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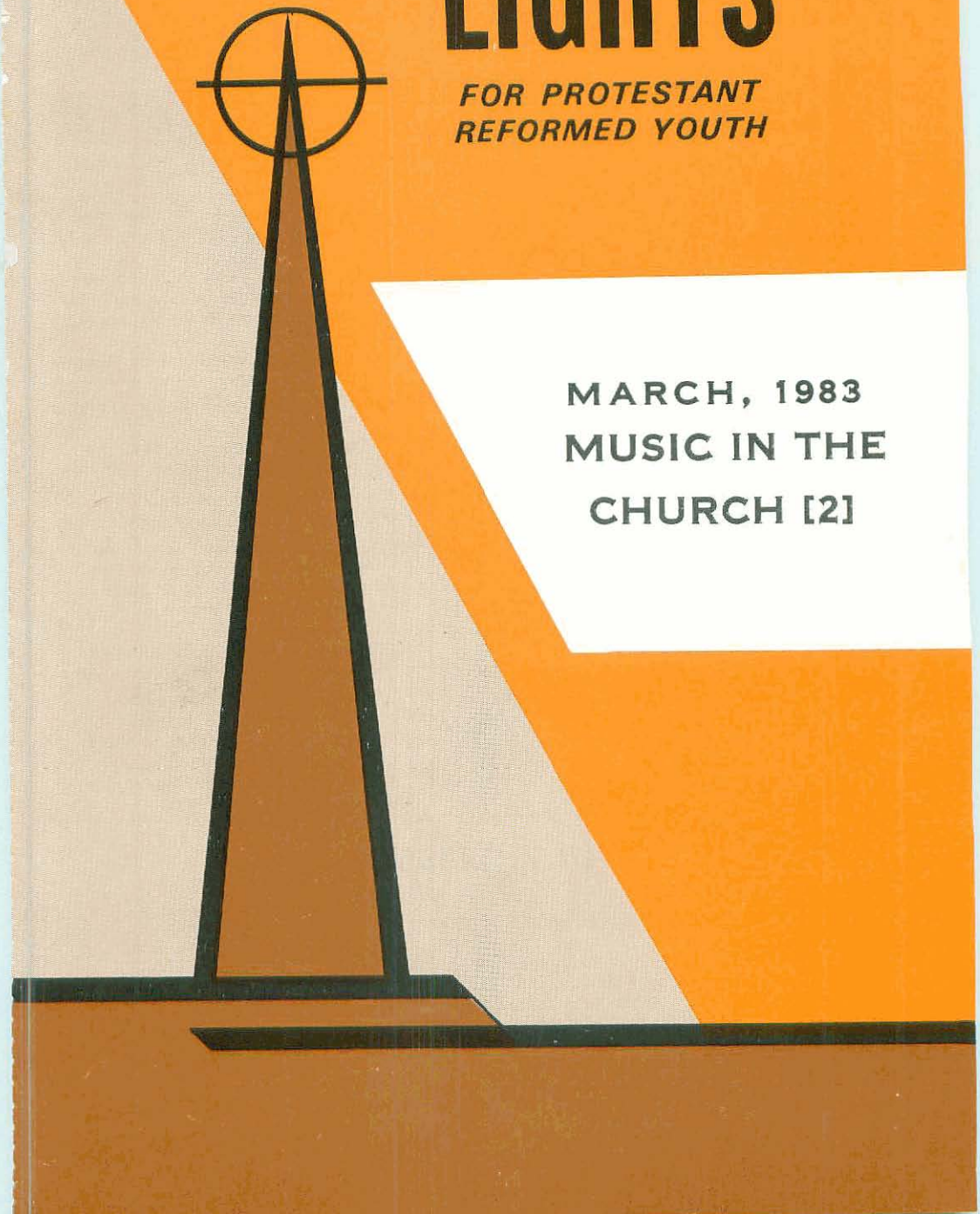
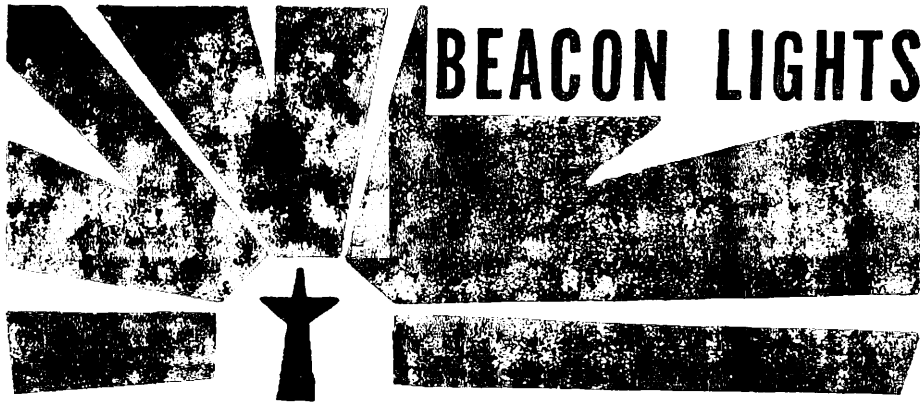
FOR PROTESTANT REFORMED YOUTH



MARCH, 1983

MUSIC IN THE CHURCH [2]



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Editor's Notes

In this issue of the *Beacon Lights* you will find the second in the series of Rev. David Engelsma's articles entitled "Music in the Church". This installment deals with "Our Singing" and "The Importance of Music in the Church" which will be continued, D.V., in the April issue. To quote from the article: "Singing is to be part of our personal life. 'Is any merry?' asks James, 'let him sing psalms.' (James 5:13) In your home, as you travel, on the job (if permitted), it should not be an unheard-of thing, that you break out in song—not turn the radio on, but yourself, sing".

