BEACON LIGHTS

FOR PROTESTANT REFORMED YOUTH

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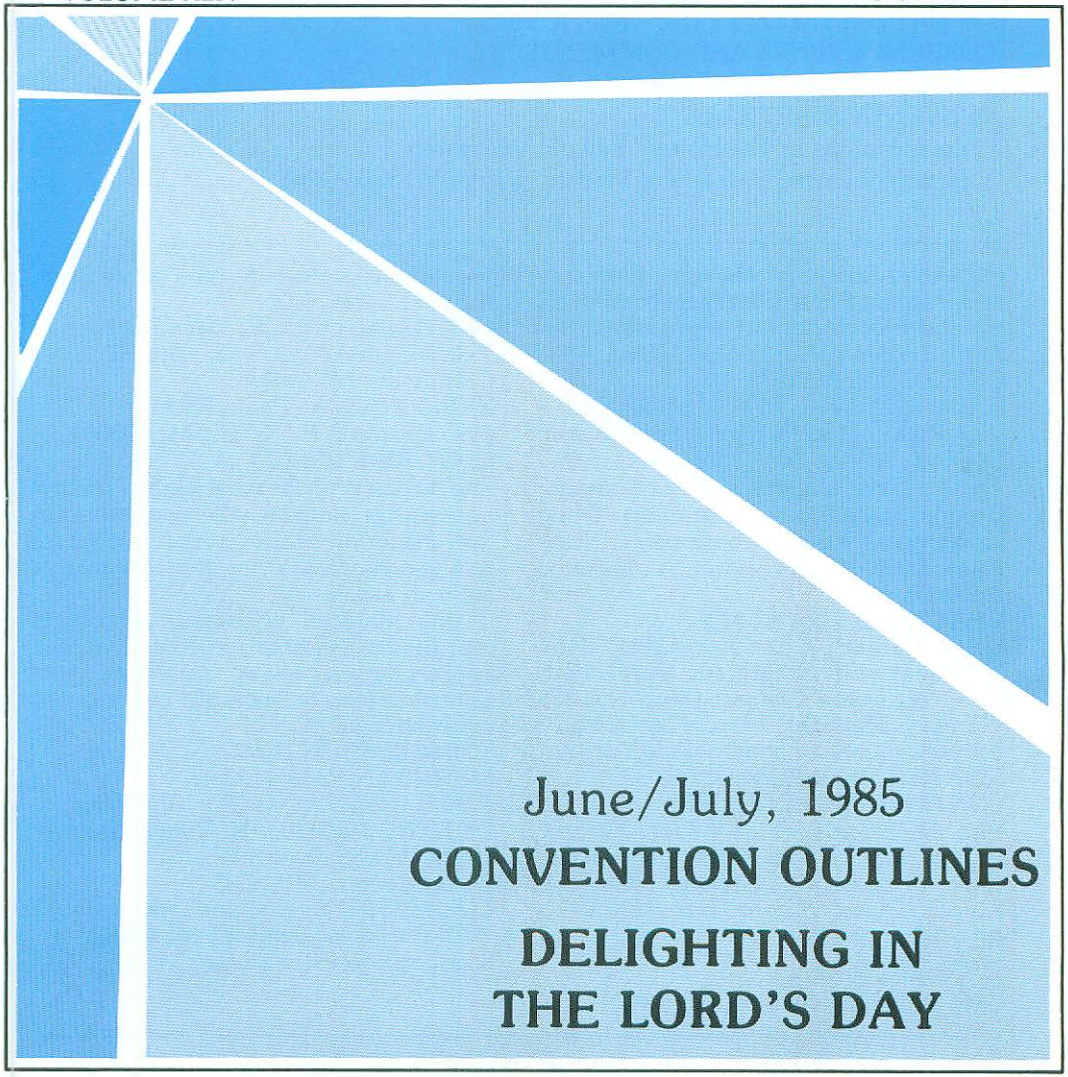
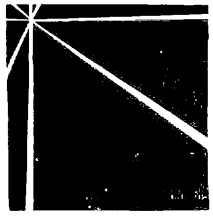


June/July, 1985

CONVENTION OUTLINES

DELIGHTING IN THE LORD'S DAY



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EDITOR'S NOTES

by David Harbach

I want to thank Mrs. Brands for her eight articles on the "Joys of Conception". Many of us have benefitted from her writing and we look forward to reading her next series of articles.

Miss Grace Faber, the Michigan subscription manager will be leaving our staff. We thank God for her many years of dedicated labor she has given to the **Beacon Lights**. Grace has served on the staff for several years not only as a subscription manager but also as a generator of many an article theme. In fact, it was her idea to do the present series on the "Fruit of the Spirit". We will certainly miss her at our monthly meetings. May God continue to bless her present involvement with the Reformed Witness Hour.

