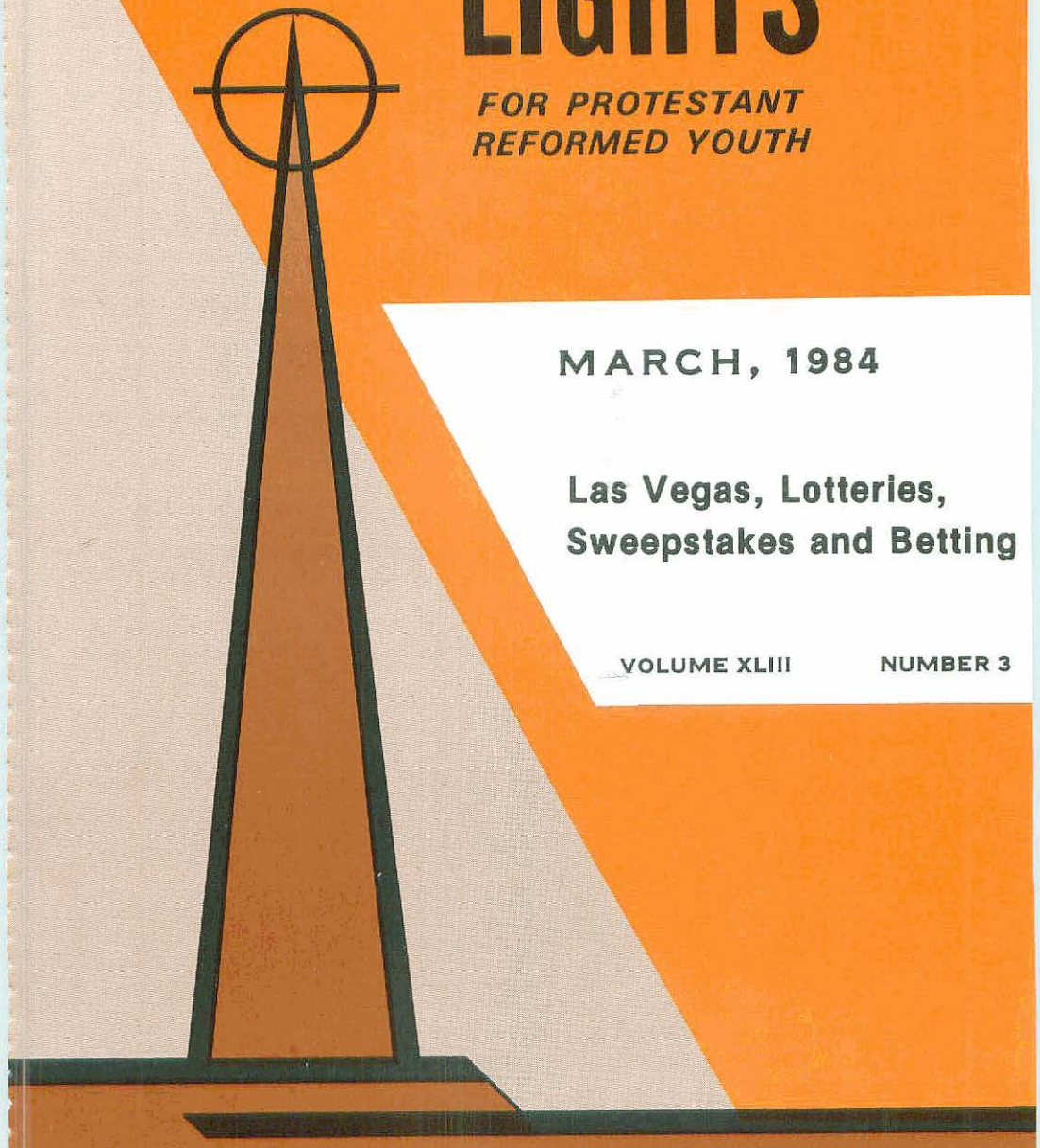
BEACON LIGHTS

FOR PROTESTANT REFORMED YOUTH



MARCH, 1984

Las Vegas, Lotteries, Sweepstakes and Betting

VOLUME XLIII NUMBER 3

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

EXECUTIVE BOARD
Dan Schipper - President; Bruce Klamer - Vice-President; Denise Van Baren - Secretary; Jane Pastoor - Vice-Secretary; Todd Terpstra - Treasurer; Jerry Kuiper - Vice Treasurer; Pam Kuiper - Librarian; Jon Bol - Youth Coordinator; Rev. Kortering, Rev. Van Baren - Spiritual Advisors

BEACON LIGHTS STAFF
David Harbach - Editor-in-Chief; John M. Faber, Ed Lotterman - Associate Editors; Mike Lotterman - Finance Manager; Marcia Lotterman - Secretary; Grace Faber, Vonda Klamer, Mike Rau, Thelma Westra

CONTRIBUTING EDITORS
Mrs. H. Brands, Paula Faber, Rev. C. Hanko, Rev. R. Harbach, John Kalsbeek Jr., Bernie Kamps, John Ten Haaf, Dean Wassink, Ben Wigger

Forms 3579 should be returned to:
BEACON LIGHTS
1382 Su-Lew Dr. S.W., Grand Rapids, MI 49504
Second Class Postage paid at Jenison, MI
(USPS 046-840)

EDITORIAL OFFICE: David Harbach
4930 Ivanrest Ave. S.W., Apt. B,
Grandville, MI 49418

NEWS EDITOR: Paula Faber
4190 Burton S.E., Grand Rapids, MI 49506

EDITORIAL POLICY
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.
If any material of **Beacon Lights** is reprinted by another periodical, we will appreciate your giving the source.
Contributions of general interest are very welcome.

SUBSCRIPTION DUES:
MICHIGAN: Grace Faber
4190 Burton S.E., Grand Rapids, MI 49506

OUTSIDE MICHIGAN: Vonda Klamer
10143 Wilson Ave. S.W., Byron Center, MI 49315

COLLECTIONS SEND TO: Mike Lotterman
1382 Su-Lew Dr. S.W., Grand Rapids, MI 49504

Subscription Price $5.00

CONTENTS

EDITORIAL
Proverbs For Young Pilgrims - Thinking Christians - Ed. Lotterman 1
CURRENT EVENTS AND COMMENTS
Las Vegas, Lotteries, Sweepstakes and Betting - John Kalsbeek Jr. 2
A Word of Introduction - Rev. C. Hanko 5
TRUTH VS. ERROR
God's Being - Rev. R. C. Harbach 7
The Blessed Peacemakers - Rev. J. A. Heys 10
As A Father Pitieth - Friendship - Rev. D. Engelsma 13
The Christian in the Nuclear Age - Ken Feenstra 15
Time (Continued) - Rev. R. Hanko 16
CRITIQUE
Resisting Temptation - Bernie Kamps 18
DISCUSSION OUTLINES OF I SAMUEL
Chapters 13 & 14 - Rev. R. Hanko 20
What's Happening - Paula Faber 22

Editorial

Proverbs For Young Pilgrims
THINKING CHRISTIANS

by Ed Lotterman

Proverbs 4:26 "Ponder the path of thy feet, and let all thy ways be established."

In this section of Proverbs 4, Young Pilgrim, spiritual matters are dealt with from the viewpoint of the physical parts of the body. Vs. 23 makes mention of the heart. From a physical viewpoint, the heart is the center of the body. No less is it the spiritual center "for out of it are the issues of life." We are exhorted to keep diligently our hearts. For, with our hearts we believe and with our mouths we make confession. Cf. Romans 10:8-11. So our mouths and lips must also be guarded according to vs. 24. And vs. 25 exhorts the pilgrim to watch where he is going. With an eye of faith, and looking straight ahead the pilgrim carefully treads the path of life. In order to travel along a path one must use his feet. And this is what our Proverb suggests.