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Especially for our Senior high school r(l)eaders, Rev. Robert C. Harbach in Truth v.s. Error begins a seven-part series under the general heading "Earnestly contend for the faith". This first installment is "Taking Captive Every Thought". When your attention is taken captive by this series, you will be seeing such sub-titles as "The Rock Foundation", "Defense of the Christian Hope", "Mystery", and others.

* * * * * * * * * * *

"Are we spiritually sensitive? More important, do we *WANT* to be spiritually sensitive?" These very important fundamental questions are dealt with in an article entitled "Spiritual Sensitivity" written by Harlow Kuiper, a member of the Southeast Protestant Reformed Church of Grand Rapids. In a day of increasing spiritual *in*sensitivity, he asks this question which we all would do well to consider. "Doesn't it seem strange, young people, that on the one hand Jesus teaches us that our life and walk on earth will be difficult and hard, and on the other hand, all the compromise and changes in the church world make it *easier* for the members to live in harmony *with* the world?

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With the article "Fight the Good Fight of Faith", Bernie Kamps of our Hudsonville Protestant Reformed Church joins our Critique department. Welcome to our pages!

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Have a cover design for *Beacon Lights* in mind? If you would like your idea considered, send it to the editorial office address on the inside front cover.

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Editorial

PROVERBS FOR YOUNG PILGRIMS
THE MAN OF UNDERSTANDING

by Ed Lotterman

"It is as sport to a fool to do mischief: but a man of understanding hath wisdom." Proverbs 10:23

Each of us is well acquainted with the mischievous type character. He is the one who does the naughty little things. He is always in minor trouble — nothing really serious. Wherever he is, crazy little events just seem to happen. Following in his wake, we find a certain incorrect conduct. Shall we say he is a misfit?

He is in constant need of scolding. Not requiring severe discipline, he is always amazed by the perpetual admonitions directed toward him. He always wonders and sometimes even expresses, "Why does this always happen to me?" Again, you will hear him ask one in authority, "Why do you always 'pick on me'?"

You know the type. He is the child whose mother has told him that he may play outside "but", she pleads, "try not to get too dirty" He promptly makes a mud puddle with the garden hose. "After all", he reasons, "the water coming from the hose is not dirty."

He is the youth who is continually teasing his siblings. Nothing serious, only mild mocking, perhaps. To "get under their skin" is his goal.

This mischievousness becomes as a sport to the youngster. He seems to

enjoy causing minor disruption. This mischief is fun and games! Many times there is laughter and glee attributed to him on account of his clever tricks or witty sayings. But because he is yet an amateur at this game, he will "carry it too far" and need a word of admonishment.

Although he is yet a novice, he is encouraged to expand his repertoire of comical tricks by the "positive" attention he receives from his peers. The development of his skills is hindered only slightly by the mild rebuke he receives from a person who may have authority over him. He soon achieves a sure method of development in his trade. As his mischief becomes more refined, he receives more attention of laughter and less of exhortation, he "doesn't get caught."

As he becomes more proficient in his mischief, his spiritual sensitivity declines and notice what happens. His mischief becomes more a matter of word than deed. Foolish jesting, crazy remarks, passing of rumors all become part of his repertoire.

Experience polishes the skill. The silly remarks which once reflected upon him, drawing laughter directed toward him, have now become witty commentaries of other people, reflecting upon them and sending peels of laughter toward them. Stupid little events which he was once involved in, which drew attention toward himself, are now become clever observations of another's circumstances in life. (Need we add that these observations are derogatory?) While he was once the recipient of scoldings and admonitions, he now coins sly comments which belittle others.

When yet a novice, most of his mischievousness hurt only himself! The laughter he drew was directed toward him. He received the scoldings and admonitions.

But his mischief has become more advanced. No longer does he injure himself, but his mischief is performed at another's expense. Several people have gathered to hear his witty commentaries, clever observations, and sly comments, all of which are directed toward other people. And these same several people help him hurt others when they join in the laughter and gaiety. Their light-heartedness makes them partakers in his mischief.

Fools!

Fools, for this is their sport. Fools, for this is the entertainment they seek. Fools, for they participate in this amusing performance.

We do not participate in this type of thing though, do we?

Consider the individual who receives this callous abuse. The ridicule has been merciless. He has been robbed of his integrity, his reputation has been slandered, and now totally embarrassed by all this unjust treatment he feels that he has suffered at the hand of fellow Christians.

"The man of understanding hath wisdom."

Yes, the man of understanding is filled with compassion for the individual who receives such callous abuse. He recognizes the ridicule and mockery for what it is . . . sin against the brother. For how ought we to behave ourselves one toward another? The Law of God requires Love!

The Apostle Paul wrote concerning Love: "Charity suffereth long, and is kind; . . . seeketh not her own . . . thinketh no evil; rejoiceth not in iniquity." I Cor. 13:4-7.

The entertainment of the above mentioned mischief is gone. No longer do we hear the mockery, the laughter, the ridicule, the gaiety, the slander, the light-heartedness.

Stopped!

All is quiet!

Silence!

"Why don't you grow up?" This is the quick, sharp rebuke from the man of understanding.

Yes, Young Pilgrim, the man of understanding. ". . . but when I became a man I put away childish things." (I Cor. 13:11)

Considerate, merciful, kind, compassionate man he is. Understanding the hurt of the brother and having wisdom to both know and apply the Law of God.

As we walk the path of life, Young Pilgrim, may we also "put away childish things," and grow up to be men of understanding, having wisdom.

