorious Word."

Insist upon knowing your heritage. And walk in it. There there is rest for your souls. The old ways alone lead to peace. Only the truth of the Scriptures can bring peace. This way of Reformed faith is the balm to heal the wounds of sin. In the way of obedience to God's commands, God's favor comes upon us. In the way of doctrine and creeds is quiet, peaceful worship which leads the soul to heaven.

Judah's response was, "We will not hearken and walk therein." Coldly they refused. They preferred the new ways and hated the old. But do not forget what happened to Judah when they walked in the new ways. Judgment lurked around the corner. All of their seeking of new ways never gave them peace. Restlessly they sought, but never found satisfaction. These new paths lead to destruction (captivity). Jeremiah warned that exactly that would happen.

What about you? Which paths do you want?

The apostates within the nation of Judah perished in Babylon. The Lord cut them off in their generations. Against all such apostacy the judgment of God remains.

But it was through this judgment that God preserved unto Himself a Church and the truth within that Church.

God will always preserve the truth and His people. Often He has to do it in the way of judgment (captivity or splits within denominations).

"Thus saith the Lord", not Jeremiah and not me. God commands, Walk therein!

I beg of you to heed this command for the sake of our churches and for your sake and for the sake of your seed. The judgment of God stands upon us if we do not harken. And that is a terrible judgment.

And a blessed promise of sweet peace and rest for your souls stands for those who obey. May God give us the grace to obey.

The Application of the Reformed Truth In Our Lives

by Rev. M. Joostens

Thank you, Bob. Several times this evening I have heard comments that rather worried me. Someone told me that the first speaker said he was thankful to be first so that no one would steal his thunder. That is alright for the first and maybe the second and the third speaker, but for the fourth? I don't know. Also, this evening, several times I have heard it mentioned that our speeches heretofore have been marked with excellence. I don't know whether I should go home or speak to you.

Protestant Reformed Young People from far and near, you have asked me to address you this evening for your last convention speech. I am very thankful that you asked me and I am honored that I have this opportunity to speak to you. But more importantly, I appreciate this occasion to address you because I enjoy very much speaking to you as Protestant Reformed young people. The reason for that is this. I am very much concerned about you. I am very vitally interested in you. Because as Protestant Reformed young people, you represent a token of God's covenant blessing unto us as churches. You are the church of tomorrow. And you have the awesome calling and the responsibility to take your place in the midst of the church and in the midst of your respective congregations as leaders and to take up the task that we have as churches in the midst of this world, distinctively to preserve the truth of the gospel. I was much impressed by the theme of your convention. As you well know, that theme is very unique. That theme is rather out of place in the theological atmosphere of today's world. You don't read very much, nor do you hear very much, about an appreciation for the Reformed Truth. I read and I hear of a scorning of the Reformed truth on every side. I see that there is a lack of appreciation when it comes to the truth which we call a distinctively Reformed truth, that is, the Scriptures as they have been developed and articulated by the Spirit through the church. That is why I am very happy that you have chosen such a unique convention theme—"An Appreciation of the Reformed Truth."

It is my task this evening to address you from the viewpoint of the application of that truth to our Christian walk in the midst of this life. That

means that I will not make it my business this evening to reduplicate that which has been told to you already. I am going to assume that you know what is the Reformed tradition, and what is the Reformed truth. The former speakers have told you that the foundation of that Reformed heritage is scriptural. That the development of that Reformed heritage you can find in the creeds. They are there preserved for us to use, to consult and to apply to our life. And you were admonished to adhere to the old paths. I will make it my business this evening to admonish you to walk according to that truth which has been so explained to you.

In order to do that, I would like to familiarize you with a portion of Ephesians, Chapter 4, and I want to read just a short portion of that chapter before I get into my speech proper. Beginning at verse 17, Paul tells the saints at Ephesus this:

> "Now this I affirm and testify in the Lord, that you must no longer live as the Gentiles do, in the futility of their minds; they are darkened in their understanding, alienated from the life of God because of the ignorance that is in them, due to their hardness of heart; they have become callous and have given themselves up to licentiousness, greedy to practice every kind of uncleanness. You did not so learn Christ!—assuming that you have heard about him and were taught in him, as the truth is in Jesus. Put off your old nature which belongs to your former manner of life and is corrupt through deceitful lusts, and be renewed in the spirit of your minds, and put on the new nature, created after the likeness of God in true righteousness and holiness.

You say to me, but we are not converts from heathenism, as were the Gentiles who were converted at Ephesus. And I grant you that we are not converts from heathenism. We stand upon a rich Reformed heritage that has been preserved for us by our forefathers, that has been given unto us through diligent teaching and preaching. Yet, I would like to call to your attention that we, just as the Gentiles, have the old flesh that we must struggle against. To this Paul refers when he talks to them about their former conversation as it was in the midst of the world. Experiencing the old man of the flesh, we understand what the Apostle Paul is talking about. Because we feel the power of that old nature and we know the power of the flesh in the old man. And we know that is a factor in our conversation in the midst of the world. Paul contrasts for us in this particular passage that which he sees in the world and that which ought to be true of the children of God as they walk as children of God in the midst of the world. It is very interesting that as the Apostle Paul looks at them, he makes this observation. He says to the Ephesians, "You have not so learned Christ, if so be that you have been taught by him as the truth is in Christ Jesus." Now the Apostle Paul says some very bold words here. He says you have been taught by Him. You have heard Him, and he is not referring to his own preaching, but to hearing Christ and to being taught by Christ. That means, of course, that Paul tells us that the preaching of the Word as it comes

to us through the servants of Jesus Christ from the pulpit is the teaching of Christ. When you sit in church and when you are under catechatical instruction, you hear Christ, you learn about Him and you learn Christ. Paul knew exactly what the Ephesians had learned about Christ. As you know, he preached to them for over two years. He made Ephesus the main stay of his labors for over two years. He preached to them Christ crucified and when he looks at the walk of the Gentiles, the walk of the world, then he says to them "and you have not so learned Christ." That means that the Apostle Paul implies that that which they have learned in Christ Jesus through his preaching and his teaching has affected their walk in the midst of this life. Paul says, look at what the Gentiles do. They walk in the deceitful lusts of the flesh and in the pride of their life as you walked before you heard the Gospel, and were touched by the spirit of grace. You have not so learned Christ. That is, what you have learned about Christ has demonstrated to you a walk which is wholly distinct; a walk which is wholly different; a life style which is very unique in the midst of this world. Paul without a doubt, preached unto the Ephesians the whole counsel of God, from regeneration all the way through glorification, and that most certainly implied sanctification. The Spirit of Christ that dwells within us demands of us that we walk a wholly unique lifestyle; that we are wholly separate from the world; that we are different in the whole of our conversation, life and in all of our walk and activity.

I want to reiterate those words of Paul to you this evening. As I look at the world and as I see what the world does and what the world enjoys, then I say to you, Protestant Reformed young people, you have not so learned Christ. You have not so learned Christ! I know that. Instead, you have learned the truth which is in Christ Jesus. The Lord has given unto you the privilege to be brought up in the sphere of the covenant. I mean by that, that you were born into the church; you were born into the Reformed heritage. Your parents presented you for baptism, vowing before God and the congregation to bring you up to the utmost of their ability in that distinctively Reformed truth that has its basis in the scriptures. And ever since you can remember, before you could read, you were fondled on the knees of your parents and taught familiar Bible stories. As soon as you learned to sit still and not to wiggle too much you were sent to Sunday School. And when you started Kindergarten, you were shipped off to catechism class and you learned Bible stories. Year after year, you were instructed in a distinctively Reformed heritage and truth, from *Bible Stories 1, 2, 3,* all the way through the *Essentials of Reformed Doctrine*. Yeah, in your pre and post confession classes you delved into the confessions that we hold so dear and Sunday after Sunday you sat under the preaching of the Word. You heard Christ speaking to you and you heard Christ teaching you. You have learned Christ! The Reformed heritage is a precious truth. And not only have you learned Christ intellectually, not only do you have your head swelling with knowledge about Reformed doctrine, though that too, but you have come to know Christ. Paul does not say you have learned of Him or about

Him, but you have learned Him. That's true. Many of you already have and many of you are contemplating making confession of your faith. Then you say before God and the Church, "I know Christ," not just, "I know all about Christ", but "I know Christ; He is my Redeemer; He is my Savior; His Spirit dwells within me; I want to live unto Him, and out of Him." Young people, when you look in the world outside the church and when you see what they are doing, then I say to you and I testify in the Lord that you, Protestant Reformed young people, have not so learned Christ. In fact, I would go beyond that. You are unique in this sense of the word, that you, more and better than any other group of young people on the face of the earth, know the Reformed truth. You have been privileged to sit under the purest preaching of the Word that you can find anywhere and you have so been instructed. That is a lot to be thankful for.