Feet do crazy things. They can lead us into more trouble! With our foot we push down the accelerator pedal - oops too far - got caught! With our foot we kick a textbook down the school corridor. Our feet carry us to forbidden places, like movie houses. No, we are not that bad, are we? Let us just say our feet carry us to "unforbidden places" such as the television viewing area of our homes. There, now, that sounds so much better than "movie houses". After all, our homes are not "movie houses" are they? These are some of the crazy things our feet do. They run from that which is right.

Spiritually our feet are no better, are they? As our feet transport us along the way of life, they carry us away from the established path and we enter the brambles of evil. Our actions, words, and thoughts are corrupt by nature. An honest appraisal of ourselves reflects that we are spiritual bullies. With our spiritual foot we kick a fellow pilgrim when he is down, so to speak.

But our feet are guided. "Established" is the term our Proverb uses. Indeed the old path is hardened by the many previous pilgrims who have followed the way. The way of truth it is, free from the brambles of the lie. Sometimes, the path of truth is difficult, we would rather avoid it then, would we not? Yet the way is established.

This entails the serious calling of becoming knowledgeable concerning the well worn ways. We are talking history, Young Pilgrim! Do you know it?

The Old Testament history of types and shadows is a contributing factor in the hard established path upon which we travel. Old Testament history is for us an example. Cf. I Cor. 10:11. Do we dare not to know this history?

Likewise New Testament history must be known by us; for, here is the fulfillment of God's promise revealed in Christ. The feet of our Lord brought Him to Calvary! The way is established! He is "the way, the truth, and the life." John 14:6

Furthermore, we must have a knowledge of Church History, It is the history of the Church to which we belong. The Spirit of Christ leads the Church into the Truth. The doctrines of the Church have been developed through time until the

present. But development may not stop here. Further development must be pursued.

"Ponder the path of thy feet."

The continued pursuance of the development of the truth of the Scriptures is a process of careful consideration. We must be thinking Christians! When we ponder the paths of our feet then we recognize our miserable condition. How often we attempt to find new ways. We try untested and unproven ways. We become flighty, impulsive, shallow thinking Christians. Our feet run loose all over the place, leading us into all sorts of trouble and problems, and we might add, inconsistencies. We go astray from the established way and the brambles of the lie prick us. The reason we can recognize this is because Christ has established the way which we are to follow. Being acquainted with that way we also know when we are not in it.

But the way which Christ established is the way which we must follow. When we do follow the established path then Christian conduct is illustrated in our lives. It is in this way that previous pilgrims have followed the path. Through the ages of history the path has become increasingly hard and firm.

And do we properly appreciate the feet of previous pilgrims who have maintained and developed the way of truth? In order to appreciate previous pilgrims we must know the history that surrounded them. Many even died on account of the established way! We show our gratitude for these pilgrims by following the path which has been firmly packed by their footsteps. Even as they pondered the paths of their feet, so ought we to ponder our path.

Let us then be thinking Christians.

Current Events and Comments

Las Vegas, Lotteries, Sweepstakes and Betting

by John Kalsbeek Jr.

As the day of the Lord draws nearer there appears to be an obvious increase in wickedness and sin in the world. Sins once committed in secret are now blatantly committed in the open. Sins which once were openly and forcefully disapproved of and condemned by governments and churches are now legalized and promoted by them. Sin today is no longer categorized as sin—that has an odious ring to it—but rather the world uses all of its resources to convince themselves that these sins are sicknesses.

Young people, you live in a topsy-turvy world. The distinctions between right and wrong are being obliterated. Old values are disappearing as a new morality is being forced upon you in many insidious ways—ways designed to lull your senses and catch you unawares. Newspapers, magazines, radio, television, billboards, books, music, art are all being used today

by the prince of the devils, old Lucifer himself, to deceive you as he did our first parents some six millenia ago.

Satan and his ally, the world, tell you and me that what God says to us in His Word is not good but rather the things of this world are desireable and good for you. It's the same old lie that deceived our first parents. Be on your guard! They fell for it when they were yet perfect. You and I are corrupt sinners, prone to sin, and every evil way, how much easier it is for him to deceive us.

The particular sin that disturbs me today is that of gambling. One who gambles plays games of chance for money or other valuable possessions. He willingly risks losing those possessions that God has graciously given him to be used to His glory. He squanders recklessly possessions which really do not belong to him at all but to God.

Gambling takes on many different forms. Betting on dog and horse races, betting on major sport events, betting on cards, bingo, betting in the casinos in Las Vegas, Nevada; and Atlantic City, New Jersey; flipping pennies, raffles, lotteries, sweepstakes, slot machines, to name a few.

The gambling craze is sweeping over our country. According to a recent feature article in the U.S. News and World Report (May 30, 1983) "Never before have so many people used so many ways to bet". One authority on the subject of gambling estimates ". . . the total volume of bets . . . at about one third of the gross national product. That would represent more than one trillion dollars annually—nearly $4,500 for every man, woman, and child." We are bombarded on every hand by the prospect of the get-rich-quick philosophy of the world. The appeal to gain much by contributing little is pressed upon us.

Las Vegas and Atlantic City, two of the gambling capitals in our country, are miles away and probably pose little serious threat to your spiritual wellbeing. The temptation to spend a week in either place is, no doubt, remote and far from your mind. But, young people, many of you make automobile trips to California and the highway you take goes right through Las Vegas, only a block or two from "Sunset Strip". Were you able to resist the temptation to turn aside and see how the so-called "other half" lives? Or did you turn off to take in Caesar's Palace, Circus Circus, Star Dust or one of the other ninety casinos? And then, just for fun, did you try a slot machine or two or three or more? And then—then what? Since no one was there to hold you back what more did you do? And those of you perhaps planning a trip to California, are you spiritual enough to "resist the devil" (James 2:7) and refrain from such an excursion?

Although the gambling casinos are far away, other gambling opportunities are very close at hand for most of you. Nineteen of our fifty states promote lotteries. Those of you who live in Michigan, Illinois, Colorado and New Jersey are able to buy lottery tickets at many stores. You don't even have to ask, they ask you, "Would you like to buy a lottery ticket today?". On the daily newscast they repeatedly announce the winner of the daily card game and winning lottery ticket number. It's so easy to spend a buck or two and who will ever find out. And just maybe you'll buy a winning ticket. Yet, lotteries are gambling. They are a game of chance. You do have to spend money that really isn't yours to waste. And according to the U.S. News article, lottery tickets have "legal gambling's worst odds", If winning could possibly make the buying of a lottery ticket right (and don't fool yourself, it doesn't) your chances of winning are infinitesimally small.

Not only are lotteries a close-to-home temptation but so are the many sweepstakes opportunities that come to our

homes through the mail and through magazines. I suspect that more than half the people in our country have received the Readers Digest Sweepstakes with its tantalizing bait of $250,000 grand prize or so much per year for life. Those of you who watch television have, no doubt, seen the advertisements promoting certain sweepstakes. How they try to encourage you to fill in your name and address and send it in. You might become an instant winner. Although one does not squander money or other valuable possessions to enter a sweepstakes, the fact remains that it is a game of chance and the motive for entering is crass covetousness. It's the same get-rich-quick sham. And is it possible that there might be just a little bit of discontent with one's present standard of living? Are we not telling God, when we submit to the temptation to send in our sweepstake tickets, that we are just a little dissatisfied with His way for our life?

Then there is betting, making wagers. How often do we flippantly say, "you betcha" or "I'll bet you this or that"? How frequently do you actually make so called innocent little bets just for fun? How often have you justified these little excursions into the world of gambling with the lame excuse that "everyone does it"? Do you crave excitement and eagerly look forward to betting on cards, each laying down a five dollar bill on the draw of a card—high card wins? Small beginnings grow into addicting habits. At the beginning the web of sin is light and airy to the touch and the strands may be as easily broken as a spider's web, but as the sin develops the light thin strands turn into tough and heavy cords of steel from which escape becomes well nigh impossible. Young people, let me caution you about taking a casual attitude toward betting.