TEST YOUR MEMORY

1. To what element did Jesus liken the Spirit? John 3:8
2. What punishment did the Jews decree for anyone who confessed Jesus as Christ? John 9:22
3. About what kind of tree did Jesus say, "Let no fruit grow on thee hence forward forever"? Matthew 21:19
4. What was the man carrying who led the disciples to the place where they would eat the Passover? Mark 14:13
5. In the parable of the talents, what did the man who was given five talents do? Matthew 25:16
6. In what city did Jesus raise a widow's son from the dead? Luke 7:11-15
7. What was Jesus' second miracle? John 4:46-54
8. Who asked, "What is truth?" John 18:38
9. Whom did Jesus describe as an Israelite in whom is no guile? John 1:47

MUSIC IN THE CHURCH [2]

by Rev. David Engelsma

"Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly in all wisdom; teaching and admonishing one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing with grace in your hearts to the Lord." (Colossians 3:16)

OUR SINGING

"Singing," the Holy Spirit says, with reference to our teaching and admonishing one another is psalms and hymns and spiritual songs. The Body of Christ is to be a singing Body in her assemblies for worship. The gift of song has unique power, not only to move the people of God, but also to serve as the vehicle to express most fervently our love, thanks, and praise to God our Savior. Accordingly, singing has a vital place in the worship of the congregation. God wills congregational singing.

Our exclusion of choirs and soloists ("special music") from the worship services is based on the revealed will of God that in His worship the congregation—all the members as one Body—is to sing His praise. It is not His will that most of the congregation be entertained, or even edified, by a few, but that the whole church praise Him in song. Inevitably, choirs and special numbers in the services not only infringe on the preaching, but also weaken congregational singing. The musical power and beauty of a church is not a large and excellent church-choir, but good congregational singing.

Like the exclusive singing of Psalms in the worship services, the excluding of choirs and special music from the service for Divine worship is the historic, traditional Reformed stand. John Calvin banned choirs from the Reformed, Biblically-based worship. He was disgusted with the entertainment that cluttered up the services of Roman Catholicism:

> Similarly in these days, in the popedom, the organs are piping on one side, and there is chanting in four parts on the other side, and there is such a lot of foolery, that the simple people are ravished by it, but never a whit edified. [*Sermons on Ephesians*)

We should not hang our heads in shame when visitors to our services exclaim in amazement, "You have no *choir*!"; but we have every right spiritedly to defend this exclusion of a choir and to point to our emphasis on congregational

singing as Reformed and Biblical.

A contemporary, Presbyterian student of liturgy (the form of worship) has noted that the introduction of choirs tends to "suppress congregational participation":

> Even in churches with no tendency to sacerdotalism, the use of robed choirs in chancels (the part of the church building containing seats for the clergy and the choir -D.E.) tends to approximate the worship service to a concert of sacred music, and works against congregational worship. Perhaps the most unfortunate legacy of the Anglo-Catholic movement to the Reformed churches generally has been this epidemic of chancels and theatrical choirs. (James Hastings Nichols, *Corporate Worship in the Reformed Tradition*)

The call to sing is not limited to the worship services, but extends to other areas of the life of the saints. We do well to sing at our society meetings for the study of Holy Scripture. We should sing more often than we do when we come together for Christian fellowship—our Sunday evening visits. We ought to sing in our homes, as part of our family-worship. Parents must teach their children the Psalms and the great, good hymns of the New Testament Church, in this way. Our Christian schools, likewise, must be full of music, especially the praise of God in song. We owe our schools a great debt, that they teach *The Psalter* to our children. They may also teach them good hymns, although even in the schools the Psalms should have pride of place. We certainly must not have bad hymns in the schools, i.e., hymns that are doctrinally erroneous and spiritually misleading, much less "gospel-rock" and the like corruption. Singing is to be part of our personal life. "Is any merry?," asks James; "let him sing psalms." (James 5:13) In your home, as you travel, on the job (if permitted), it should not be an unheard-of thing, that you break out in song—not turn the radio on, but yourself sing; not sing the latest "hit-song," but sing psalms. If now some young person sneers at this, or raises his eyes heavenward in exasperation at such piety, let him ask himself whether he has any of the merriment of eternal life, worked in his heart by the Holy Spirit of Jesus Christ the Lord, at all!

As part of the broader life of a congregation than its services for Divine worship, a choral society (or choir) has its rightful, valuable place. Those specially gifted musically can exercise their gift. The rest of the saints can be edified by the singing of the choral society. That God forbids this as part of the worship service does not imply that there is no place for this at all. We are not always singing ourselves; there are times when we take pleasure in listening to the singing of others.

What better way is there to spend an hour or so a week than singing, with a view to giving an edifying, pleasing program for others! What more worthwhile, enjoyable way to spend an evening once in awhile than hearing a good program of music! It is especially beneficial that the young people participate in the choral society. We warn them against bad music. Sharp and frequent as our warning is, it is not sharp and frequent enough. The temptation

is strong. The bad music is rotten. They are still listening to it. But with the warning, we should give them opportunity and encouragement to fill the strong need for music with good music. The choirs and bands at school and the choral society of the church do this.

Let there be music in the church!

THE IMPORTANCE OF MUSIC IN THE CHURCH

The importance of music in the church is indicated when the apostle of Christ writes, in Colossians 3:16, that by our singing we teach and admonish one another. Probably, this is not a familiar thought to us; perhaps, we are not conscious of this when we sing. We are well aware, of course, that we all should teach each other, and admonish each other, as the opportunity, or need, arises (although our practice leaves much to be desired). But we are doing this by our singing, in "psalms and hymns and spiritual songs."

Music has great power to teach—to drive what is sung deeply into the soul and to fasten the words that are sung in the memory. Secular education has recognized this and has always used music in teaching. The Devil also knows this power of music; and he has always used it, effectively, to teach the lie. I have found this to be true, to my sorrow. Some fifteen years ago, in order, I thought, to be able better to contend against it, I listened to the music of the Christ-denying rock opera, *Jesus Christ, Superstar.* To this day, I find myself humming, and sometimes singing, the haunting, but demonic, piece of Magdalene, "I don't know how to love Him." But Christ has redeemed God's creature, music; and God the Holy Spirit uses the singing of the congregation, or of a group of saints, to teach and admonish the people of God with the Word of Christ.