Having pointed that out to the Ephesians, Paul says, "You must not walk as the Gentiles." That is, he draws a contrast between the walk of the Gentiles and the walk of a child of God. That is the heart of my speech this evening, "Our Walk". What do we mean by that? Your walk or your conversation is the whole of your life. It is the whole and the entirety of all your personal activity, whether it be in your eating; in your drinking; in your work; in your recreation; in your sitting down; in your standing up. The activity that you do within yourself, and by yourself, with the two of you or in company of your Christian friends, or in the midst of the world. Whether it be in relationship to your parents, your teacher, your preacher, a date, a boyfriend, girlfriend, your courtship; whatever it may be, your walk is the whole of your personal activity, as that is determined by time and space in this world. That's your walk. There is absolutely nothing excluded from that term.

Paul says, "I want to show you how the Gentiles walk." And I want to show you this evening how the Gentiles walk in the world. Not because I think you don't know that, but I want to put that in perspective this evening. I want it clearly understood what the walk of the world is—for the purpose of telling you in the end, that you have no business walking that way, that your walk must be wholly distinctive from that of the world. There are several things that Paul mentions in this particular passage. First of all, he says to us, "They walk in the vanity of their mind." The world walks in the vanity of their mind. That means that in all their planning, in all their desires, in all their striving toward accomplishment, they are empty, totally empty. When Solomon, the preacher, talks about that he uses this figure. He says, "As many rivers flow into the sea, yet the sea is never full." That's the world. You can look at them to verify that. Go ahead. They strive after notoriety and wealth, yet, they are never satisfied. They do away with all standards of morality, engage in all kinds of sexual debauchery, yet, the lust of their flesh is never satisfied. There is no satisfaction in all that the world does—none whatsoever.

So, young people, don't ever think that you can find any satisfaction in the ways of the world. They are total vanity. Do you think you can enjoy yourself in the world, or by compromising your distinctively Reformed principles to the

philosophies of the world? That's vanity. It's total emptiness. The world is never satisfied. And our old man of the flesh and the old evil nature will never be fulfilled in this activity. There is always the longing for more, more and more. That's the world. There is no satisfaction in the midst of the philosophies and the activity of the world. Furthermore, says the Scriptures, as they go about their business and exercise themselves in the vanity of their life, it is quite plain to us that their understanding is darkened and they are alienated from the life of God. Because they stand in the blindness of their hearts; they are ignorant. You have not so learned Christ!

In the world you see no respect for God or His precepts. That's not because they don't know it. Paul says that their conscience continually excuses them. They know the law of God. They know there is a God. They have a responsibility to serve, worship, and honor that God; but, you see, in the blindness of their own understanding and in the hardness of their heart they steep themselves in total ignorance and their understanding is darkened, so that the mysteries of the Kingdom of Heaven and the truth of the Word of God, or more particularly, the Reformed heritage that you have been taught and learned, is not spiritually discerned by them. Oh, they know it, there are some very unreformed men who know Reformed theology better than you or I know it, but they don't spiritually discern that that Reformed tradition is the truth of the Word of God—the Spirit-led truth of the Word of God as represented in our confessions, as you Protestant Reformed young people have learned it. You see, you have learned Christ. He spoke to you from the pulpit. He taught you. You know the truth, as I said, better than any other group of young people. You can defend the Reformed heritage. You can stand fast in that profession. You know the Scriptures. You know that they are foundational to the whole of Reformed theology and living. Let it never be said of you, Protestant Reformed young people, that you walk as those who are ignorant. Let it never be remarked about you, "He or she knows nothing about Christ or Him crucified, look at their walk." May it never be on account of you that scorn is heaped upon the Church of Christ, because you act as if you are blind, groping in the lust and in the greed of the world. You have no business there because you have learned Christ. Furthermore, when you look at the world, says Paul, you can see that they are past feeling and being calloused; they have given themselves over unto lasciviousness to work all manner of evil out of the lustful greediness of the flesh. Again, I say unto you, that's not because the world doesn't have a conscience. They know they stand responsible before God, but they make themselves calloused in their sin. They are past feeling, that is, there is no sensitivity in the world about that which is right or that which is wrong. They can engage in the wrong and in all kinds of transgressions against the precepts of God, but they are calloused against that sin. They are past feeling. That is why you find in our generation in the midst of the world an apathy about those things which are common and descent and orderly in the midst of society. They are totally apathetic. They just don't care, there is no sensitivity there. But you have learned Christ!

You and I are spiritually sensitive, when it comes to the Reformed truth; when it comes to the Scriptures and what is contained therein; are we not? It hurts when someone takes the name of our God in vain. We are spiritually sensitive. It aggravates when someone underminds and defamates the Reformed truth. We are sensitive to the infallible Word of God, and to the confessions. We stand up in horror when men play fast and loose with those Reformed principles, that truth which we have learned, as we were taught in Christ Jesus.

Sometimes I am afraid that even we lose our sensitivity. I don't mean when we are in the world, but among ourselves. It takes a lot of guts to stand up and to say, "You have hurt my God". "You have trampled the Scriptures under foot, and I object." "You tamper with the truth that I love, and I don't like it." Let it never be said of you, young people, the future of our churches, that you are apathetic when it comes to the truth of the Scriptures; when it comes to our Reformed heritage. Whether you stand in the midst of your friends, or in the midst of the world, or in the midst of the theological climate of this world, let it not be said of you, Protestant Reformed young people, that there is apathy in your midst. You have heard the story, no doubt, of that spartan youth, who after he had stolen a fox, while hiding it underneath his robe, instead of letting that fox go and confessing to the sin of stealing, he let that fox eat out his vitals. Let is never be said of you, young people, that under the cloak of piety or Christian liberty used as license, that your spiritual vitals and insides are being destroyed.

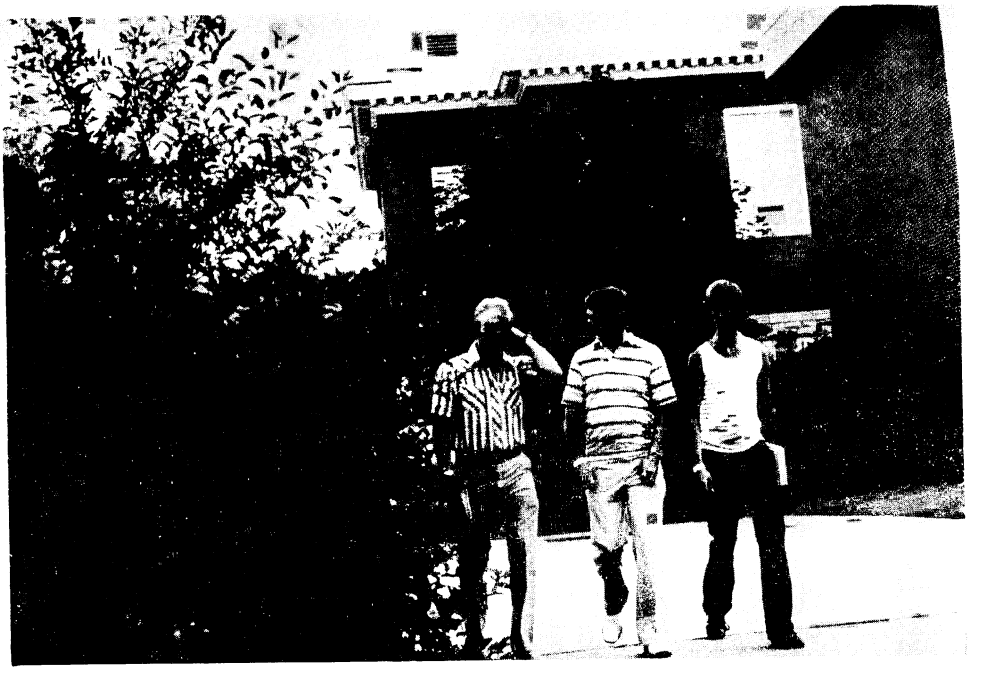
Apathy is a terrible kind of a disease. It spreads. Don't let it get a foothold among you in the midst of our churches. You must walk, not as the world walks, but you must be renewed in the spirit of your mind. I want to tell you this evening, that as you apply that Reformed heritage—that Reformed truth—to your walk, there are enemies. Enemies! And the greatest of those enemies dwells right inside yourself. The greatest enemy that you have to combat when you are applying the Reformed truth to your life and to your walk and when you are attempting to the best of your ability to live as you have learned Christ, is your own flesh. I am not telling you anything new. You know the power of your flesh, you know that. You know the struggle that you have. The old man right within us continually murmurs and every chance that he gets he gainsays the Reformed truth and the Scriptures. The old man says, "You know that Reformed truth is so narrow, so structured. Let's be open minded. That Reformed heritage that we have been taught makes us confined so that we can't have any fun in our life. It's full of you mayn't do this and you mayn't do that, and that Reformed heritage is so demanding of us. It is such a narrow way in which we have to walk." And the flesh says, "Forget about it." Protestant Reformed young people, your flesh and my flesh, the old man of sin, hates the Scriptures and the principles of the Word of God as they are articulated in the confessions and been taught to you since you were very young. And to aggravate that situation, there is the devil, who is a liar from the beginning, who stands opposed to that truth and who uses all that he can

muster to fight against that truth. The truth of the matter is that you as Protestant Reformed young people, unto whom that Reformed heritage has been so carefully articulated and so strenuously taught, are the chief objects of the devil. You think the devil worries about a group of young people who are far removed from the truth of the Scripture? His legions make you, as Protestant Reformed young people in the midst of this world, the sole objects of all their endeavor. Particularly you, because the closer you stand to the truth and the fiercer you defend that truth, the harder the devil is there to combat that defense. And he lies! He uses all that which is pretty and tantalizing in the world and holds it before your eyes and he says to you, "Don't you see how narrow that Reformed heritage is? Don't you see that you don't have to be so strict? Don't you see that you can compromise your principles a little bit, and you can get away with it?"