Big time gambling, lotteries, sweepstakes and betting all are fueled by the sin of coveteousness. One who participates in these worldly activities violates the tenth commandment. However innocent these activities may appear, be careful that you are not led into temptation. The wicked have convinced themselves that there is nothing wrong with having fun at the gaming table; beware that they would like nothing better than to convince you of that also.

Furthermore, one who squanders the precious goods that God gives to him to use, violates the stewardship that God has given him. Such an one is much worse even than the servant who hid his master's precious talent in the soil until his master returned.

Finally, gambling, in all of its many forms, is often referred to by the world as a game of chance or luck. They talk about lucky winners and unlucky losers. Such expressions are devilish and dishonoring to God. They deny, in the use of these expressions, the very providence of God to control and direct all things. God is no where in their thoughts. To consider that God might possibly control the rolling dice, the spinning of the slot machine, the fall of the cards is ridiculous to the extreme in their thinking. Ultimately, of course, they even deny the sovereignty of God. Young people, really (and you know this also) there is no such thing as chance or luck. Do you dare participate in so called games of chance and see what kind of reaction your God, who is a jealous God, will have toward you?

The gambling craze will continue to grow until the world's cup of iniquity is filled. Let's not add even a small drop to the bitter dregs that that terrible cup contains. For, if we do, God will not account us guiltless in that great and terrible day of judgment.

Be on your guard over against all forms of gambling. They are all repulsive in the eyes of the Lord. "Be not conformed to this world: but be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind, that ye may prove what is that good, and acceptable, and perfect, will of God." Romans 12:2

A Word of Introduction

by Rev. C. Hanko

This is a reprint of Rev. C. Hanko's editorial in the January, 1941 issue of Beacon Lights. This issue was the very first one, Volume I, Number 1.

Here it is

The Publication Committee of the P.R.Y.P.F. takes great pleasure in introducing the first issue of our new periodical into your midst. It means to them the fruit of concentrated effort put forth during the last few months to make this paper possible, the removal of what seemed at times to be insurmountable barriers, the satisfaction of having reached a certain goal. But we realize that it means far more to all the members of the young people's Federation. To you it is the first-fruits of the youthful, yet lively and ambitious organization it represents. Not 18 months ago the Federation was organized in South Holland, Ill. Not 5 months ago the second annual Convention was held in Grand Rapids, Mich. Today you have your own paper. And what this means toward filling the long-felt need in our young people's societies can only be surmised.

A Stride Ahead

The appearance of this new periodical is in accordance with the mandate which the publication committee received at the last Convention. The Federation went on record as being in favor of developing a Federation paper and laid this matter in the hands of its previously appointed publication committee to be carried out. This, in turn, is in complete compliance with the adopted Constitution in which the development of a Federation paper is mentioned as one of the anticipated means toward realizing its purpose. And that purpose, as you may know, is fourfold:

"1. To unite all Protestant Reformed Young People's Societies so that they may work in close unity and secure a sense of solidarity.

2. To seek the mutual edification of the members of this Federation and to strive for the development of talents as becomes Christian young people.

3. To strive to maintain our specific Prot. Ref. character with a united front.

4. To promote the welfare of the Prot. Ref. Churches in which we have a name and a place."

one stride toward realizing this purpose is made. And hereby **Beacon Lights** takes upon itself to serve this purpose.

The Name

Beacon Lights purposes to guide you on your course toward your goal. As an airplane pilot wings his way unhesitantly on his course by the sweeping rays of his beacon lights, so this paper designs to guide you on your way through this world of sin and darkness, that you may ever hold your course and unswervingly strive for your goal. Or, to use a more common, time-tired figure, as a ship at sea is in imminent danger of suffering shipwreck on some hidden shoal or treacherous rock unless the beacon lights guide it through the raging storm and murky blackness of the night, so Prot. Ref. youth must be

warned of lurking heresies and threatening temptations which so easily beset them.

The young men of today are the leaders of tomorrow. The young women stand on the threshold of womanhood. Soon your place will be appointed you, wherever God may have planned to use you. And you must be ready. Whether that be in the home, or in the church, or even in the midst of the wicked world, equipped you must be, thoroughly furnished unto every good work!

Prot. Ref. young men and young women have an especially high calling. To them is entrusted the maintenance of their Reformed heritage, the truth of God's Sovereign Grace, so commonly denied and consistently undermined in our time. That Truth cannot and may not perish from the earth, but must be carried on to the generations to come, even until the end.

May this periodical make its own contribution toward that high calling. May it actually be Beacon Lights for young Protestants.

Criticism Invited

Beacon lights comes to you with no false pretenses. No one imagines that this is a finished product in the sense that the height of attainment has been reached. We would rather consider this the first efforts in "striving for the development of a Federation paper". Practically all those contributing toward this paper, with the exception of Rev. Hoeksema are fledglings in the work and must still profit by their mistakes. Besides, we anticipate expanding the paper with more and better departments as time goes on. Therefore we invite your criticisms. The publication committee cannot receive a better token of appreciation for its untiring efforts than a large "come back" of remarks and criticisms from all of our readers. Who knows but that we may soon be able to introduce the department of "Youth Speaks" in the succeeding issues.

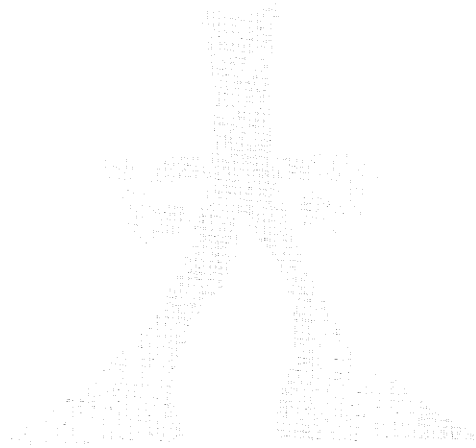
A Word to the Parents

Although these introductory remarks are intended for the youth of our Churches who have called this periodical into existence, I am nevertheless certain that many parents would turn away from scanning these pages with a look of disappointment if no single word were addressed to them. Parents are vitally interested in the welfare of their children and believing parents are especially interested in their spiritual welfare. They want to know and have a right to know what their children are reading. Therefore, in the conviction that parents too will examine these pages I want to enlist your services. We need your support in this new undertaking. Not your financial support; in fact, we prefer that young people find ways and means to take care of their own financial obligations as much as possible and that they thereby develop a sense of responsibility. They will appreciate this paper far more if they realize that it has cost them some sacrifice. But we do need your moral support and your prayers. You can cooperate by maintaining an interest yourself and by fanning the flames of youthful enthusiasm. Discuss the contents with your children; remind them, if need be, to read and make use of it in their preparation for the society; give it your wholehearted support.

In Conclusion

Finally, we would urge all our readers to receive this periodical as your own. Read it and reread it, ponder upon its contents, turning them over in your mind to formulate your own opinions. Do not fail to use it before attending society in order that you may be prepared for the discussion. Discuss it with your friends and get them interested. Learn to use it to your best advantage. And, last but not least, make arrangements to preserve it for years to come.

And may God cause His blessings to rest upon these efforts for years to come and forevermore.



REV. ROBERT C. HARBACH

GOD'S BEING

"For the invisible things of Him from the creation of the world are clearly seen, being understood by the things that are made, even His eternal power and Godhead" [Rom. 1:2].

The apostle seems to be speaking contradictorily. How can invisible things be seen, much less, be clearly seen? The solution is immediately provided in the added, "being understood by the things that are made." So that the visible things in the creation reveal to us the invisible things concerning the invisible God. The things made by God are illustrated advertisements of His power and divineness. God is known by His attributes. Some of them are reflected on the "kodacolor" screen of His creation. There in three-dimension are clearly seen the invisible things concerning himself. Our understanding visualizes and takes in those visible created things conveying to our mind His majesty, omnipotence and divine nature. These things have been focused on the projection screen of men's minds, understood and grasped, from the creation of the world **on.** (Old Dutch Bible, **aan**). For a long time, then, all men have had ample opportunity to reflect on the created things which clearly imply and declare God. Those invisible things of God, understood and perceived, are "both His eternal power and divinity." The illuminated spherical stage of the universe completely surrounds our vantage point with what seems like an inextinguishable brilliance. Yet behind this glittering world-stage may be seen the almost blinding corona of God's justice (Rom. 1:32), eternity and omnipotence, that is, His divineness.