If we stop and think about this, we will find it so in our own experience. You come to church on a Sunday morning depressed, so "down" that you do not even sing yourself. Then, the congregation sings:

O my soul, why art thou grieving?
What disquiets and dismays?
Hope in God; His help receiving,
I shall yet my Savior praise. (Psalm 43)

As the church sings, you feel *your* own soul addressed; your lips begin to move; you are taught, effectively, to hope in God.

Or, I come to Men's Society bitter, really against God, for some disappointment. The group sings number 210 in *The Psalter,* from Psalm 77:

I asked in fear and bitterness,
Will God forsake me in distress?
Shall I His promise faithless find?
Has God forgotten to be kind?
Has He in anger hopelessly
Removed His love and grace from me?

To these fearful, bitter questions comes the calm answer:

These doubts and fears that troubled me

Were born of my infirmity;
Tho' I am weak, God is most high,
And on His goodness I rely;
Of all His wonders I will tell,
And on His deeds my tho'ts shall dwell.

I am admonished, mightily, so that then and there I am converted and renewed to live in trust in the goodness of God.

This happens through the singing of the people of God. It makes a difference that I do not merely read, or think about, these words, but that the Body of believers and their children sing them, with one heart and one voice.

(to be continued)

SPIRITUAL SENSITIVITY

by Harlow Kuiper

Are we spiritually sensitive? More important, do we *WANT* to be spiritually sensitive? Before we answer (although we already know our response should be "yes"), let's take a short, limited view into what this term really means, how it relates to us, and how we obtain and become proficient in this attribute. Then, after doing that and observing a few examples together, I think we'll be better prepared to answer our question.

When assigned this topic a few weeks ago, my first thoughts dealt with the term itself. What, in general at least, is spiritaul sensitivity? Obviously, it would mean being sensitive about spiritual things. Therefore, it naturally follows that it is a quality we should desire to possess. Let's look a little deeper and be a bit more descriptive.

Sensitivity, in general, as the world sees it, is a personal quality all men possess and exercise to one degree or another. Man's contact with others always gives evidence as to how sensitive a person he is. Someone who has a concern for other people's feelings or needs and exhibits thoughtfulness in his dealings with others is generally considered to be sensitive; he is probably sought out as one we would want as a friend. For example: Those that are quick to organize community drives which would benefit the poor or homeless in times of emergency, we would describe as sensitive. People who donate to charitable organizations, such as Cystic Fibrosis, Red Cross, Kidney

Foundation, Salvation Army, and countless other human need organizations, along with those who donate time and work in hospitals, rest homes, and children's homes are also perceived as being very sensitive to others. Young people across our country dedicate two or three years of their lives in the service of Peace Corps and Youth Corps organizations in order to advance mankind, as well as personal fulfillment. These young people, too, are sensitive and show affection for those less fortunate than themselves. In fact, everyone in this world has ample opportunity to display his level of concern toward his work, friends, family, supervisors, co-workers, recreation, dating, teachers, etc. Man's sensitivity, regardless of level, is a thread that runs through his entire life.

Now, how does *spiritual* sensitivity differ from what we just described? What must our feelings and attitudes be as Christians toward God, toward our fellow Christians, toward *all* those around us? As you realize, whenever we talk about spiritual issues, we must look to God's word and law for our instruction and guidance. Our attitudes must be founded on His word only. The Bible clearly teaches us that our spiritual sensitivity, or affection, is based on our love of God. Do we love God? If so, then we will also be sensitive in our personal calling and to the instruction concerning that calling, which God has so graciously given us through His word and the working of His spirit.

His word! The Bible. What a perfect place for God's elect to look for instruction concerning not only our topic, but also everything pertaining to our life. Do we love God's word? Of course we do! It follows then, through God's grace, that we *are* spiritually sensitive. Loving God and His word, we will have a genuine concern and affection for His being, His commandments, His people, and everything pertaining to His kingdom. That is spiritual sensitivity.

God's word that we have studied at home, at Sunday school, catechism, Christian schools, and heard in the weekly preaching in church has taught many truths about being sensitive. God's law itself demands our affection and loyalty toward Him. Remember? Have no other gods, make no graven images, reverence His name, keep His sabbath holy, and love Him with all our hearts. We must be sensitive to those commands and *desire* to obey them perfectly, even though, in this life and of ourselves, we cannot.

Not easy to desire that, is it!? We have so many things that compete for our affection and interest. Our popularity, personal goals, accumulation of earthly riches, pursuit of special interests, recreation, etc. - all tend toward *self-sensitivity*, rather than spiritual. This is not *just* a ''young people' '' struggle. The problem remains in all of us due to our nature and the relentless dedication of Satan to turn our hearts. But struggle and fight now in your youth, because it pleases your God.

God's law for us toward others? Honoring father and mother - no killing, stealing, false witnessing, coveting - loving our brother as ourselves all speak toward sensitivity. But our brother as ourselves? If you're at all as I am, you'll find it so much easier to be sensitive and caring toward those who treat *you* well and please *you*. But God doesn't call us to love our neighbor on a

conditional basis, rather that we be truly concerned for each other's spiritual welfare and that we instruct, correct, and encourage all our Christian friends along the way in love. (Give thanks to God also that His sensitivity and affection for us is not conditioned by our good works, but that Jesus seeks and saves us based on God's perfect love alone.)

In Romans 8, the apostle Paul talks much about being spiritual, or walking after the spirit of Christ. Read this chapter when time permits. Many verses are already familiar to you by now, because it is a very popular passage. But read it again anyway. Much instruction and comfort is there. Paul teaches us that to be spiritually minded is life and peace, but that those who are of the flesh and seek themselves *cannot* please God.