There is another enemy, one that is becoming increasingly prevalent. I am afraid of this enemy, for your sake, young people. That is the enemy of dead orthodoxy. What is it? It is having a knowledge about Christ, having a good command of the Reformed tradition, sitting in church twice on Sunday, being very pious, but in your everyday life, forgetting all about that Reformed tradition. Lip service unto God, but a walk that hardly shows the same. You see the Reformed tradition is a very vital and lively tradition. It is not dead doctrine. There is no such thing as dead doctrine, doctrine is life. When we talk about the Reformed heritage, and we mean by that the tenants of Calvinism and that which is often called the tulip doctrine in our midst, the five points of Calvinism, and more particularly the distinctively Protestant Reformed heritage that belongs to you as you were taught in synopses form in the *Essentials of Reformed Doctrine*. Those truths are not just intellectual. Those truths are living. They are to live in your life and in your walk. They are to reflect themselves in all that you do. It means that the child of God knows that by nature he is totally depraved and he lives knowing that old nature, struggling against it in the whole of his life and walk. You and I know that the election of God is unconditional, no matter what men may say. We are His peculiar treasure and how can we ever show enough thanks in the life of sanctification for that peculiar privilege of being His young people. And we know that the death of Christ, contrary to all theological winds that blow today, is limited, because otherwise there is no atonement, and that I belong to Christ because He atoned for me. You confess that the grace of God is irresistible. It's not what you do, it's not how I preach, it's only by the power of grace that He shows unto us the truth of the Scriptures; that we can spiritually articulate the rich Reformed heritage that we have. And we know that we are preserved as the saints of God. That doesn't give unto us license to do whatever we will. Rather, that gives unto us confidence whereby we know that the work which He has begun by His grace within us, He will finish until the day of our complete redemption. Young people of our churches, the heritage that you and I have is beyond comprehension in its beauty. The distinctive truth that stands before you, that you have learned and that you must carry on in our churches is

important, and the only truth that can possibly stand. It is your calling to know it as you have heard Christ and learned of Him and learned Him, and so to walk in the midst of this life. That's not going to be easy, because the world increasingly is an evil and a perversed generation that hates those who stand up for that truth. Look at the world, young people. It may seem, oh, so pleasant, to you and oh, so satisfying, but, it is not! I testify in the Lord and I say unto you, don't compromise your Reformed heritage; stand as distinctively Reformed young people in the midst of the world because there is nothing in the world that can satisfy, there is nothing that has any lasting value, except the truth of the Word of God. That which our fathers have stood upon years back; which they have died for; which they strove to maintain; which our forefathers separated for; which you and I have been taught as we sat upon our parent's knee; which we have heard from the pulpit; which we have confessed before God and the church or will confess; is the guide, in our life and in our walk. That's your calling. May God by His grace and by His holy Spirit grant you as young people what you stand in need of, to continue your appreciation for the Reformed truth, the grandest of all, the only truth there is.

I thank you for your attention.



IMPRESSIONS OF THE CONVENTION

Although the 1980 Young People's Convention lasted but four days, those who attended will long hold memories of it. Some will remember the speeches; others, the fellowship; still others, the spiritual inspiration it provided. We asked a chaperone, the Youth Coordinator, and the following delegates to briefly describe their impression of the 1980 Convention.

* * * * * * * * * * *

by Jerry Kuiper

I have just returned from the 1980 Protestant Reformed Young People's Convention at Hope College in Holland, Michigan. It was sponsored by the Hope Church Young People's Societies (Grand Rapids). When I think back on it, I find that there were many things that deserve talking about.

The theme, "Appreciation of the Reformed Truth," is a unique and important one. It teaches us more about where, when, and why our faith was brought into existance. The theme song, "The Church's One Foundation," also speaks of this one reason for our existance, Jesus Christ our Lord.

The speeches, given by Rev. Van Baren, Prof. Hanko, Rev. Van Overloop, and Rev. Joostens, were all excellent. They followed in line with the theme, under four divisions:

I. The Foundation
II. The Development
III. The Admonition
IV. The Application

I think that these four divisions helped us to learn more about the Reformed truth.

At this convention, as usual, we had daily discussion groups. These really led us to talk of our Reformed heritage. The topics were: (1) "Aspects of the Worship Service," or Liturgy; (2) "Christian Courtesy"; and (3) "Confession of Sin." Most of these groups had good, lively discussions. In these we learned more of the truth of God's Word and how that truth applies to us as young people.

Before we turned in at night, we were led in devotions by our chaperones. In these devotions we studied Psalm 139, Psalm 103, and James 3. We had good discussions, and I think we learned more about these familiar passages of Scripture.

I think it was a well-run convention, and would like to thank the chaperones, Hope's societies, and all others responsible for the good time I'm sure we all had. It was a spiritual uplifting for us all.

by Anna Mae Meelker

The 1980 Convention was a convention not soon to be forgotten. The most important thing to me was the Christian fellowship with each other in Christ which was bountifully given to us.

"Appreciating the Reformed Truth" was an excellent topic. It is not often that we come to appreciate our truth; we usually take it for granted. God in His infinite wisdom blessed us by giving us His Word to study, and obey, and that through the Holy Spirit working in our hearts we love and embrace that truth.

I felt the discussion groups were the most spiritually rewarding. We discussed the three topics chosen and also allowed for discussions about clapping at Singspirations, having hymns sung instead of Psalters, and whether it is right to send children to public schools. These discussions held much significance and I really enjoyed them. They were a spiritual inspiration to each one of God's chosen young people.

The conventioneers parted with heavy hearts and with hopes of seeing each other next year. We are thankful to God for bringing us together and for the spiritual edification He has given us. We pray and look forward with earnestness that the day will soon be here when we will be one in Christ in perfection.

* * * * * * * * * * *

by Gerald Van Baren

A couple of weeks before the Convention I received a letter from the *Beacon Lights* requesting me to write about my impressions of the upcoming Convention. I agreed to do so (it's always easy to agree to do something in the future) and so now I am suffering through the agony of having to not only separate my impressions (all good) from my feelings (also good) and my memories (not a bad one in the lot), but have to also write about them.

The campus at Hope College is in itself impressive for it includes such buildings as the impressive Gothic-style Dimnent Memorial Chapel with its beautiful stained glass windows, and the new Dow Center (the Physical Education building) with its pool, three basketball courts, six raquetball courts, indoor track and weight room. The Convention was nicely arranged so that every day there was free time to swim, play basketball or raquetball, or just visit with old and new friends. We also had a great time on the beach Wednesday, which turned out to be a bright, sunny day, and a lot of the young people, myself included, went back to Hope looking somewhat like boiled lobsters.

The spiritual life at the Convention was also excellent. In the morning, after breakfast, we had an introduction to an outline and after the presentation was finished we broke up into smaller groups for discussion. On Tuesday we studied the aspects of the worship service, Wednesday we discussed Christian courtesy, and on Thursday we talked about our confession of sin. In all the

groups that I was in we had active discussion about some of the areas of our lives which were covered by the topic of that day. In this convention there were also two things that were new for me. The first was that we had four excellent speeches instead of the usual three, dealing with our Reformed beliefs starting with the Foundation, going through the Development, the Admonition, and finally the Application of those beliefs. The other innovation was the evening devotions in which the chaperones each took the group they were responsible for (about twenty young people per group), read an assigned chapter from the Bible, discussed it, and closed the day together with thanksgiving to God.

I would also like to personally, and I think I speak for all those who attended the Convention, thank everyone who made this convention the shining success which it was, with respect to both the physical activities and the spiritual activities. Above all else, however, we give thanks to God for gathering us as His Covenant young people to share a week of fellowship and spiritual growth, preparing us for the days when we must hold fast the profession of our faith without wavering.

by Kevin Bylsma

When I was first asked to write about the convention for the *Beacon Lights*, I wasn't sure I would be able to get much in formation to write about. How surprised I was that by the end of the week my little notebook was filled with ideas for this article. I had to do some condensing so that I wouldn't go over my five paragraph limit, and that was a difficult task.