The word **Godhead** (KJV) is not the best translation of the word. (Neither is the RSV's **deity**). Only twice does **Godhead** appear in the KJV, here and in Col. 2:9, but they are two different words (note difference in spelling) in the original and in the Dutch. In Romans 1:20, we have **thelotees** (Du. goddelijkheid), **divinity**, divine nature, divineness. In Col. 2:9, the word is **theotees**, (Du. godheid), **deity**, the state of being God, the absolute, essential and personal Godhead. This

reveals Christ to be absolute and infinite God. So that **theotees, deity,** (in Colossians), referring to Christ, differs from the word (in Romans) **thelotees, divinity,** as ESSENCE differs from ATTRIBUTE. **Divinity** (Rom. 1:20) men have known from creation on; **deity** (Col. 2:9), God, the Godhead, is known by the regenerated from Scripture. So the Bible distinguishes between the divine essence (Col. 2:9) and the divine attributes (Rom. 1:20). Yet the two are inseparable. The attributes of God may be said to be an exegesis (Jn. 1:18, Gk.), further exposition of the absolute essence.

The adjective **absolute**, according to Funk and Wagnalls Dictionary, means "independent; free from limitation, dependence or relation. Not limited or restrained by any extraneous power or authority. Specifically: Independence in existence; self-existence, as God is the **absolute** Being. Perfectly complete, as God is **absolute** goodness. **Absolute**, in the strict sense, free from all limitation or control, and supreme, superior to all, cannot properly be said of any except the Divine," as God is **absolute** sovereign. This word **absolute** is not found in Scripture, but theology borrowed it from philosophy. But what Reformed usage does is to extract from the term all philosophical content to pour into it meaning in harmony with Scripture and Reformed (biblical) doctrine.

In Reformed doctrine the subject of the being of God is approached in the fundamental question (Westminster Shorter Catechism, Q 4), "What is God?" The answer: "God is a spirit, infinite, eternal, unchangeable in His being, wisdom, power, holiness, justice, goodness and truth." This is in harmony with the second paragraph, above. First, there is a statement as to the essence of God, that He is a spirit. Then His attributes are mentioned. By attributes we mean the perfections of, and inseparable from, His being. Not all there is in God's attributes is revealed in Scripture, since it is impossible for the finite understanding to come up to God's infinite understanding. "There is no searching of His understanding." (Isa. 40:28). Also God conceals His inapproachable essence which "no man hath seen, nor can see." (I Tim. 6:16). We could not stand the revelation of all His glories. So it is all to the good that "Thou art a God who hidest Thyself, O God of Israel, the Savior." (Isa. 45:15). The excellencies of the Lord in many of their characteristics are too high for us. (Isa. 55:9). Man cannot fathom God's attributes. (Job 11:7). We can know only such and as much as God has condescended to reveal to us. We are concerned with what He has revealed to us in His word.

Somewhat strange it is in works on the being of God that much dry space is given to the subject of atheism and to arguments for (and evidences of) the existence of God, while there should be less of that and more on the main subject, the Being of God. Close to hand we have the doctrine of God as expressed in our Reformed Confession (articles VIII-XI). The following will prove a beautiful and valuable addition to this. "There is but one only living and true God, who is infinite in being and perfection, a most pure spirit, invisible, without body, parts (Dt. 4:15, 16; Jn. 4:24; Lk. 24:39), or passions (Acts 14:11, 15), immutable, immense, eternal incomprehensible, almighty, most wise, most holy, most free, most **absolute**, working all things according to the counsel of His own immutable and most righteous will, for His own glory; most loving, gracious, merciful, long-suffering, abundant in goodness and truth, forgiving iniquity, transgression and sin; the rewarder of them that diligently seek Him, and who will by no means clear the guilty.

"God hath all life, glory, goodness, blessedness in and of himself, and is alone in and unto himself all-sufficient, not standing in need of any creatures

which He hath made, not deriving any glory from them, but only manifesting His own glory, in, by, unto and upon them. He is the alone Fountain of all being, of whom, through whom and to whom, are all things; and hath most sovereign dominion over them, to do by them, for them or upon them whatsoever Himself pleaseth. In His sight all things are open and manifest; His knowledge is infinite, infallible and independent upon the creature, so as nothing is to Him contingent (depending on something else, rch) or uncertain, He is most holy in all His counsel, in all His works and in all His commands. To Him is due from angels and men, and every other creature, whatsoever worship, service or obedience He is pleased to require of them." (Westminster Confession, II).

God is the Absolute Unity, necessarily excluding division and rivalry. (See Dt. 6:4; I Cor. 8:4). Also the Christian Trinity of three divine persons in one undivided God: "I and My Father are one," (one essence, Jn. 10:30). Men everywhere sense the divine presence of the one true God. Despite religions like Hinduism, there is no evidence of myriads or hordes of gods. Polytheism is neither psychologically nor theologically demonstrable. Further, besides God's unity, simplicity, unchangeableness, omnipresence and infinity all preclude His consisting of body, parts and passions. The attributing to Him of arm (omnipotence), hand (providence), eye (omniscience), ear (omnipresence), nose, mouth, back, face (intelligence), heart (center of being), grief, etc., is figure of speech intended to convey much of God's **incommunicable** attributes! This is possible because there is a similarity between the creature, especially man, and God himself. (Cp. H. Hoeksema's **Reformed Dogmatics**, p. 54.)

Some theologians have tried to distinguish God's attributes as absolute and relative. The danger of this distinction is to make them all relative. All His attributes are in Him in absolute perfection. His knowledge, purposes, even His feelings in His being are absolutely unchangeable.—Ps. 33:11. Even in what we call His ethical attributes, His goodness is an absolute perfection of His essence. God in His being is absolutely good. Another of His ethical attributes, often mentioned last, is His truth. In God is the absolute truth. There is nothing relative about His truth. To make truth relative is to make it equal to and synonymous with the lie. Then to speak of "the truth" and "the lie" would only be speaking of two aspects of the same thing. But what that thing could be none could say. If, as the man says, "Everything's relative," then there is no meaning to anything.

A word at this point from Bavinck's **The Doctrine of God**: he says, Our chief method of reaching God is not by way of the creature, not by taking our starting-point in the universe, but taking our starting-point in God. For not the creature but God is first. He is the Original, the creature, the likeness. "In God everything is original, absolute, perfect; in the creature everything is derived, relative, limited . . . God is not named on the basis of that which is present in creatures, but creatures . . . on the basis of that which exists in God in an absolute sense. Nevertheless," our ideas of God are "derived from the creaturely realm . . . which, though inadequate, is not untrue," for "the creature is **God's** creature and . . .reveals something of His excellencies." Scripture, of course, derives everything from God, even its own method, in places, of ascending "to God **from the plane of the universe** . . . Rom. 1:20 . . . Everything is **from** God) everything points back **to** God." So we may begin our method of reaching God logically first by beginning with God, then also by traveling the way of the creaturely sign-posts which unerringly point to Him. (bold, H. Bavinck, p. 134).

THE BLESSED PEACEMAKERS

by Rev. J. A. Heys

With this seventh Beatitude we come to the last of a series of descriptions of the citizens of the kingdom of heaven. Each citizen of that kingdom as he faces God is poor in spirit, mourns over sin, is meek and hungers and thirsts after righteousness. As his soul faces his fellow men he is merciful, pure in heart and a peacemaker. You see, Young People, man differs from the animals in that, being created in God's image, he has a soul that faces God as well as the earthly creation in which he lives. No, he is not two-faced. Nor does he look in two different directions. He does not have eyes in the back of his head as well as just under his forehead. What I mean is that while he looks at creation round about him, and thus also at his fellowmen, he is looking also beyond man to the God Who made man and has given definite laws in regard to dealing with that fellow man.