With a view to wht we have now discussed, how do we, as young Christians, handle the swiftly changing world we live in? We see almost all churches changing their position and attitudes toward a wide range of subjects. Hardly a year goes by without a major change in one denomination or another. Churches that used to be "close" to our doctrines now advocate or embrace much of what follows: additional views of creation, divorce and re-marriage for the innocent party, homosexuality as a disease that the church should be sympathetic and loving toward, allowance for women as office bearers, allowance, even encouragement, of members to attend movies, permission of dancing and theatrics (some of these are deemed appropriate enough to include in special services), all restrictions on Sunday behavior lifted completely, as long as you attend church in the morning . . . and you could add many more. But worst of all, many have allowed the preaching to become diluted beyond recognition, and permitted church discipline to become non-existent. What do they have left? What's become of their sensitivity?

When we see the above mentioned changes, do we become all the more sensitive to our faith? Do we cling to the faith of our fathers, to the wonderful inheritance we are given that leads to eternal life? We must resist the creeping compromise that is in the church world all about us. God and His word are perfect and absolutely unchangeable! Unchangeable - regardless of extreme world and social changes. Doesn't it seem strange, young people, that on one hand Jesus teaches us that our life and walk on earth will be difficult and hard, and on the other hand, all the compromise and changes in the church world make it *easier* for the members to live in harmony *with* the world? When we consider changes in our church and personal life, we must remember that. Be defensive! Be sensitive and on guard!

I Thess. 5:19 and Eph. 4:30 instruct us to neither quench nor grieve the Holy Spirit. Hear the spirit, be sensitive and do its bidding. Forget what others may think about your actions or decisions. Love the spirit and show affection for its calling. Don't be hard hearted or calloused toward God. Remember this: God absolutely *hates* indifference. Instead, we must pray. Pray for guidance and strength to do His will, to love His word, to be kindhearted, careful, forgiving, and eager to bear one another's burdens in Christ. May God supply us the grace to become and remain spiritually sensitive.

FROM THE PASTOR'S STUDY

BY REV. G. LUBBERS

Israel Remembered in Covenant Mercy

"He hath holpen his servant Israel in remembrance of his mercy, as he spake to our fathers, to his seed forever." Luke 1:54, 55

There are times in the history of God's people when the mighty deeds of God are exceedingly manifested in their faithfulness and love! Such were the days of the nativity of the Christ, the Son of God as expressed in the Song of the virgin Mary!

God had revealed Himself as Mary's Savior God. He had sent His angel Gabriel to announce the birth of a son to her. She, a virgin, would conceive in her womb, and she would bear a son, and she was to call His name Jesus! Yes, this Son would be great, He would be exalted and perfected at God's right hand. Would He not be given to sit upon the throne of His father David? And would He not reign over the house of Jacob? Yes, He will be a king, and of His kingdom there shall be no end!

Hail, thou that art highly favored, the Lord is with thee: blessed art thou among women!

Thou hast found favor with God!

God in sovereign mercy and love chose Mary to be the virgin, long predicted by the Lord to Israel in the days of Isaiah. You are the woman of

God's choice to bear the eternal Son of God under thy heart, to be born as a child to Israel. In thee is fulfilled what the Holy Spirit spoke through Isaiah, "Behold, a virgin shall conceive, and bear a son, and (the LORD) shall call his name Immanuel." And in glad prophetic anticipation the prophet cries out, "For unto us a child is born, unto us a son is given, and the government shall be upon his shoulders; and his name shall be called Wonderful, Counselor, The Mighty God, The everlasting Father, The Prince of Peace." (Is. 7:14; 9:6)

It was Gabriel who was sent from heaven to tell this news to Mary in Nazareth. He too had suggested that she go to see her cousin Elizabeth in the hill country of Judea. And when she arrives she is greeted by Elizabeth as the "mother of my Lord". The word of God spoken by the angel had already been performed upon Mary. And Mary hears fulfilled in her ears what the angel had announced to her in Nazareth. And it is intuned into Mary's ears, and it was received by faith in her heart, "And blessed is she that believed: for there shall be a performance of those things which were told her of the Lord".

This message from Elizabeth's lips was from the Holy Ghost which filled her heart and her mouth.

It was an infallible message, the very oracles of God!

And the same Spirit led Mary into all the truth of the Promise of the Gospel in the entire Old Testament Scriptures. The Spirit traces the wonderful help which God always gave to his servant Israel in His sovereign mercy!

It was the mercy which God gives to whom He will. It was the mercy of the sovereign good-pleasure of God in His Son. God had promised Abraham, the father of all believers, Jew and Greek, a Seed. Said He to Abraham "In Isaac shall thy seed be called". (Gen. 21:12; Rom. 9:7) That Promise cannot fail; it was confirmed by God's oath to Abraham, by a God who cannot lie! For this was a promise to Abraham and to Isaac and Jacob unto eternity!

O, it often looked as if God's promise would fail. In the days of Mary and Joseph, Israel is in a very low estate. There had been no king on David's throne for five hundred years, that is, since the time of the Babylonian captivity. Jerusalem had been laid in ruins, her walls were broken down, the temple and palace were destroyed, and the vessels in the temple were carried away to the temples of idols in Babylon. And the house of David seemed well-nigh to have ended. The tree was nothing but a root in the ground; no great tree was left with great branches whither the birds of the air came to nestle. But God always lifts up the lowly, who cried because of their sin, and who mourned in Israel. These proved themselves to be servants, they were children-servants, willing servants of the living God. They were the true Israel in the midst of the Israelitish Theocracy of the Old Testament dispensation.

How long, Lord, they cried and let it repent thee of thy servants.

They were the true Israel according to the election of grace. Yea, they were the people, who God will never forsake!! He will fulfill His promised mercies. While the rich and powerful of men were sent empty away, God filled these hungry ones with good things. These received the forgiveness of sins, life everlasting, looking for the fulfilment of the promise in the Messiah to come.