I thought that the theme of this year's convention was very practical in reflection to our daily lives. It is not very often that we really appreciate the true Reformed doctrine and heritage that we have. It was good that we were admonished, told of the foundation and development, and told how to apply this Reformed truth. This is something that we will use every day of our lives.

The added devotional periods before "lights-out" were an added attraction well worth noticing during our time at the convention. I thought, as well as many others, that these devotions have guided us well and showed us how to really close the days activities.

The discussion groups also were excellent. The writers of these should be well applauded for their fine work of showing how the liturgy, confession, and courtesy play a vital role in the heritage of our faith.

I felt that I enjoyed this convention much more than the one I previously attended. I could tell from the beginning to the end of the convention that I was maturing spiritually as I never had before.

Through the many aspects of the convention, the words of Paul in Hebrews 10:23 were made more clear to me and made me more grateful to God for the heritage and truth that He has given to us as Protestant Reformed youth, "Let us hold fast the profession of our faith without wavering; for he is faithful that promised."

by Grace Hauck

This year, although the convention was smaller than usual, participation was better than ever. The convention topic was "Appreciation of the Reformed Faith." With the future generations the way they are, only God knows how long the Reformed truth will last and if it will. It seems as if our young people do not care what happens to our doctrine. We exist in a time when there is no persecution as of yet, and the children of God are taking God's Word for granted. We are becoming lax in discipline and the only way to repair this damage is to work hard and struggle so we don't die of the lack of knowledge in the day and age where there is no excuse.

The discussion groups, for me, were extremely satisfying. I can't speak for the others in the group but I thought they were much better than last year in the way of participation. The groups were smaller so each person had to talk more. The topics—Christian Courtesy, Confession of Sin, and the Liturgy of our Churches, were particularly interesting. When should the Christian be courteous and to whom? The question of good works is also involved. Dealing with the confession of sin, must we confess before God every single sin by itself or all at once? Many questions like these were answered in these discussions. Discussions are always very good because you can ask questions you always wondered about but don't like to ask your parents. The leaders did a very good job and kept discussion going.

Devotions at 11:30 was a very good idea. It was a special time when we could worship God before finishing the day. Especially good, was the devotion led by Rev. Van Overloop on Thursday night for the girls in Gilmore Hall. It makes you stop and think, how can we, being so wicked, ever be saved? This past convention was a very good one and, God willing, may the next one be as good as the last.

by Jim Regnerus

This year's convention left me with a feeling of joy, but also with an attitude of concern.

It was joyous that we as Protestant Reformed young people could come together for a week of Christian fellowship. We heard four speeches on the preservation of our faith that, if one listened attentively to, contained overwhelming inspiration and motivation. We attended discussion groups where, if one applied himself, the material for spiritual growth was limitless. It was joyful.

But one matter concerns me. Did not the theme of the convention revolve around the Preservation of our Reformed faith? Yet, did not we sing nearly all hymns, even the very theme song itself? And is not, as Rev. Van Overloop so adequately suggested, the singing of hymns instead of or in addition to the Psalter numbers a step toward the departure of our Reformed faith? This

concerns me especially at a convention because many of us are forming values that will determine what makes the church of tomorrow preserve or not preserve our Reformed faith. I think this marred an otherwise beautiful convention.

by Doug Wassink

This year's convention succeeded in making a good spiritual atmosphere for our young people to meet in. I think this is the main purpose of a convention.

The speeches that were given were very meaningful because they were directed especially to people our age. The things that were learned kept being brought up throughout the convention and this really helped us apply them practically.

The theme, "Appreciation of the Reformed Truth," was well-chosen. This is an important thing for us to be thinking about. I learned a lot in the discussion groups; the topics for these were also good.

The chaperones did a very good job this year, everything went quite smoothly and I think the experience was a real inspiration.

by Paula Faber

Our 1980 Convention at Hope College was very enjoyable. The theme was "Appreciating our Reformed Faith." Throughout the speeches we saw the necessity of preserving the truth in our generations.

We had some very good discussions. After the one on Christian courtesy, we were more conscious of how we should act towards one another. We should not do this just out of courtesy, but to love one another for Christ's sake. We also discussed liturgy and its importance. We have liturgy for our order of worship. We should not let this become formality, but take thought to what we are doing, although the order may remain the same. God must be the center in our worship service. While talking about the third topic, "Confession of Sin", we discussed why it is so difficult to confess our sins to others, but not to God and why there are certain sins we confess publicly and not all our sins. I found that these discussions were very profitable for a spiritual walk of life.

I enjoyed being at the convention, with young people of all our churches, especially hearing others' opinions in our discussions groups.

Let us in the coming year show our appreciation for the Reformed truth.

by Denise Van Baren

This was the first convention for me. I thought that as a whole it was fun and interesting, while, at the same time, a spiritual encouragement. One of the best parts of the convention was meeting new people and making new friends.

The campus was equipped to suit everybody. One could swim, play tennis or raquetball, use the gym and much more. Even though everybody

complained about the food, it was usually passable. By Friday most of us were too tired to notice anyway.

The speeches were based on a topic that I think everybody will agree was appropriate. The appreciation of the Reformed truth is something that is not always obvious. The four speeches made us realize how precious truth is.

The topics for the discussion groups were ones that really affected my life and I was interested in them. My groups all had really good discussions, probably for this reason. I learned a lot about how true Christians should behave in certain circumstances.

This convention makes me eager for the convention which, the Lord willing, will be held next summer.

by Val Poortenga

This was my second convention and I really enjoyed it. I have never in my life felt closer to other Christian believers.

The theme of this convention, "Appreciating Our Reformed Faith," was very timely. With all the troubles of this present day pressuring us as young people, I believe what we heard and discussed must apply right now. We must stand up and fight for our faith. As one minister said, "We are becoming weaker in a time when we should be strengthening ourselves for the fight ahead."

My discussion groups were very enjoyable. "Christian Courtesy" is something that we must apply right now and our life will be more pleasant and full. "Liturgy of Our Churches" is a very important part of our worship of Christ, its purpose being to aid us in our worship of Him. "Confession of Sin" is a daily part of our lives and is essential for our salvation. The seminarians very capably presented their topics.

The speeches were very inspirational! Rev. Van Baren spoke first. His theme was "Foundation of Our Faith." He divided it into three points which were: (1) What is involved in building the foundation of our faith? (2) How our faith is based on Scripture and (3) the basis for our personal faith. He closed by telling us to ask ourselves personally, "How much do *you* appreciate your Reformed faith?"

Prof. Hanko's speech was second and entitled "Development of the Truth." It dealt with the truth as being the most important part of the Church. He emphasized that the truth is developed by the whole church. Our truth is part of our living salvation.

Wednesday night was Rev. Van Overloop's opportunity. "Admonition to Adhere to the Truth" was the topic based on Jeremiah 6. He questioned us, "Is a split necessary to maintain the truth of Reformed doctrine?" His reply was, "God forbid, but if people go astray, then we will!" The truth is very important because it is a revelation of God and it gives Him the glory.

On banquet night, Rev. Joostens spoke on "Our Walk." Our life is very

unique in the world and wholly separate. We are the only young people who have been taught the Reformed faith and believe it. He reminded us that there is nothing that is not included in our walk. The truth of the word of God is the only lasting truth and it must be our guide in our walk and calling. *All were excellent speeches!*

In closing I'd like to say that during the week of this convention I became very aware of the precious gift of Reformed faith. I pray that God will preserve me and give me the strength to walk as a Christian throughout my life.

by Jim Van Overloop

Dear *Beacon Lights* Readers,

I was asked by the *Beacon Lights* Staff to write an article about the convention. I thank them for this opportunity as I was a chaperone and because my term as Youth Coordinator has ended. During the convention I occasionally would jot down my impressions of the events that took place as source material for this article. As I look at these notes I notice different levels of fellowship at various times. I'd like to reflect on the over-all convention, its purpose, and its participants.

The purpose of the convention and all conventions was aptly stated in the pre-registration form. It is: "that Christian young people can fellowship with one another and at the same time exercise themselves spiritually by listening to the speeches and participating in the discussion groups and devotional periods." This purpose and some basic rules were listed on the pre-registration form, and this was signed by each conventioneer and his parent. I ask you, young people, to read that purpose again and ask yourselves if that's why you went to the convention. Conventions are a perfect time for young people to relax, to get away from the routine, to get together with like-minded Christians, to listen, to learn, and to participate. The 40th annual convention surely was planned for this purpose and the convention accomplished that end.