Man's eye is certainly an amazing organ which God gave him; and it has tremendous capabilities. It, as created by God, can see objects in front of it, and yet also have objects on the horizon in clear focus. It is true that there are those who are near-sighted, and others who are far-sighted. But with 20/20 vision one can see clearly the flowers in the foreground and yet far beyond to the sharply lined mountain peaks that stand out against the deep blue sky. Well, so it is with man's soul after he is born again. He sees his fellow men that surround him. But he also sees his God, and his fellow men as instruments wherewith he is to serve his God.

Those who have not been born again, and thus are not citizens of the kingdom of heaven are spiritually near-sighted. They see this earthly creation clearly, but they do not clearly see the Almighty, all-wise and sovereign God behind all that creation. They will, therefore, speak of a Kind Providence, or of Mother Nature. They will call Him Fate or Lady Luck, which all shows that their eyesight is very defective. Even though they may read His Word, they are incapable of seeing Him as He is. In fact those not born again, who do read His Word studiously, will often come with the cry that He is unfair, cruel and merciless to elect some to everlasting glory and reject others. They cannot see Him correctly, even though they do see a blurred picture of Him behind all His creation.

The citizen of the kingdom of heaven who has been born again, however, will see God clearly and in front of Him all of the creatures which He made and gave to us as tools wherewith to serve Him. They will not only know that He has given man laws, yea created man within laws, in regard to all this wide creation, but will also love God and want to keep those laws.

The law that God has given for dealing with fellow men is that they walk in love toward each other for God's sake. And that means that men should live as peacemakers. Then the idea is not simply that they should not hurt each other, that is, be merciful, but to **make** peace between themselves and those round about them. It hurts the citizens of the

kingdom to hurt other men. But Jesus did not say, "Blessed are the peaceful". Rather He spoke of peacemakers, those who make peace, not simply those who live in peace with others. They do not simply fail to attack others. They seek to realize peace when others attack.

It might seem, then, as though many are citizens of the kingdom of heaven who never go to church, who desecrate the Sabbath, take God's Name in vain, worship the things of this world and uphold such heresies as Evolution, and defend Atheists. For these exert much effort to bring peace to this world. They give of their time. They accept insults and blows without retaliating to keep and obtain peace. They even give up land and possessions for the sake of peace. They look like peacemakers.

Nothing, however, could be farther from the truth. To make peace you must take away the cause of war, not simply the fear of war. You must root out war, not simply make it too expensive or dangerous to wage it. Building up an arsenal that makes weaker nations fearful of attacking is not making peace. To make peace you must take away hate and make men love each other. Then there can be no war. And peace in the very first place means that we have peace with God, as Paul writes in Romans 5:1, "Therefore being justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ." What peace has a city wherein all the citizens love each other but is surrounded by a huge well-equipped army of another city that is ready to blow this city of brotherly love to pieces? The main consideration man must have is to have peace with God. Peace in the very first place must be and is a relationship of love between God and man.

Therefore, I am sure that you can see that Christ is The Peacemaker, The Prince of Peace. For it is in Him and by His blood that we are justified in the sight of God; and it is through Him that the love of God blesses us. That is why Paul says that we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ. In Him we seek that peace. Rather, as Paul writes in the Greek, we are justified **out of** faith. Our faith draws its peace of mind out of the work of Christ whereby He justified us by His cross. Our peace consists in this that we are sure of the forgiveness of our sins, and that because of this God smiles down upon us in love instead of with His terrible wrath which we by nature deserve.

But those forgiven, and dealt with in love by God, forgive their enemies and deal with them in love. Being forgiven and forgiving go together, as Jesus pointed out in the prayer which He taught us. We are told to pray, "Forgive us our debts, as we forgive our debtors." And then He adds, "But if ye forgive not men their trespasses, neither will your heavenly Father forgive you your trespasses." Matthew 6:15.

Now there will be no peace on this earth among the nations until Christ returns and casts all those who hate God, and their neighbours, into hell, and fully delivers His people from the love and power of sin. The Prince of Peace will bring peace to this world, for He will take away the cause of all war. He has removed the curse for His people, and He will give them bodies that have in them no motions of sin; and this He will do through the death of our flesh and a resurrection from the dead.

But now and until that kingdom of Heaven is fully come the unregenerated will hate the regenerated as well as other unregenerates. In fact one of the signs of the coming of Christ to usher in that kingdom of heaven is exactly wars and rumors of wars with nation rising up against nation and kingdom against kingdom. Then too the regenerated, still having the motions of sin in their flesh all through this present life, will often perform deeds of hatred against their fellow church members. However because

they are citizens in the kingdom of heaven, and do have that principle of the new life in them, they are peacemakers, and will confess their sins, be sorry for them, and as we saw mourn over them, and do what they can to restore peace between them and the ones against whom they sinned. On the other hand those against whom they sinned will accept the apologies, forgive and hold no grudges, but walk in love with that one who sinned against him.

The citizens of the kingdom of heaven will not return blow for blow, nasty word for nasty word, ridicule for ridicule, sarcasm for sarcasm. No, the peacemakers will turn the other cheek and never seek revenge.

Yea, as peacemakers they will try to save their spiritual brethren and sisters from all warlike deeds. And then it must be borne in mind that they will do this in a twofold way. They will seek to turn their brethren from fighting the living God, for sinning is always an act of fighting the living God. Sinning is always opposing God in His will. There is no danger that we are ever going to hurt God and inflict injury upon Him. But sinning is fighting against God in the sense that we are going against His will, opposing Him in His holy will. The peacemaker will seek to keep his brother from such warlike deeds. And he will seek to keep his brethren from attacks upon their neighbour's flesh, but also upon their wills in deeds of hatred.

This peacemaking is realized through the Word of God. And therefore what belongs so inseparably with the peacemaking is supporting both morally and financially mission work. Through it the church seeks to turn unbelievers away from their unbelief, from their hatred toward God to a love for the living God. Indeed Christ, the Prince of Peace, must do this. But He uses us to preach the gospel and calls us to serve as His mouthpiece. And rather than to fight Him on this point, the peacemakers gladly approach all whom they can with the gospel about this Prince of Peace, that they too may know the joy of being justified by faith and of having peace with God.

And their blessedness is that they shall be called the children of God. Now to be the children of God means that He brought us forth. We owe our existence to Him. It also means that He loves us as those belonging to His family in Christ His only begotten Son. But do not overlook the fact that it also means that we are like Him. A child, receiving his life from his parents, will take on their natures. Peter speaks of that in II Peter 1:4 when he says that we are partakers of the divine nature. But note that it is the divine nature and not the divine essence. We will be like Him in that we too shall be righteous and holy.

This we shall be called. However this means much more than that this will be our name. When God calls things happen. When He said, "Let there be light", there was light. When He calls us children of God, we become such children of God and begin to enjoy all the benefits of being heirs of God and joint heirs with Christ. Being such heirs we lose nothing when as peacemakers we refuse to fight for this world's fading goods.

And do not overlook the fact that God is the one Who will call us His children. That we call each other Christians, believers, children of God does not make us such. But the almighty, unchangeable God calls us to be His children, and the peacemakers can therefore be sure of enjoying this blessedness when the Prince of Peace returns.

And by all means do not overlook the fact that if God calls us His children, He is going to treat us as His children. It is not a matter of simply admitting that we are His children. Many a parent does that, and then abuses his child. Not God. Calling us His children He showers down on us all the blessings of His kingdom.

Indeed it is wonderful to be a citizen of that kingdom. It means that we are God's children, heirs of God and joint heirs with Christ. Those He calls His children He brings home to live in covenant fellowship with Him forever in a bliss and glory that has never been known on this earth.