And now, God has looked upon the lowliness of Mary, as a damsel, a virgin in Israel. The Messiah is to be born, who will be given to sit upon David's throne forever. Of his kingdom there shall be no end. When all the thrones of men and of the nations of this world have toppled to the ground by the hand of God, then this Son will have his universal kingdom of glory in the kingdom of God in the heavens and upon the earth.

Yes, God is the LORD!

He is God, the Savior God. Him Mary's soul magnifies. Her spirit rejoices upon God her Savior. Yes, she will be blessed in her Son.

All nations call Mary blessed. All the generations in God's covenant, both in the Old and in the New Testaments, in thousands of generations shall call Mary blessed. This will not be because Mary is not a sinner, but rather that she had brought forth the sinless Lamb, the Holy Child Jesus, the High Priest which became us: holy, harmless, undefiled and separated from sinners, and made higher than the heavens.

Now shall the proud be scattered in the imagination of their hearts. Christ will triumph gloriously in His Cross, death and resurrection and in His triumphal entry into the very heavenly throne of God. And the proud shall be scattered in fear and dread, while those that fear Him will receive mercy according to the sure promise to Abraham.

Yes, Israel is remembered in mercy.

And Mary has a very choice place in this salvation. She is the blessed mother of the Christ-child. Hear her sing in the Holy Spirit. Her song rises higher than does that of Hannah, the mother of Samuel. Hannah sang most prophetically of good things to come. Yes, she too rejoiced in God's salvation. Her son will be great in Israel as the Judge-Prophet in Israel, who will anoint David to sit on his earthly throne in Jerusalem, but Mary's Son will be the Greater David, who will sit on the heavenly throne at the right hand of God. Hannah sang from afar looking for the day of Christ, but in Mary we see the breaking of the day itself.

Mary sings in the dawn of the eternal day.

She will have much to ponder in her heart. But now she sings not as the mother through whose soul a sword shall pass, but she sings as the expectant mother in the expectancy of a lively and eternal hope.

And we sing with her. We sing centuries later. We sing of Him who is blessed and who will come in the name of the Lord. And we too chime in with Mary and with Hannah and with all the godly Sarahs who laughed in hope of the Child to be born. And we hear the redeemed of all ages singing: Our soul doth magnify the Lord, and our spirit rejoices upon God our Savior!

We too sing in hope under the Chief Singer in Israel, Christ, who by His Spirit causes us to sing and to exhort each other with spiritual songs, making melody in our hearts.

Lift up your voices, young and old.

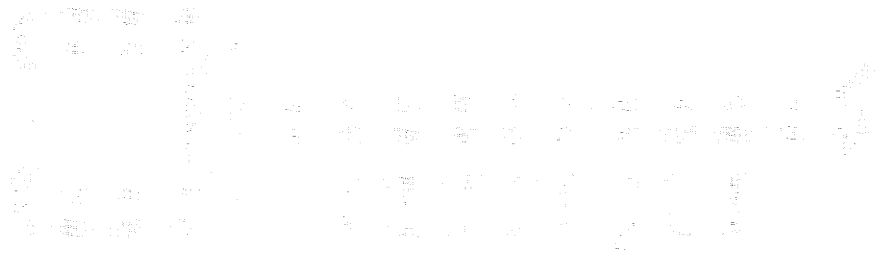
Sing of the Lamb who standeth between the Throne and the four beasts.

Sing and shout, "Salvation to our God which sitteth upon the throne, and

unto the Lamb." And may all the angels reply in their festal array "Amen: Blessing and glory, and wisdom, and thanksgiving, and honor, and power and might, be unto our God forever and ever. Amen!

Yes, Israel remembered in Covenant mercy.

The Israel of God!



FIGHT THE GOOD FIGHT OF FAITH

by Bernie Kamps

Oh, young people, you are assured of your faith, aren't you? You know in your hearts and minds that you are a child of God. No one could persuade you otherwise. When you pray to God and repent for sins committed, your heart grieves, doesn't it? And you pray that the Lord will forgive such an unworthy sinner. You ache and sometimes weep. You do this because of faith. That precious knowledge of God and confidence that you are a saved sinner. Find comfort in your sorrow of sin, find strength in God's grace which He gives so you can walk a life of sanctification.

In times of doubt and temptation when other young people have suggested an evening full of sin, listen to your conscience. What is it telling you? Honor God in all. Hebrews 10:38 and 39 must be our life long confession, "Now the just shall live by faith: but if any man draw back, my soul shall have no pleasure in him. But we are not of them who draw back unto perdition; but of them that believe to the saving of the soul".

You live by that faith which Christ has given, don't you? You want to obey your parents because you know they have instructed you in the way of the Lord. You seek God-fearing friends. You fight a spiritual war against your own desires and lusts for God's sake. You *are* fighting the good fight of faith!

But our nature fights against us, doesn't it? The devil is always there, as darkness befriends the night, so sin and temptation befriend our human nature. Sin assails us just as the ocean waves pound the sandy shore, constantly trying to draw them into their clutches, to devour them. Beware!

To war against sin is such a battle. We get weary at times, it's far easier to cave in, collapse and for a moment embrace sin and enjoy deceptive pleasure. To walk hand in hand with Satan, taking the easy road, laughing with him, talking his language, singing his music, what enjoyment for the moment. THROW OFF the DEVIL! Seek Christ, pray earnestly, cry out for His mercy and grace. Be firmly planted in the word of God.

The trials and temptations for you young people are awesome. Be on your guard. Look at everything you do with spiritual eyes and use Scripture to determine right from wrong. Do not live a loose life imitating the world and enjoying its pleasure for a season. Be chaste and believe to the saving of your soul.

Eph. 2:8 - "For by grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God.

Truth vs. Error

REV. ROBERT C. HARBACH

Earnestly Contend For the Faith

(Intended for the high school level)

INTRODUCTION — TAKING CAPTIVE EVERY THOUGHT

For though we walk in the flesh, we do not war after the flesh: (for the weapons of our warfare are not carnal, but mighty through God to the pulling down of strongholds; casting down imaginations, and every high thing that

exalteth itself against the knowledge of God, and bringing into captivity every thought to the obedience of Christ. —II Cor. 10:3-5.