The main ingredient of the convention, of course, is the young people. Those who prepared for the discussion groups and agreed with the purpose as stated, had a great time. Those who, as the theme stated, appreciated the Reformed truth, grew. As was emphasized often in the speeches, we need to ask ourselves if we know these truths? Do we love them? Are we willing to suffer for them, or do we die for the lack of knowledge? When I observed the attitudes and actions of a few young people, I wondered what camp they were in. There were times when some of them acted as if they couldn't care less. We must, however, as Joshua, choose Whom we will serve at all times. By our fruits we make ourselves known to those about us. God judges our every action and we will be held accountable for them. May God in His grace help our young people and all of us in these last times. May He work in us to straighten out our priorities, that we may always put Him first in our lives.

The convention was a spiritual time. There were four speeches and three

discussion groups. Each day began with devotions and ended in devotions. In talking to other chaperones, I think we agreed that we all grew spiritually. This is because the Holy Spirit was working in us, causing us to take an active part in listening, participating, and learning. Most of the young people also grew spiritually for the same reason, and had a good time.

It is my prayer that all the young people will always strive toward glorifying God, including the times when they are together with other young people and away from their parents. This Christian walk must be the most important aspect of their lives. This then will dictate their attitudes and actions in all of their activities.

Finally, the conventions are planned for you, young people, so that you may grow spiritually. You can help make them a success by coming prepared, and by being willing to participate and armed with a Godly attitude, to the end that God, not yourselves or others, may be glorified.

by Agatha Lubbers

The 40th Annual Young People's Convention of the Protestant Reformed Churches of America is now history. It is complete with its joy and disappointments. It is complete with the events we would like to remember and some that we would rather forget. The steering committee and societies of Hope Church, Grand Rapids, are to be commended for organizing and administering a fruitful and edifying convention for the young people of our churches.

The first thing that strikes me about the convention of this year is that it is the 40th convention. That number 40 drove me to do some research about the origin of the P.R.Y.P. Convention. I could remember as far back as the Seventh Annual Convention—I know that dates me—and that according to my own souvenir booklet of the convention, it was held in 1947. (These souvenir booklets have become quite an established tradition.) The Seventh Annual Convention was my first convention and it was held in the First Protestant Reformed Church of Grand Rapids. (The water tower was still standing where the parking lot is today.) We moms and dads and grandpas and grandmas who see our children go off to camp or college campus for a week of convention remember that those were the days before conventions were held away from the homes of the families of the host church. We remember the day when conventions were hosted by a church and the host church would provide the lodging for the out-of-town conventioneers in their own homes. This meant that conventioneers were chaperoned, transported, and often fed by the members of the host church. There was something beneficial about that arrangement because conventioneers established lasting and profitable friendships in the churches away from home.

As I thought about my first convention in 1947, I could not help but think about my father, who I think is representative of many fathers then and now. He must have transported me and my sister and two other young people from

the Randolph Protestant Reformed Church to our first convention in the Hope that we would grow spiritually and establish an understanding concerning the church and the people in the churches in which we had our membership. We young people came from communities where there were other Reformed Churches, but we were called to be distinctively Reformed in the church world thirty years ago.

I remembered that first convention because I was just a youngster then and was quite fearful. I was afraid because I knew very few of my fellow conventioneers. Part of my fear was that I was young. I remember that there were many older young people at that convention and that was good. We need older young people at our conventions, and it saddens me that so few of our older unmarried young people attend conventions but turn instead to alternative forms of recreation or entertainment. I hereby register my vote in favor of more of our older young people attending future conventions.

Oh yes, I was going to say something about my father. He was at the very first convention that was held in 1939 in South Holland, Illinois. He had young children then. They were too young to attend a young people's convention. But his family grew. Those early ministers at the first convention in 1939 (think now of emeritated ones — Rev. C. Hanko, Rev. G. Lubbers, Rev. H. Veldman), who were leaders of the young people at those earliest conventions must have dreamed of the day when by God's grace their children would attend conventions; they must have dreamed of a day when conventions would be forty years old and when children of their children would be attending P.R.Y.P. conventions. And that's exactly what has happened. God in His preserving grace has made it possible for children's children to attend conventions. God has been faithful to His promise that He would establish His covenant with those who keep His covenant. We see in our conventions, therefore, tangible evidence of the reward of God's grace.

For me then, this convention was a time to look back and view the events of the present from the perspective of the past. I concluded in my purview that young people have not really changed that much. Solomon said there is no really new thing under the sun. It is still true as the preacher says in Ecclesiastes that childhood and youth are vanity. It is likewise true that God from the beginning to the end of the world through His spirit causes young men to see visions, and old men to dream dreams.

The tendency for young people is to do things only so that they can have "a blast". A few of us go to conventions only so that we can continue the legends that have accompanied the history of past conventions. That this is true can be learned when we read the message of the Federation president to the conventioneers of the Twentieth Annual Convention twenty years ago. "All the legendary tales you might have heard about how late others have stayed out during previous conventions, about how much mischief they made, about how many authorities they disobeyed, all being summed up in the frightfully illogical conclusion, 'Boy, did we have fun,' all these tales fall away to make place for real standards of fun at the convention."

This should help us to understand the concern of our newly-retired Federation President, Bob Faber, when he wrote in the 40th Annual PRYP convention booklet as follows: "It is a unique opportunity to meet with fellow believers and discuss matters of faith and conviction. So when we meet with old friends, establish new relationships, and engage in the activities of this week, let's keep in mind the ultimate purpose of the time. Let's be aware that through discussions, speeches, and devotions we are able together to grow spiritually and to mature as Christian young people."

This year the host society planned the 40th convention (a symbolic number, don't you think) and called us to look backward and to look forward. The speeches were planned to help us consider our calling in the midst of a church world that does not really love the Reformed faith found in the Holy Scriptures. We were given an opportunity to view our position as young people who are youthful members of the Protestant Reformed Churches from the point of view of a theme that called to "Appreciate our Reformed Faith."

What were the real standards of fun that were uppermost in the minds of the members of the steering committee? These real standards of fun were that all the activities of the convention should be subject to one main goal—spiritual growth. How could we grow spiritually? When all the other good times have been forgotten, we will remember the edifying and thought-provoking speeches. We will remember the spiritual talks we had with fellow young people and discussion leaders about our confession of sin, about the liturgy in our churches, and concerning Christian courtesy. We will remember the moments when we gathered around the Word of God for spiritual devotions at the end of a busy day. That's real lasting fun.

You left the convention, young people, and the battle goes on. The same conscious dedication you felt at the convention you must continue as you live in your own societies and churches. You are now separated from each other, but you are bound by a new appreciation for the Reformed faith that should and will by God's grace lead you in your life of gratitude and faithfulness in this world until Jesus comes.

As we commemorate the blessings of God at the conclusion of this 40th Annual PRYP Convention, may we with the assurance of faith recite Moses' prayer of faith as he came to the end of forty years of labor.

> "The eternal God is thy refuge and underneath are the everlasting arms: and He shall thrust out the enemy before thee...
> Happy art thou, O Israel: who is like unto thee, O people saved by the Lord,... Deuteronomy 33:27, 29."

THANK-YOU

The Convention Steering Committee would like to thank all those who contributed to the success of the convention. We appreciate the help in planning we have received from our advisors and members of the Host Societies. We remember also the financial help received from other congregations in both fund raising and patron collections. We especially would like to thank the speakers for their instructive and edifying messages.

But above all, we thank our Heavenly Father for gathering and protecting us throughout the week. May He continue to guide us throughout our lives as we contend for the faith and uphold that rich heritage which is ours.

DISCUSSION GROUP IMPRESSIONS

EDITOR'S NOTE:

Some of the most edifying activities held in conventions are the discussion groups. Those who participate in these groups not only grow in spiritual knowledge, but also, through discussion, grow in their knowledge of one another. The 1980 Convention had three discussion topics. Each topic was introduced by a student in our Protestant Reformed Seminary. We asked three delegates to prepare reports, both on the seminarian's introduction and on comments concerning the topic that were made in the group they attended.

by Amy Huisken

On Tuesday, July 22, the second day of the 1980 convention, we young people discussed the subject of the liturgy of our churches. Seminarian Deane Wassink introduced the subject in Wichers Auditorium on the Hope College campus.

Seminarian Wassink defined the liturgy to be all parts of our public worship service as well as the particular position of each part in the service. Not only are the salutation, benediction, singing, prayer, and sermon part of the liturgy, but also all special forms of worship. These forms are found in the back of our Psalter, and include the forms for baptism, public confession of faith, excommunication, ordination, and marriage.

Many aspects of our liturgy are traditional, although some changes have been made since the days of our forefathers. Examples of these changes are seen in our communion services. Our present day custom is to remain seated while the elders pass around the bread and wine in individual servings. In the past history of the church, the members of the congregation who partook of the Lord's Supper went to the front of the sanctuary and ate and drank from one loaf of bread and one cup of wine.