As A Father Pitieth
FRIENDSHIP

by Rev. D. Engelsma

Our love for our children must establish friendship between us and them. This is what we must aim at and work for. This is the effect of the Godly love of believing parents, by the grace of the Holy Spirit. We are, and must be, our children's friends. Life in a Reformed home must be friendship.

Within this friendship, all of the rearing must take place— the teaching, the discipline, even the exercise of parental authority. If there is no friendship, the teaching, the discipline, and the exercise of authority lose their Christian character and their power for effective rearing. Only as my child's friend can I be his teacher, his disciplinarian, and his lord.

This basic truth for child-rearing is learned from God's Fatherhood towards us. God's love for us establishes the bond of friendship with us—the covenant. God is our Friend; and He gives us the privilege of being His friends. This is not incidental; but it is the very essence of our life with God. Within the covenant, He teaches, disciplines, and is our Sovereign. His teaching, discipline, and sovereignty are **covenantal** teaching, discipline, and sovereignty. Take away the Divine friendship; and the teaching, discipline, and sovereignty are radically changed. Indeed, they become fruitless.

Just as the covenant of grace with us is established and maintained by God alone, so the friendship in the home is the responsibility of the parents. God calls us to see to it that the relationship between us and our children reflects that between Him and His children. He calls us to guard against a family-life that is nothing but casual contact, or that is merely a cold, formal arrangement, or (worst of all) that is an oppressive subjection of cowering underlings by harsh overlords.

This is the truth portrayed in Psalm 128:3: "Thy wife shall be as a fruitful vine by the sides of thine house: thy children like olive plants round about thy table." It is not an idyllic picture of family-life among the farmer-folk of old Israel; but it is the teaching that the family-life of the people of God is to be friendship. This is the "atmosphere" of the home; and the "atmosphere" of the home is vitally important. Jan Waterink writes:

> As a rule, the manner in which the family lives in relation to God finds expression in the behavior of the child. The family atmosphere is often a more powerful means to bring lasting impressions to the child's mind than many talks and nice stories. (**Leading Little Ones to Jesus,**

p. 20)

Waterink refers particularly to the threat to the friendship of parents and children:

> If there is one danger that threatens the very foundations of our spiritual existence, it is the estrangement between parents and children. It is really a tragic situation that the older children are more frequently referred to with complaint than with commendation. (p.96)

The power that creates this friendship is the Word of God. It is the gospel that creates the covenant between God and us; and it is the gospel that creates the covenant between believers and their children. Therefore, it is essential for Reformed child-rearing that the parents raise their children in a true church that faithfully preaches the pure Word of God. This is essential for creating the friendship that is the **sine qua non** of all rearing. Family-life flourishes in the church, as Psalm 128 indicates, when it goes on to say to the believing husband and father, concerning the promise of family happiness, "The LORD shall bless thee out of Zion . . ." (v. 5).

The friendship between parents and children, thus established, will have certain characteristics, patterned after the covenant of God. We parents will give ourselves to our children and will be receptive to them: we will speak with them, listen to them, and share our life with them. For this, we will see to it that we have time for them and actually live with them. Certain evils need to be purged from our lives: mothers holding jobs outside the home, or jobs in the home that harm the friendship; fathers not being home when they could and should, on account of a desire for wealth, or recreation, or even too many church-duties; permitting teenage children to live their entire, non-sleeping life outside the home; the takeover of the few, precious hours that the family has by television; putting the little children outside the home at younger and younger ages. Fundamental to the life of friendship is that we all be together—the wife as a fruitful vine on the inside (such is the meaning of Psalm 128:3) of the house (where the husband dwells), and the children round about the table (where the father is sitting).

Only if we have time for them and live with them can we know them, personally, individually, and thoroughly, so as to be able to teach them. Parents must teach their children the Word of God. God rears His children to spiritual maturity by teaching them His Word; accordingly, earthly parents are called to bring up their children "in the nurture and admonition of the Lord" (Ephesians 6:4). It is not enough that we see to it that pastors teach them the Bible in the church and that schoolteachers teach them in the light of the Bible in good Christian schools; but it is also necessary that we ourselves teach them. Parents must teach their children the stories of the Bible; they must read and explain the Bible to the children; they must go over the catechism with them. But they can, and must teach their children the Word in less formal ways, when the opportunities arise in the natural life of the family. Their duty is nothing less than to teach the children to live wisely in the world, in all of life—to fear the Lord; not to love money; not to envy; to honor the teacher, even though the child may not like him; to live chastely as regards sex.

The main truth that parents must teach their children is God's redemption of them from their sins by the cross of Jesus Christ, the forgiveness of sins in Jesus' blood, received and enjoyed through believing on Him. Every father and mother must be able and ready, having perceived the distress of the child and having carefully drawn out the confession of the sin that burdens the child, to speak the gospel of grace to the child's troubled heart.

The Christian In The Nuclear Age

by Ken Feenstra

Dear Christian in the nuclear age, the age in which man has tapped the power of the atom, the building block of physical materials, both living and otherwise, look at the power and might of this world. Man is gaining control of the more fundamental means of power. He is using this power in both war and peace, for weapons and electricity, for poison and for medicine.

Not only is man mastering nuclear power, but look at the advances of computer technology. Many predict that we will be ordering all our basic needs (food, clothing, etc.) by home computer or by push-button phone. Banking also is going in that direction.

How do we as Christians live and perceive this world in such an age? Should we live in fear of nuclear war? What should we fear?

To answer these questions, we first have to remember that all of history is God's counsel revealed. If we look at Matt. 24 it becomes apparent that we live near the end of time. Matt. 24:14 tells us that the end will come when the kingdom or gospel has been preached in all the world. We can see this now. Technology (radio, TV, communication) has advanced to the point where everyone can hear the gospel. Language barriers are also being broken. Not only have most languages been translated, but English is becoming a second language to many. It is now just a matter of time. We now wait for the Abomination of Desolation, the Antichrist, to set up his kingdom.

Looking from this perspective, we can attempt to answer the nuclear war question. Assuming nuclear war would cause wholesale destruction of the earth, where would that leave the anti-christian kingdom? A nuclear war would destroy the technology and "peace" needed to produce such a kingdom among diverse people. God reveals to us in Rev. 11 that the world will not be destroyed before the ascending of God's people into Glory. So we have nothing to fear on this count for sure. Even if we would have a limited nuclear war why should we fear? We have the comfort that Christ gives to us; that he will care for us in life and in death.

So then what do we fear in this age? We fear our natures. As in all ages we have natures that hate God and the Christian calling we have as God's people. We have that war in ourselves between the mind (regenerated, spirit-filled man) and the flesh (our corrupt nature). Because of this, our calling is to be a living sacrifice (killing our old nature) holy and acceptable unto God, Rom. 12:1. This war will never become easier and will climax in the time of the great tribulation. Jesus tells us that for the elect's sake those days would be shortened, so intense will that war be.

Do you feel that war in your heart? If so then you can understand the words of Phil. 2, where we are commanded, "Work out your own salvation with fear and trembling, for it is God which worketh in you both to will and to do of His good pleasure." Fall on your knees and seek the face of God praying for forgiveness and acknowledging that we can do no good of ourselves. This is working your salvation with fear and with trembling.

God promises He will answer our prayers, Matt. 7:7, "Ask and it shall be given you, seek and ye shall find, Knock, and it shall be opened unto you."

Do you seek God in this nuclear age

or do you seek the world?

Do you see the signs leading up to the end of times or are you to engrossed in the things of this world?

Remember that your walk in this world will never get any easier. Neither history nor maturity makes it easier to be a Christian. Make sure you truly are a stranger in this world.

Seek the face of God continually!

TIME (Continued)

by Rev. R. Hanko

In Psalm 31:15 David confesses, "My times are in Thy hand." Though this is true of all men, in that they live and move and have their being in God, yet the confession is one which only God's redeemed children can make.