(Translation, RCH) . . .we . . . serve and fight as a soldier . . , For the weapons of our military service are not fleshly, but powerful for God, fit for the demolishing of (enemy) fortifications. We are continuing to demolish (deceptive) reasonings and every exalted thing (men have) raised up against the knowledge of God, and we are taking every thought captive to the obedience of Christ.

I. *The Course* Invincible to Victory

II. *The Conquest* Securing Subjection

Paul refers to the battle between truth and error, between the wisdom of God and the wisdom of the world, between the Christian religion and the world's philosophers and men of science. It is the age-old battle where the one side has its every thought taken captive to the obedience of Christ and the opposing side consists of "free thinkers." It is the Word of God opposed to the word of man; divine revelation against humanism.

The Christian is not to try to fight the battle for the Bible, or the good fight of faith the way men of the world fight to maintain their non-Christian (anti-Christian) position. Some men of the world think that the only weapon they need is an intellectual needle to pop the balloon of superstition they deem Christianity to be. Yet they, and especially the liberal theologians in the church, have heavy artillery levelled against the gospel, in the face of which the battle becomes more serious and dangerous. We do not use weapons like those levelled against us. We must resort to the Sword of the Spirit, the Word of God. Think of the satanic arguments of the devil against Jesus and the defensive and offensive implement He successfully employed against him. Jesus fought with the invincible Word of God. He did not first resort to clever human reasonings to prove that there is a Word of God. For the weapons used in this warfare are the scriptures of truth, the whole armor of God, the weapons used to secure the bastion of the faith and to attack and destroy the errors of the lie.

Our enemies have very sophisticated equipment to use in attack against us and our gospel. They as veterans of war come against us with their powers of logic, their philosophies, their imposing array of science. How small and weak we are against all this show of strength! We need, and have, mightier weapons than those mentioned in Eph. 6:11ff. To destroy enemy fortifications, the heavy weaponry of the ballista, the catalput and the battering ram are needed. This is the divine artillery Paul is talking about. It is not of man's ingenuity, but of God, furnished by God and "for God." It is folly to think that human devices can stand. "Why do the heathen rage, and the peoples imagine a vain thing? The kings of the earth set themselves, and the rulers take counsel together against the Lord and against His Messiah. . . He who sitteth in the heavens shall laugh. The Lord shall have them in derision" (Ps. 2:1-4). Trusting in the divine weaponry wielded in the power of God's Spirit, the battle cannot go any other way than to victory. Even if Jerusalem is lost, as it was, Jerusalem's

children have the victory. The gospel never went down to defeat and never will.

"We are taking every thought captive. . . "—expressive of the true conversion of man in which he throws down the weapons of his warfare against God to become obedient to Him as King and Savior. So, in surrender and submission to all Christ's commandments and ordinances, the converted man receives and embraces by faith all of Christ's truth and doctrine. The grace of God has captivated him, the power of God having demolished all his refuges, not against, but with his will, to willingly and cheerfully bow to the sovereign sceptre of Christ's kingdom. His formerly held philosophy, his way of conforming the Bible to science and his reasonings and arguments to satisfy his own unbiblical thinking are all demolished in favor of the Cross "tow'ring o'er the wrecks of time." The truth (the knowledge of God) demolishes the lie. Actually, what refuge have they who stand not on the Christian position? The castles or forts they take refuge in, such as, evolutionism, modernism, Pelagianism, Arminianism and antinomianism are all wrecked fortifications. It is foolish to hide in the rubble of these wrecks. What safety can possibly be found in them? Christ and His truth provide the only safe refuge.

By the preaching of the Word, the thinking, reasonings and arguments of men against the knowledge of God (the gospel) are wrecked, overcome, taken captive to the obedience of Christ. Then we do not any more devise our own thinking, but strive to think God's thoughts after Him. Our minds and hearts now listen only to Christ. Our thinking operates in total submission to Him. The evidence that we have the knowledge of God is our obedience to Christ. For they have no knowledge of God who do not obey Christ. So now we have done with our clever thought—contrivances and our ivory tower of intellectual pride. Now our delight is in willing and happy obedience to Christ.

It is by the work of the ministry of the Word and the preaching of the gospel that we wage a spiritual warfare against spiritual enemies. This ministry and warfare is not carried on according to human maxims and theorems. For the weapons of our warfare are the gospel and the keys of the kingdom. So then, our weapons are not carnal. Physical force (cp. The Inquisition) is not the method of the gospel. Not by (human) might, nor by (man's) power, but by My Spirit, saith the Lord. Our weapons are mighty for God, very powerful in God's hands, because they are His and become effectual with His blessing on them. By His own weapons the Lord takes the field and all opposition falls conquered before His victorious gospel. He does not need human nor divine-human weapons.

Satan has many strongholds exalted against the knowledge of God. Not the universities as such, but the proud philosophies which come out of these institutions are some of these strongholds. The devil gathers men into these to keep them from the faith and from obedience to Christ, so to keep them slaves to his own power. But there is a conquest which the preached Word gains in which these strongholds against the knowledge of God are hurled down and obliterated. What remains is a new creature in Christ, with heart, mind and thought captive no longer to the devil, but to Christ and to His sole authority.

"Weakest means fulfil His will, mighty enemies to still." (Cp. Jehovah's use of Israel's ram's horn trumpets in the overthrow of Jericho under Joshua.)