There is a broad, denominational liturgy, and there are also parts of the liturgy which are different in the various Protestant Reformed Churches. The

fact that different benedictions, such as those found in II Corinthians 13:14, Jude 24-25, Numbers 6:24-26, are used is an example of these differences.

The origin of our liturgy reaches back to the history of the church before the days of Christ. Throughout all of Scripture, the pure preaching of the word is emphasized (Romans 10:13-15). The very early church developed organized singing and readings. During the early days of Paul's ministry, deacons were ordained.

The Middle Ages has a unique contribution to our liturgy. Our liturgy is a reaction to the corruption and decline of the Roman Catholic Church at this time. Preaching, the most important part of the liturgy, became non-existent. The priests spoke Latin, which was not understood by the common people, so the preaching stopped. The common people were not allowed to drink the wine of the Lord's Supper. Instead, priests drank it for them. The Reformation was very important for the development of our liturgy. The originator of our liturgy was John Alasko. The decision to follow a specific liturgy was made at the Synod of Dordt. This liturgy is basically the liturgy that we follow today.

The purpose of the liturgy is to aid in the worship of God. The liturgy is *not* an end in itself. The organ prelude and postlude, prayer, singing, sermon, collection of alms, and every other part of the liturgy are all used to aid the congregation in the worship of God. The liturgy helps to create orderliness, familiarity, and consistency in our worship services.

The sermon is the most important element of the liturgy. The sermon has the most central position in the liturgy because it is the chief means of grace. We hear God talking to us through the minister. We should not hear the man that is preaching to us, but we must hear God. The minister is merely an instrument God uses to enable us to hear Him.

The congregational singing is an important part in our worship service. The Protestant Reformed Churches use Psalter numbers for this singing. Article 69 of the Church Order states that "only the 150 Psalms of David, the Ten Commandments, the Lord's Prayer, the Twelve Articles of Faith, and Songs of Mary, Zacharias, and Simeon, the Morning and Evening Hymns, and the Hymn of Prayer before the sermon shall be sung". Many hymns are man-centered; all Psalter numbers are based on the word of God. We should not question the use of Psalter numbers, for the Psalms cover a range of subjects into which every aspect of our life can fit. What more can we need?

We use the King James Version of the Bible in our worship services. We use this version for four basic reasons. First, it is not contrary to sound doctrine. Secondly, it can be understood by the common man. Thirdly, the style is one of great beauty, dignity, and solemnity. Finally, it uses the language of the creeds. By reading the King James Version, one becomes familiar with the terms of justification, predestination, sanctification, regeneration, etc. Other modern version of the Bible, such as the Revised Standard Version, the Jerusalem Bible, the New English Bible, and the Living Bible, weaken or contradict such issues as the Virgin Birth, the Deity of Jesus, the Trinity, Creation, and sovereign predestination. To use one of these versions would be

to deny the purpose of the liturgy, which is to aid in the worship of God.

We traditionally follow the liturgy adopted by the Synod of Dordt because we believe that it is a good liturgy to follow; it is practical for us to use in that it aids us in the worship of God. Too often, we follow our liturgy without thinking of the importance of each aspect of the worship service as it relates to the whole service. When this happens, the liturgy ceases to be traditional and becomes habitual. We must guard against this by remembering that the purpose of the liturgy and each aspect of it is to aid in the worship of God.

by Deborah Decker
First Church

Christian courtesy was the subject of our Wednesday discussion groups. Mr. Everett Buiter introduced this pertinent subject to the young people. He began by giving us the definition of courtesy: an action which expresses deep respect by bodily action or gesture. Courtesy implies, however, all sorts of manners which any man might have. Mr. Buiter stressed that the Bible should be our basis for courtesy. For example, in Matthew 7:12 we read, "Therefore all things whatsoever ye would that men should do to you, do ye even so to them for this is the law and the prophets." And in Matthew 22 Jesus tells us, "Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind. This is the first and great commandment. And the second is like unto it, Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself. On these two commandments hang all the law and the prophets." This means, Mr. Buiter told us, that where ever we go, whether it be to the beach, or to a discussion group, or to a lecture we must seek to do all things in love, even as we love ourselves. We all want to have fun at the conventions, but we must *make sure* that others do have fun.

From I Peter 3 we are taught that if we are courteous and have compassion on the brother we will have a happy life for "the eyes of the Lord are over the righteous, and His ears are open unto their prayers: but the face of the Lord is against them that are evil."

Mr. Buiter concluded by exhorting us to be courteous *now*, at this point in our lives, while we're still young so that we will be prepared for the responsibilities of the adult life.

An important point that was made at my discussion group was that our churches within themselves should be more friendly and warm, not only to strangers, but also to individual members. We decided that the size of a church affected the friendliness of that church, but we all felt that improvement in Christian courtesy was definitely needed in our churches.

Another good point was that often times we, as friends, stick with the so-called "cool" kids and ignore the shy, not-so-outgoing person, instead of making it a point to talk to him and include him in our fun. We asked ourselves

the question, "Does our 'cool' group need our friendship as much as that person standing on the outside?"

Then the question was asked, "How far do we go in using our Christian courtesy?" After much discussion, we found that the Bible tells us, "It is better, if the will of God be so, that ye suffer for welldoing than for evildoing." Self-denial and brotherly love are the things which we must remember as we walk our life's pathway.

We concluded that Christian courtesy is lacking in our midst, but that, if we make an effort to be courteous, it will become a natural part of our personality as we gain experience in practicing our Christian courtesy.

I see a grave lack of courtesy and respect not only in our own circles, but in the society around us. Look at the inconsiderate and rebellious nature of our own generation. Is it any wonder, then, that the world is experiencing so many problems today?

That is why we, as Christian young people, must fulfill our calling to be respectful and courteous to everyone. Do we want to be accused of being "just like the world"?

by Gary Lubbers
Hudsonville Church

"Confession of Sin" was the morning discussion group topic on Thursday, July 24, at the PRYP Convention. It was introduced by Mr. Tom Miersma. Following are some questions and ideas he brought up just to get us going. First, he brought to light the reason for confession—that is sin. Then he questioned the relationship of confession of sin to conversion and also to repentance. Also mentioned was faith working the proper attitude in our heart. Then he got into the idea of how we as sinners can confess our sin and the benefits that God bestows on us as a result of our confession. Last of all, he mentioned our expression of confession of sin, and in connection, public confession of sin.

To help us in our discussion, we also had the outline written by Jon Smith and printed in the June-July issue of *Beacon Lights*.

The discussion group I was in was led by Mr. Harry Langerak. We more or less followed Mr. Smith's outline. We started out reading and discussing the given Bible texts.

Proverbs 28:13 states that whoever confesses his sins will have mercy. When we sin our natural reaction is to try to hide our sin. But we must confess our sins, be truly sorrowful and realize how terrible our sins are. We need God's mercy, which He bestows on us through Christ, only as a result of confession.

Psalm 51:1-5 is the reaction of David when Nathan comes to him after he had sinned with Bathsheba. He pleads with God to give him mercy. He acknowledges in verse 5 that we are born and conceived in sin and therefore need God's mercy.

In the New Testament, I John 1:9 also states that we are forgiven and cleansed from unrighteousness only if we confess.

We understood James 5:16 to mean that talking about and confessing our sins to one another is good. Confessing to each other helps us realize that our sins are truly serious. We must be sorry and pray for each other's forgiveness. Matthew 5:23 and 24 continues on this thought to say that if a brother sins against you, it is your responsibility to go to him, not wait for him to come to you.

Our Reformed Confessions also say something about confession of sin. The Heidelberg Catechism is divided into three sub-headings. They are "The Misery of Man", "Man's Deliverance" and "Thankfulness". We cannot be delivered and therefore thankful before we are sorry for our sins and confess them. Lord's Day LI refers to the sixth petition in the Lord's Prayer, "And forgive us our debts as we forgive our debtors." Even as God by grace forgives us so that grace works in us so that we can forgive our neighbors.

We then went on to discuss public confession of sin. When we sin such that it offends other people, we must publicly confess that sin. For example, David numbered the people against God's will—a presumptuous sin known to all the people.

Confession of sin is very important. We often out of habit say at the end of prayer, "forgive our sins for Jesus' sake. Amen." We don't always realize how serious this petition is! We are conscious of our sins and sorry for them not of ourselves, but on the ground of God's sovereign salvation. We confess and plead for mercy only by the grace of God. God then bestows on us forgiveness for our sins and we express our gratitude as God fore-ordained in His eternal plan of salvation.

CONVENTION REVIEW

by Lois Hoekstra
1980 Convention Secretary

Minutes of the 40th annual Protestant Reformed Young People's Convention held July 21-25 on the Campus of Hope College in Holland, Michigan. The Hope Church young people sponsored the convention with the theme: "Appreciation of the Reformed Truth." The topic was divided into four sub-topics.

I. The Foundation
II. The Development
III. The Admonition
IV. The Application

Their text was taken from Hebrews 10:23, "Let us hold fast the profession of our faith without wavering; for he is faithful that promised;". The theme song was "The Church of Christ."