The ungodly deceive themselves and in the folly of their unbelief they imagine that their times are their own to use as they please. More and more they seek to press time into their own service, thinking even to conquer death and decay that they may live forever. But even when they must die, "their inward thought is, that their houses shall continue forever, and their dwelling places to all generations" (Ps. 49:11). All this shall finally issue in the Kingdom of Antichrist and the great delusion of the man of sin himself, who shall "think to change times and laws" (Dan. 7:25). This, as Daniel confesses, and as every child of God knows, is something that belongs to God alone. He only has power and might to change times and seasons and to control the destiny of men (Dan. 2:20, 21).

In the end these delusions are their undoing, for while they seek to use time for their own ends and glory, they are so ruled by time as a servant of Almighty God, that every moment of time serves to bring down on them the displeasure and wrath of God. And as time hurries them on for judgment and destruction, they find that all their life is vanity and vexation of spirit. Perhaps more than anything else it is the swift passing of time with its "sudden warnings" as it also brings death that leaves them no peace and hope.

The mark of God's saints is the confession that their times are not their own but God's. This confession shows them to be delivered from folly and vanity through the mercy of God and the work of the Lord Jesus Christ. And when, by grace, that confession becomes ours, then we find too that time is no more an enemy, but once again a servant which works together with all things for our good.

In the mouths of God's people, therefore, this confession is first of all an acknowledgement that God uses the times and seasons of this present creation to bring us His great salvation. This is also part of David's confession in Psalm 31; "Into Thy hand I commit my spirit: Thou hast redeemed me, O Lord God of truth. . . . Oh how great is Thy goodness, which Thou hast laid up for them that fear Thee: which Thou hast wrought for them that trust in Thee before the sons of men!" (Ps. 31:5, 19). Thus there are according to the eternal good pleasure of God times of promise (Acts 7:17) and in the "fulness of time" a time of fulfilment of the promises (Gal. 3:4ff). And through the fulfilment of His promises there are times of mercy (Ps. 102:13), times of acceptance with God (Ps. 69:13), times of deliverance and help in

trouble (Is. 49:8), of salvation (II Cor. 6:2), of possessing the Kingdom (Dan. 7:22), of trial and suffering, but also of mercy and grace in those times of need (Heb. 4:16), times of persecution but also of patience and victory for God's saints. And even though time still brings death for God's people, it no longer brings death as the punishment of their sins, but as the last and greatest victory.

The wonder of it all is that the eternal God entered into our times through the incarnation of His Only Begotten Son, in order that he might bear for us all the sufferings and sorrows of this present time and give the times and seasons of our life back to us filled with the benefits and blessings of salvation.

This confession that our times are in the hands of God is also our acknowledgement that by the same power of grace we are once again able to make proper and profitable use of time as a gift of God to us. By grace we redeem the time (Eph. 5:16), that is, by the power of grace we purchase the times and opportunities that God has given us, take advantage of them, and make profit from them, just as a trader redeems his time spent in the marketplace by making careful and wise use of every moment and by profiting from every opportunity. The profit that we make in redeeming the time, however, is not earthly nor any gain for the flesh, but spiritual gain for the glory of God.

The wonder of grace is, once again, that we are able to make this profit in all the circumstances and seasons of our life. We are able to redeem the times of instruction (and youth is especially a time for this) when we learn to say in the schoolroom, in the Catechism class, and in our Young People's Societies, "My God, how great Thou art." The hours of each day that are spent at work are redeemed when we seek through our labours the coming of the everlasting Kingdom of our Lord and of His Christ. We redeem our times of fellowship when we use them, not for foolish talking and jesting, but for helping and comforting one another. Even times of loneliness and discouragement can be redeemed through meditation and prayer. Times of trial and suffering, of temptation and sin are also redeemed when we learn in such times to fear and trust Jehovah with all our heart. Nevertheless we do these things and redeem these times only in and through the redeeming power of the cross and suffering of our Saviour. Then even the shortness of time, especially of that time which is given to us, rather than becoming a burden and a sorrow, becomes a constant motivation to walk in wisdom and to rejoice in the Lord.

Finally, in making this confession, each of us remembers that this present time shall come to an end, not only through the return of our Lord Jesus, but for each one of us at the time of our death. When these present times have served their God-appointed purpose, and when through them all the will of God concerning our salvation is fulfilled, then the need for time, at least as we now know it shall be gone, and time itself shall pass away.

This is the word of the great angel in Revelation 10, when he announces the finishing of the mystery of God. He declares and swears by Him Who lives forever and ever "that there should be time no longer" (verse 6).1 It is not so easy to determine what these words of the angel mean, since Scripture says very little about the new creation and the relation to time that we shall have there. Certainly these words do not mean that we shall become eternal as God Himself is eternal and unchangeable, even though we shall receive from Him the life that never dies, not only in our hearts as we have it now, but in our bodies also when they are raised and changed into the likeness of the glorious body of Jesus Christ. In the second place we can certainly say that time as we now know it

shall be no more. Scripture does speak of a "time" to come, but if there is time in the new creation, then it will no longer be measured as it now is, by the movement of sun, moon, and stars for in that Kingdom sun and moon shall pass away (Rev. 21:23), nor shall time be measured by the rise and fall of kingdoms, by life and death, and by the changes of history, for the Kingdom of our Lord is a Kingdom which cannot be moved and even death shall be banished from the streets of that Kingdom. Perhaps we can say that time, which is now our greatest limitation, cutting short all our works and hurrying us through life to death, will in the new creation be our greatest asset, for we shall have day without night and without weariness and sin, and that everlasting day, shall be a season for perfect praise and worship, and an opportunity to enjoy God and the blessedness of life with Him forever.

---

1 Rev. H. Hoeksema explains Revelation 10:6 in the sense of "no more delay" (cf. **Behold He Cometh**, pp. 334-348). I believe that this interpretation is not possible for several reasons:

(1) the word used here is the Greek word "chronos" from which we get our word "chronology" and is a word which refers to time as we experience it, as the succession of moments, hours, days, and years.

(2) this word is never once used in Scripture in the sense of "delay," and therefore ought not be taken in that sense here.

(3) there are other words in Scripture which could and would be used if that was the idea of this verse, not only the word "delay" but also such words as "tarrying" "waiting" even perhaps the word "longsuffering".

Critique

RESISTING TEMPTATION

by Bernie Kamps

Young people, let us address some of today's temptations and how we can resist them. This world is so full of temptation for the believer that it is impossible not to see and feel them.

The sad part is we expose ourselves to them. Yes, we often compromise our convictions and accept the world's invitations. Take her music for instance. We sometimes cherish it, sing it and are mesmerized by the Godless lyrics and harmonies. What type of mood does it put us into? A very carefree, morally loose and generally worldly sinful mood. Ever notice how you can listen to a sermon and really not feel moved by the Holy Spirit after listening to adulterous country or rock music?

After seeing a movie particularly on Friday or Saturday night notice how easy it is to drift back to it in your mind while sitting in church.

Sin has it's awesome effect on us doesn't it? Our Canons in Article 5 of the 5th Head teach us the severity of our lamentable fall into heinous sin. "By such enormous sins, however, they very highly offend God, incur a deadly guilt, grieve the Holy Spirit, interrupt the exercise of faith, very grievously wound their con-

sciences, and sometimes lose the sense of God's favor, for a time until on their returning into the right way of serious repentance, the light of God's fatherly countenance again shines upon them."

Lose the sense of God's favor - ever experience this? Our sin separates us from God's loving hand, that wonderful joy and comfort of being a Christian - an elect child of God.

After Young People's Society or a Singspiration with the joy of Christ in our hearts and His words just on our lips, you have felt the struggle of temptation, debating whether to turn on your radio or listen to a tape of Godless music. What happens within us when temptation knocks? Usually we justify what we are going to do. Think about it right now. Are you contemplating sin; premeditating to have some sort of wicked enjoyment in the hours or days ahead? Really think now, be honest with your conscience and your heart. What reasons do we have when we go ahead with our plans? Oh, we have our good reasons, our rationalizing, our conniving and scheming. Blasphemously wicked, aren't they? We are so clever with our sin. Trying so hard to appear outwardly pure. Temptation comes in the form of hypocrisy and pride all too often. We know ourselves so well, and our God knows us so much better. He knows the very center of our being - our heart.