So Paul was set for the defense of the gospel; and every Christian should believe that he is, too. How do we strive for the gospel? Two ways, according to the scripture text now dominating our thoughts: (1) we are casting down imaginations and every high thing exalted against the knowledge of God, and (2) we are bringing into captivity every thought to the obedience of Christ. Being re-oriented to the knowledge of God (the gospel) we desist from seeking our own pleasure and speaking our own word to take sole delight in the Lord and His thoughts (Isa. 58:13, 14). The thoughts of the unregenerate are void of God (Ps. 10:4), are an abomination to the Lord (Prov. 15:26), and are evil (Mt. 15:19). The thoughts of the regenerate are just (Prov. 12:5). This biblical antithesis in thought must be understood; we must aim to be always conscious of it, let it permeate our own thinking, and use it to structure our witness. By grace we have been conquered through the preaching of the Cross and held captive to Christ's love; the Lord thus making His once enemies His friends forever. So the gospel is the mighty power of God for salvation to deliver captives (everyone who believes) from the bastions of heathendom, the strongholds of idolatry, the fortifications of unbelief and the dungeons of the powers of darkness. Praise ye Jah!

(To be continued, D.V.)

Suggestions for Further Study

1. Read *The Reformed Confession Explained*, H. Beets, pp. 34-71 on the Doctrine of Scripture.
2. Read the *Beacon Lights* articles: "The Christian and This Age of Error," "The Christian and the Truth," "The Christian Buying the Truth," "The Christian and Where He Begins" (Sept. 1981 issue), "The Christian With Eyes Opened" (Feb. 1982 issue), and the two articles on Reformed Apologetics in *The Standard Bearer*, Vol. 57, No. 4, Nov. 15, 1980 and No. 7, Jan. 1, 1981.

GOD THE ONLY DELIVERER

Psalm 33 — Westminster College — German Melody

Jehovah from His throne on high
Looks down with clear and searching eye
On all that dwell below; . . .
And He that fashioned heart and mind
Looks ever down on all mankind,
The works of men to know.

Not human strength or mighty hosts,
Not charging steeds or warlike boasts
Can save from overthrow; . . .
But God will save from death and shame
All those who fear and trust His Name,
And they no want shall know.

Our hope is on Jehovah stayed,
In Him our hearts are joyful made,
Our help and shield is He; . . .
Our trust is in His holy Name,
Thy mercy, Lord, in faith we claim,
As we have hoped in Thee.

ETERNAL TRUTH

Rationalist logician avers argument powerful
That Christ's death no substitution signifies.
Futile, worthless logic falls before the Cross:
"We have received the atonement —
The Good Shepherd giveth His life for the sheep" —
Doctrines of Grace He proclaims, holding heart and mind
Deep-dyed with crimson stain
To ingrain the wool of the soul.
Where His word is not heard, easily men are swept
Away with every sophic miasma.
Uttered He His truth in voice of Luther and Calvin;
Men thronged them to hear at death's expense.
Huguenots under mortal ban yet mustered
To sermons of interdicted preachers Reformed.
Geneva sent forth prophets to gather auditors
In fields tinged with martyr's blood.
Why congregated they so on death's dark brink?
Never jeopardize men life to meditate mere modern thought!
'Tis the good way, in the old paths, alight with holy allure
Of election, sovereign, precious, pure —
Redemption which actually redeemed —
Preservation ensuring perseverance to glory eternal —
Truth, which is matter of life and death,
Divine magnet in life; deep comfort in death;
Forms a race of real men receiving a Kingdom
Immovable, in palaces divine
Founded on the Rock.

—Rev. Robert C. Harbach

News From, For and About Our Churches

by Karen Vink

BIRTHS

Mr. & Mrs. Koning of Faith were blessed with the birth of a daughter, Stephanie Ann.

Mr. & Mrs. Neal Hanko were blessed with the birth of a daughter, Sharon Ruth.

Mr. & Mrs. T. Bodbyl were blessed with the birth of a daughter, Larissa Mae, on December 29.

Mr. & Mrs. Glen Griess of Loveland rejoice in the birth of a daughter, Elizabeth Joy, on January 6.

CONFESSION OF FAITH

Gary Gaastra, Al Van Dyke, and Mary Van Meeteren of Redlands made public confession of their faith on December 26.

Jill Dykstra and Ruth Zandstra of Hope made public confession of their faith on January 23.

CHURCH MEMBERSHIP

The membership papers of the Charles Bult family were transferred from Hope to Southwest.

The membership papers of Mrs. Dan Key were transferred from Hope to First.

ACTIVITIES

The Young People of Redlands gave a Christmas Program on December 19.

The Young People of Hull held a Bake Sale on December 18.

The Choral Society of Loveland gave a program on December 19.

The Choral Society of Redlands gave a Christmas Program on December 19.

Covenant Chr. High Choir gave a program at Hudsonville Church on January 16.

MARRIAGES

Nelson Oostra and Wanda Bleyenberg of Hull were married on December 10.

Daniel Key of First and Judith Voss of Hope were married on January 21.

A TRIBUTE TO SOMEONE ELSE!

We were saddened to learn this week of the death of one of our most valued acquaintances, Someone Else. Someone's passing created a vacancy which will be difficult to fill.

Else was with us for many years and for every one of those years, Someone did far more than a normal person's share of work. Whenever leadership was needed, this wonderful person was looked to to bring results. "Someone Else can work with that group," we said.

Whenever there was a job to do, one name was on every list—Someone Else.

And it was common knowledge that Someone Else was generous toward charitable organizations. If there was a financial need, everyone just assumed Someone Else would make up the difference.

Were the truth known, everybody expected too much of Someone Else. Now, Someone Else is gone! We wonder what we are going to do.

Someone Else left a model example to follow, but who is going to do the things Someone Else did?

Author unknown

The Lynden Prot. Ref. Young People's Society
invites you to the Northwest,
to attend the
1983 PRYP Convention

The Youthful Sojourner Saved

(I Peter 3:14-17)

I. Saved to Speak
II. Saved in the Way of Suffering
III. Saved to Serve

held at **Trinity Western College**, Langley, B.C.
August 15-19