The 1980 Convention began Monday, July 21, with registration at Hope Church. Conventioneers from all over the U.S. and Canada came in car loads to register, get their room numbers, have a quick lunch and load the buses. Final rules and regulations and announcements were given and the Convention was in full swing on its way to the college. Upon arrival at the campus, free time was given to settle in and get cleaned up for supper. After supper the convention picture was taken, and at 8:00 Rev. Van Baren introduced and spoke on the first topic, "The Foundation." Two special numbers were also given by Kevin Bylsma and the Skipstra Quartet. There was a pizza party after the speech. Lights out at 12:30.

Tuesday forecasted a dark dismal day; this of course is not beach weather. No problem, the schedule was just switched around—Tuesday was Wednesday, and Wednesday was Tuesday. By 7:30 everyone was present for devotions and breakfast. An introductory speech was given by Deanne Wassink on "Aspects of the Worship Service", after which discussion groups were conducted.

Our first business meeting followed:

I. Bob Faber read a scripture passage and opened with prayer.
II. Roll call was taken—7 delegates were not present.
III. The Financial Report of the Federation Board and Beacon Lights were read. The Federation Board's balance on hand as of July 1, 1980, is $15,324.46 The *Beacon Lights* balance as of May 1, 1980, is $355.63.
IV. Acknowledging of nominees for the Federation Board to be voted on Thursday.
V. Minutes of 1979 Convention were read and approved.
VI. Dues were set as follows ($12.00 per member):
    $8.00 — convention expense
    3.00 — Scholarship Fund
    1.00 — *Beacon Lights*

VII. Read and accepted Scholarship Fund Committee's scholarship awards.
VIII. Brian D. Dykstra closed with prayer.

Following the noon meal the afternoon was spent in sports activities—volleyball tournaments, swimming, tennis and anything imaginable. Supper was served around 5:30 and then everyone cleaned up a little and headed for Dimnent Memorial Chapel where Prof. Hanko delivered the second topic, "The Development." Special numbers were given by Redlands and Hope Societies. The basketball tournament started after the speech. Teams were selected at random, although by the end of the last games, players were switched and teams were pretty well rigged in order to win. Lights out at 12:30.

Wednesday, the weather forecasted a bright, sunny day. So after breakfast and discussion groups that were conducted on the topic, "Christian Courtesy" and introduced by Everett Buiter, the bus rolled out with beach bound conventioneers. Upon arrival at Oval Beach in Saugatuck, we had devotions and ate our brown bag lunches. The rest of the afternoon was spent playing volleyball, (of course the guys had to play football), frisbee, swimming and baking in the sun. By 3:30 everyone was tired and sunbaked, so the bus headed for the campus while everyone anticipated a refreshing shower. The speech that night was given by Rev. Van Overloop on the third topic, "The Admonition." Southeast young people gave a special number. Again after the speech free time was given to play basketball, to swim, play tennis and just goof around. Lights out at 12:30.

By Thursday morning, most of us half awake, dragged ourselves to the Phelps Hall for breakfast, but by 9:00 we were wide awake and ready to start another day. The morning started off with discussion groups. The topic was introduced by Tom Miersma as John Smith was absent. The topic discussed was "Confession of Sin." At 11:00 our second business meeting was underway:

I. Brian D. Dykstra opened the meeting with prayer.
II. Ballots were handed out for voting on new Federation Board members, the results as follows:
vice president — Dave Rau
vice treasurer — Mike Lotterman
vice secretary — Norma Westra
librarian — Mary Van Baren
III. Minutes of previous meeting were read and approved. Roll call was taken. 8 were not present.
IV. Doug Dykstra closed with prayer.

After lunch the annual east-west softball game was played by both girls and guys. Some caught a cat nap and others ran around buying last minute corsages for the Big Event—the Banquet.

The punch bowl began at 6:00 and everyone enjoyed a good hearty banquet meal. After supper Rev. Joostens delivered the last speech on "The Application." A special number was given by the Van Dyke and Engelsma Quartet. Following the speech, Bob Faber announced the new Federation

Board members and thanked the retiring members. The rest of the night was spent like all the others except that everyone who was ready and willing to make their own ice cream sundae was free to do so.

Lights out at 12:30.

Friday, our last day, everyone met at Phelps Hall for breakfast. Dorms were cleaned and checked and by 10:00 the campus so full of sound and excitement for a week was quiet and empty. Goodbyes were said, promises were made to write, smiles through tears with a promise in each ones heart

were made to write, smiles made through tears with a prayer in each ones heart that God would be with us till we meet again. Tired, weary bodies boarded the bus back to Hope Church. Each one had a prayer in his heart that he would remember his creator in everything that he does even as He remembers us.

POLITICS—80 AND CHRISTIAN INVOLVEMENT

by Jeanne Ryskamp

"Render therefore unto Caesar the things that are Caesar's; and unto God the things that are God's." matthew 22:21

Is it right for Christians to be politically active? Indeed, is it Christian for us not to be active?

We may believe that in answering the Pharisees as He did, Christ was instructing them and the church of all ages that the Christian should not be an enemy to government but a friend. Implicit in Christ's answer is the admonition not only to pay tribute money to Caesar, but to submit to the Caesars who have the rule over us, and the Caesars in our lives are the President, our Senators and our Representatives, the Governors and other state elected officials, plus all the local magistrates.

It, therefore, becomes incumbent upon us as Christians in this free land, where by God's grace, we can still choose our rulers, that we exercise our right to vote. The radicals of the near and far left will most assuredly cast *their* votes in an effort to install *their* puppets in office. We need to be just as enthusiastic in backing men and women who stand for the things we believe to be best for our beloved country.

At the outset of this article, let me make it abundantly clear to all who read this that I do not believe that we can determine our destinies nor that of our country. Only God, who controls all things is able to direct the affairs of us all.

Having said this, let me also say that God does not expect us to sit on our hands and do nothing because we believe that He controls the future anymore than He would expect us to refuse medical attention because we believe that

He determines the prognosis of our illnesses. We go to the doctor for advice and treatment when we are sick, and we trust God to use the doctor as His instrument to accomplish His purpose. As God uses the doctors in His plans, so He also uses the Caesars of this modern age to accomplish His purpose for the world.

It is not only a privilege but a duty we Christians have to register and vote for those men and women who we believe can best represent our own views. And you can know their stand on the different issues, if you but take the time to study the things they have said, and in the case of incumbents, study their voting records on the bills that have already been passed. It may be too late for those bills, but you will get an idea as to whether the candidate has a tendency to vote in a liberal or a conservative way. It will often tell you whether he or she votes his or her conscience or simply votes in a way that is politically expedient for him or her. You will also be able to form a judgment as to whether or not the candidate has been bought by a union or some other special interest group when you study his or her record.

For too long, many otherwise committed Christians have ignored their divine mandate to properly render unto Caesar in this matter of voting. We may not be apathetic for that is ascriptural. We have been the sleeping giant of American politics who should seek Christian men and women to represent us to effect a morally accountable Congress.

The New International Version of the Bible translates Colossians 2:8 as follows: "See to it that no one takes you captive through hollow and deceptive philosophy, which depends on human tradition and the basic principles of this world rather than on Christ."

Humanism, which denies the authority of Christ, is spreading across our land like an infectious disease, which is influencing every area of America, and many of our elected officials are either humanists themselves or they support and are supported by those whose thinking is permeated with humanistic doctrine. As Christians, we need to clean house on Capitol Hill and turn the humanists out.

Humanism contradicts and undermines our most sacred Christian beliefs. They believe that man is responsible for what we are and what we will become. No deity will save us. We must and can save ourselves. We humans can put all things right in society because we, not God, have all the answers.

The Humanist Manifesto II written in 1973 and signed by one hundred fourteen individuals, including Harvard and Yale professors, clergymen, the president of Planned Parenthood, the founder of the National Organization of Women (the ERA activists) and many others of their like, states: "We affirm that moral values derive their source from human experience. Ethics is autonomous and situational, needing no theological or ideological sanction. We strive for the good life here and now", and I quote further: "At the present juncture of history, commitment to all mankind is the highest commitment of which we are capable; humanism transcends the narrow allegiances of church,

state, party, class or race in moving toward a wider version of human potentiality".

Humanists believe that man is the savior of the world. We believe that Jesus Christ is our only salvation.

Because Humanism is finding strategic homes in the legislature, the courts and in the educational system, we must fight on all fronts. We do this by becoming informed, by knowing who our elected officials are—what they stand for and how they vote on the issues, and then we vote the humanists out and we vote in Christian men and women. The Christians we vote in may not be P.R., but at least they'll have Christian values.

Consider with me, for a moment, some of the concerns we should have about what is happening in this country and then reflect on your Christian duty.