Now that we have seen our real selves is there any hope, any possible way to be delivered from temptations, pitfalls? Yes! In II Peter 2:9a we read "The Lord knoweth how to deliver the godly out of temptations. . . ." God will give us the grace that David prays for in Psalm 19:13 "Keep back thy servant also from presumptuous sins; let them not have dominion over me: then shall I be upright and I shall be innocent from the great transgression." David was a man who understood the power of sin well. He lived a very full life, earthly speaking. He was brought from poverty and made rich; was taken from humble beginnings and became powerful and well known. He enjoyed sin for a time, but was plagued by them. He said "My bones waxed old" and he felt God's "hand was heavy on me." David's Psalms speak of his struggle with sin and its terrible effect on him. We certainly echo David's prayers especially through singing. (May we always hold our Psalter dear to our hearts.)

We must deal with our sins and temptations in the same manner. We must pray for forgiveness and grace to resist temptation. Strength to resist is given by God through the avenue of prayer. Contemplate on things spiritual while you go about your daily duties. Your outlook on the temptations of this life will change. Change from willingly seeking sin to seeking to please God. Will to do good; pray for strength to resist the temptations that particularly affect you. I Peter 3:12a "For the eyes of the Lord are over the righteous, and His ears are open unto their prayers."

The child of God is **active** in his faith, uplifted and made strong by God's mercy. We are comforted, we do experience peace because we are the apple of God's eye. Believe it!

Will we be free from sin and walk perfectly? No, because our old sinful nature is with us. Will the elect sinner use this to try to excuse himself? No! He doesn't even want to try to excuse himself. He knows Christ and only Christ can merit that forgiveness, our awful debt. Paul tells us in Galatians that we are made free from the bondage of sin and are no longer slaves to sin. We are given liberty to serve God through Christ.

We will halt and stumble into sin, but we will not find joy walking and revelling in sin. The thoughts of sin will plague us and temptations will be a difficult struggle in our lives. We will battle a constant war with our flesh and Satan. Our comfort lies in the forgiveness of sin and knowing God cares for His sheep. I Corinthians 10:13

"There hath no temptation taken you but such as is common to man: but God is faithful, who will not suffer you to be tempted above that ye are able; but will with the temptation also make a way to escape that ye may be able to bear it."

Discussion Outlines of I Samuel Chapters 13 and 14

by Rev. R. Hanko

A. Saul's faithlessness.
   1. The circumstances:
      a. What does chapter 13:1 mean? Is there a contradiction here? How does a passage like John 10:35 determine our answer to these questions?
      b. Compare the military situation of the Philistines at this time with that of the Israelites (13:5-7, 15, 19-22). Why is this mentioned in such detail (I Chron. 29:11, Ps. 44:5-8)?
      c. What is the connection between Jonathan's victory over the Philistine garrison in 13:3 and the rest of this story?
   2. Saul's sacrifice:
      a. Read chapter 10:8 and explain why Saul called the people together to Gilgal before the battle.
      b. Why did Saul have to wait for Samuel to come before making a sacrifice (Num. 3:10, 16:40)?
      c. Why did Saul not wait for Samuel (vss. 6-8)? Was this a great sin?
      d. Read verses 8-11 and explain whether or not Samuel came during the appointed 7 days.
   3. Saul's punishment:
      a. What does Samuel mean in verse 13 when he says that the Lord would have established Saul's kingdom for ever? Had not the Lord rejected Saul from eternity? Cf. Canons III, IV, 8 and Ezek. 33:11-19.
      b. Was Saul's punishment just? Compare his punishment with that of Uzziah in II Chron. 26:21. Why did not God take the kingdom away from Uzziah as He took it from Saul (Ps. 11:5, Ps. 89:30-37)?
   4. The significance of these events:
      a. Why did Samuel wait so long to come to Saul especially when Saul was in such desperate circumstances (Jer. 17:9, 10, Ps. 11:4)?
      b. What really was Saul's sin (Ps. 21:7, Jer. 17:5)? Which commandment did Saul break (Heid. Cat., Lord's Day XXXIV)?
      c. What did Saul's sin reveal about his attitude toward God (Ps. 50:16,

17, Is. 29:13)?

d. What should Saul have done when Samuel confronted him with his sin (Ez. 33:14-16, 18:27, 28)?

e. Do we ever commit this sin which Saul committed? Why are not we punished so severely as he was?

f. Do you think that verse 14 can be taken as implying the doctrine of reprobation since we read there that the Lord **had sought** a man after His own heart?

g. Read Canons I, 5, 6, 18; III, IV, 9. Does a reprobate man ever go to hell simply because he is reprobate?

B. Deliverance through the faith of Jonathan.

1. The situation:

a. Why did Samuel leave Saul after informing him of the Lord's judgment (Prov. 1:24-31)? What was Saul's situation after Samuel left him?

b. Jonathan is mentioned for the first time in 13:2, 3. Who was Jonathan (I Chron. 8:33, 34)?

2. The faith of Jonathan:

a. Why did not Jonathan tell his father what he was going to do? Why is this mentioned along with the fact that Saul "tarried in Gibeah" in verse 1 and 2 of chapter 14?

b. What was Jonathan's attitude toward the Philistines as revealed in his calling them "uncircumcised" (Ps. 139:21, 22)? Compare Jonathan's attitude toward the Philistine's with Saul's as revealed in verse 24.

c. What plan did Jonathan make and what was the purpose of this plan? Did not Jonathan believe in God's power to deliver His people?

d. What is the relationship between Jonathan's faith and the victory that day (Heb. 11:33, 34, I Jn. 5:4, 5)?

e. How do verse 15 and 20 show that this victory did not come **because of** Jonathan's faith? Cf. Canons I, 7, 8; III, IV, 16, 17.

3. The victory:

a. When Saul first heard of the results of Jonathan's battle why did he tell the priest to bring the ark and then to take it away again ("withdraw thine hand")?

b. What oath did Saul make to insure this victory? Was this a proper oath (Heid. Cat., Lord's Days XXXVI, XXXVII)? What were the evil results of this oath with respect to Jonathan, to the people, and to the battle?

c. Should Saul have killed Jonathan for breaking this oath (Num. 30:2)? If not, what should he have done (Lev. 5:4-6)?

d. Why did God give Israel this victory in spite of Saul's and the people's continued refusal to walk in the way of repentance?

e. How does this victory foreshadow the great victory of our Lord Jesus Christ?

WHAT'S HAPPENING

by Paula Faber

NEWCOMERS:
God Blessed:

Mr. and Mrs. J. Westing, of Hudsonville Church with a daughter, Pamela Rae, on January 24.

MEMBERSHIP TRANSFERS:

First Church received the papers of Miss Winifred Koole and Miss Agatha Lubbers from our Faith Church.

The following had their membership transferred to our Byron Center Church: Mrs. Joan Andersen, Mr. and Mrs. T. Talsma, and Mr. and Mrs. Len Holstege and Tom from our Hudsonville Church.

The following had their membership transferred to our Grandville Church: Mr. and Mrs. Jan tenHaaf and four children, and Mr. and Mrs. Dan Key.

CONFESSION OF FAITH:

Bob Prins and Curt Van Overloop made public confession of faith on January 22 in Hudsonville Church.

ACTIVITIES:

The Southeast Young People sponsored a Potluck Supper on February 16.

The Young People of South Holland Church had an outing to Randolph, Wisconsin on the 3rd and 4th of February. This included skiing on Saturday with the young people of Randolph.

O let my hands forget their skill,
My tongue be silent, cold, and still,
This bounding heart forget to beat,
If I forget the mercy-seat.

Morning and Evening
—by Spurgeon
page 75

The 1984 Convention will be held
AUGUST 6 - 10
at
CALVIN COLLEGE
Sponsored by
First Young People's Societies