The present administration has damaged a strong and proud country; in less than four years, it had managed to bring chaos to our economy and to our foreign policy; homosexuals are coming out of their closets finding some willing advocates for their "rights" amongst our elected officials; the IRS, under the Carter administration, is constantly harassing the private schools; the Congress passes or tries to pass legislative which would make a man's right to work dependent upon joining a union; the 1980 Democratic platform calls for federal funding of abortion on demand; this administration has given birth to two monstrosities in the form of the Departments of Energy and Education, each of which put thousands of additional workers on the federal payroll, and I believe that time will prove these departments to be threats to our free society.

In pushing for the Department of Education at cabinet level, the President was paying off the National Education Association for putting him in office. He had promised this second largest union in the country, (The Teamsters Union is the largest), that if they would support him and help elect him to the presidency, he would see to it that they got what they'd been aiming for the past many years. They delivered the votes and elected the President and he delivered the cabinet level department to them.

The NEA's stated goal is to collect enough votes in Congress to reorder the priorities of the United States by swelling the federal share of the nation's education spending to a third of the total budget. They want a central national vote for establishing educational policy. When they get that voice, the responsibility of the states and localities viz educational policy will be seriously eroded, eventually resulting in a nationalized education system much the same as that which now exists in Russia, East Germany and other totalitarian states.

You may be tempted to say: "How does that matter to me? My children go to the Christian school, and what's that got to do with voting anyway?" With declining public school enrollment and with three new Christian schools springing up each day in America, because parents are fed up with the humanism and values clarification being taught in the public schools, rest assured that public educators and the federal government will come up with policies that could badger the private and religious schools right out of

existence. Since bureaucrats always create domains to rule, you can expect to see new moves toward federal intrusion into and control over all levels of private education. The bureaucracy is the Department of Education and the bureaucrats are the department's secretary, assistant secretary of non-public education and all the employees under their supervision.

Let's look at Values Clarification and then ask yourself how you'd like your children to be subjected to it, remembering that though we are still free to have our own schools now, we do not know how long that freedom will remain a reality for us, and that we may someday have to send our children to public schools.

From a letter written to me by James Warner, President and National Director of the Christian Defense League, an organization which stands ready to help Christians who are having difficulties with bureaucrats, (IRS, state and local public agencies, etc.) and which has, for the past four years, been leading the battle across this nation to stop school systems from introducing pornography into their curriculum under the guise of sex education (which doesn't belong in the school in the first place), I learn that in certain areas of New York City and other regions of the country they are promoting Values Clarification. This means that they give children a series of tests to find out what they believe and what their parents believe. If they find the children were raised in good Christian homes and have Christian moral values then they begin to educate the children along the lines which will change their thinking. They attempt to brainwash the children and turn them against their parents and their values. This is a deliberate program of Communist International to demoralize and eventually destroy America by destroying America's youth.

Again, you may say, "Well, that doesn't affect my children. They go to a Christian school." Just remember that your children may go to a Christian school, but all children do not go to Christian schools and children have a way of growing up and becoming adults—adults who may some day become Caesars and rule over you and yours. We Protestant Reformed people are not living on an island. We must consider the fact that though we are not of the world, we are still in the world until Christ delivers us from it.

Let's consider some other reasons why we should vote in an effort to put legislators in office who will change some of the devastating policies the present administration has wrought.

We have become the victims of the irresponsible spending of our tax monies for ill advised programs which have precipitated a disastrous state of the U.S. Economy, double digit inflation, a $700 billion dollar national debt, a foreign policy that makes us the laughing stock of the world, because our President uses tough rhetoric in response to Soviet aggression, but which everyone knows our military forces are unable to enforce due to the fact that we are militarily weak, because we have a Congress beholden to the pacifists, who put them in office, and which consistently votes against the defense budget

necessary for making the U.S. formidable enough to deter a would-be aggressor. In short, they have abandoned a strong national defense—a necessary bulwark of freedom for America and the world.

We need to elect men and women who believe in this country and are willing to fight for what is inherently right regardless of the political consequences to themselves—people who are not afraid to take positions because they are controversial.

We must vote for legislators who oppose the passage of legislation which would allow avowed homosexuals to teach in public and eventually private schools. At present, one Congressman has more than fifty co-sponsors, including presidential candidate, John B. Anderson (remember that when you go to the polls in November), for a "gay rights amendment to the Civil Rights Act, which would give homosexuals a protected status and special consideration under law. We need to vote against such legislators and vote for congressmen like the one who has introduced a counter bill which would deny any special consideration for those who practice homosexuality, a sin for which God destroyed an entire city.

Christians should support candidates who oppose an amendment to the constitution (ERA) whose broad unspecific language could be interpreted in such a way as to actually limit our freedom. It is unnecessary, because serious sex discrimination in the area of unequal pay for equal work, discriminations in promotions, etc., are already illegal under existing federal and state laws and the Fourteenth Amendment to the Constitution.

Some of the deplorable goals of the Equal Rights Amendment are: to undermine the institution of marriage by legalizing homosexual marriage and allowing homosexual couples to adopt children; to draft women into the armed forces and require them to go into armed combat, and to live in mixed quarters; to compel the states to set up taxpayer financed childcare centers for all children, regardless of needs, and to prohibit privacy based on sex in public school restrooms, hospitals, public places, etc. These are just a few of the undesirable and often anti-family effects of the ERA, should it be ratified in three more states.

Let's put men and women in office who will vote against using our tax dollars to bail out New York City and Chrysler Corporation; men and women who condemn the Supreme Court's legislation of abortion on demand; legislators who will vote for sensible tax cuts for us middle and upper middle class taxpayers who are the ones that foot the bills; legislators who will vote against the billions of dollar's worth of foreign aid, such as the recent hand out to the Marxist Sandinistas in Nicaragua, and let's put a new man in the White House—one who has said he will abolish the massive new bureaucratic departments our present chief executive gave us after he had promised, as a candidate in 1976, that he would reduce government if only we'd elect him.

If this dissertation sounds like a political lecture, it is meant to, for it was

written with the hope that a little light might be shed on the issues which the electorate is confronted with, together with reasons why Christians should get involved in the political process which will deal with those issues in the coming months. When you know the issues and vote for those you feel are best able to represent your views, when the bills come to the floor of Congress for a vote, you are participating in the political process.

Since I agreed to write this paper, I have approached many of my Christian friends of all denominational stripe with questions and comments about some of the issues discussed above. I was appalled at how uninformed our people are and how complacent their attitudes seem to be. It was not unusual to find that wives very often leave the voting to their husbands, either because that was the way their parents handled the voting procedure for the family, or because they said they didn't know enough about it. Many were just plain apathetic and said their vote wouldn't make any difference. Do you realize that one or two votes in a precinct has nominated congressmen or governors in the past? The Department of Education passed the House of Representatives by a 210-106 vote last fall. So, please don't assume that your vote is worthless. To me, the most frustrating comment I heard was: "Well, I don't like any of the candidates, so I'm going to stay home and not vote for anyone in November." You may not be overjoyed with the choices you have this fall, but you do have a choice, so learn what you can about the candidates and vote for the ones who you believe will best represent your views. "The hand of the diligent shall bear rule; but the slothful shall be under tribute." Proverbs 12:24.

Christians are not second class citizens!

When we have Christ as our Lord and Master, we are not relieved of our duties or excluded from our rights as citizens of this nation. Paul wrote that we take on dual citizenship. We are citizens of a kingdom not of this world. Yet, God has ordained that we invoke authority to insure our physical liberty and to protect our public safety. Thus, while some may be only concerned with civil liberty, Christians are obliged to seek both spiritual and physical freedom, and it follows that Christians then have a responsibility to participate in the selection of those who will represent them in civil government.

When Christians neglect their governmental responsibilities, those who deny God will fill the public void and invade the private domain. Edmund Burke, the Christian statesman, said that the penalty the godly pay for doing nothing is to be ruled by the ungodly. "It is true that you cannot legislate evil out of the world, but by an impartial, rigorous justice you can make it too costly to practice...and by wise and Christian legislation you may limit its reach and remove its temptations...and for this, in its most perfect measure, and to our utmost ability, the God of righteousness holds every man responsible."*

Were we to look at the lot of those believers who live under governments where liberty is denied, I'm sure we'd agree that Christians do indeed have a concern and a responsibility in civil matters.

If you, dear reader, are one of those who believes your vote to be

unimportant or superfluous; if you have felt that you'd not vote because you're not happy with the options, or if you've just thought you didn't know enough about this political stuff, I hope I have contaminated your confused thinking with the virus of common sense, and that you'll make it a point to become informed and go to the polls and vote, each time there is an election from now on.

Become knowledgeable on the issues and the candidates, pray for guidance, cast your vote and trust God to direct the results to His glory.

---

*Excerpt from Letter from Plymouth Rock, April 1980

MRS O FABER
725 BALDWIN OOM 209
JENISON MI 49428