In this issue you will find the two articles for the Young People's Convention to be held at Grand Valley State College in Allendale Michigan. Our October issue will focus on the Convention and will be provided free to all those who attend the Convention. The August-September issue will include the next three articles on the "Fruit of the Spirit: Longsuffering". Also in our August-September issue will be the first article of a series focussing on some of our early church reformers. These articles are all written by a few students in Mr. Kalsbeek's Church History class at Covenant High School. We appreciate their willingness to rework their articles so that they could be published in our young people's magazine.

Editorial

A Letter To Welcome You To My House Of Imagery

by John M. Faber

Dear Grandchildren:

I haven't heard from you in a long while, and wondered why. But then I haven't written you for a long while either. In this letter we are going to do some more thinking, or, wondering together. Remember we have wondered about angels and about devils? This time we will wonder about images. Do you know what images are? I can hear you say. "Sure, Gramps, images are idols the heathen used to worship in old times," Right! Images were worshipped in Bible times and were called idols. They were false gods. But we do not have to go so far back in time. Thousands and millions worship idols in many forms of images today. Your dictionary will inform you that an image is a likeness of a person, animal or any other creature. In Judges 17 we read about a man named Micah who

had a house of idols where he and others could come to worship. Now I am inviting you to my house to wonder about my images. Not my house to which the postman delivers my mail, but to the house of my many mental images. Can you imagine that?

My house has three stories: basement, ground level and upstairs rooms. To get to the basement I will let you in by the outside entrance, down a few steps. There I will show you some of the most horrible images! See, right here on the left, is a golden enameled frog. Look at its grotesque features. The mouth is too wide, its eyes bulge out too far. What a sight! And next to it is a four footed beast with hairy skin and, yes, an imitation man's face! My, what a horrible collection of figures which have been imagined by fallen, depraved men whose imagination has gone beserk! You know, children that the First Man was created to worship his Creator-God. But man fell from that high estate and his nature still demands that he worship. So he worships all right! But he worships dumb images- birds, beasts, snakes, bugs; even insects that have been fashioned by goldsmiths.

One of the rooms in my basement has been made into a "dark room" in which your uncle developed and printed camera pictures. Well, he has grown up and moved away, so I was left with a useless darkened room, with windows heavily covered, door-cracks puttied shut, entirely sealed against any light entering. Is that room dark! I have bored a peep hole through which you may look. One at a time, now. What do you see? Oh, wait, I will switch on the ceiling light in there. Now see there are people worshipping devils! And don't come to the wrong conclusion that I set up that scene out of my imagination. No sirrie. There are many people right now in 1985 who are Satan worshippers! There are satanic cults organized in various cities where they actually meet to praise the name of Satan. They even sacrifice animals and, I am told, even make human sacrifices!

Enough of that dank basement and its gruesome images. Let's take the steps up past the furnace and go to the second floor. Look how nice and light it is here. In the kitchen you will see a beautiful golden calf. Remember when Moses stayed up the mountain too long to suit the waiting people? Though Moses was receiving and writing the Laws of God, Aaron and the people became impatient. The people gave Aaron many earrings, bracelets and other golden ornaments which Aaron put into a hot oven to melt them down. From this molten mass he fashioned a calf-likeness. The people had clamored for something tangible to worship, so Aaron publicly announced, "Here are thy gods which led you out of Egypt." Calf worship was not foreign to them. Egyptians worship calves and all sorts of animals. So the people gathered around the golden calf and sang and danced in un-holy abandon!

Next, in the dining room I have reconstructed the idol some of the Philistines worshipped. His name was "Dagon". Remember the story told in I Sam. 5? The Philistines had stolen the Ark of God from the Israelites and had put it on a table in the house of Dagon. The next morning the worshippers found their god had fallen down before the Ark of God, and his hands and his head were broken off! The Philistines learned that their false god had to bow down to the God which Israel worshipped. You can see that I glued the

broken members back on to show its original form.

Israel again fell into the vile practices of their neighbors and joined them in their licentious Baal worship. There, in the corner behind the fireplace screen I have hidden his image which is so crudely obscene. That one cannot stand in the light of my living room! And before I take you up to the highest order of images, I want you to look at that fat Buddah with three arms and hands on each side of his belly, to show that he can do anything for his worshippers. And here, on the landing halfway up, stands the mythological giant called Cyclops. His one large eye in the middle of his forehead is meant to show that he can look into one's thoughts; no secrets from him!

Now let us go to the top floor of my imaginary house. These ghostly images, (not real, of course, but only thought-images). Modern man knows too much to be found bowing to images! They have been so educated, so sophisticated, so wise in their own conceits! Now they worship ideas. Now they worship people: the Great Emancipator who set the slaves free. That shadowy figure is of the teacher of the theory of evolution. That one - no, I cannot show him to you as yet. You will notice that I have covered him with a heavy veil. You can just imagine behind that mesh is a huge MAN, the grandest of all! I will take this curtain rod and lift the bottom of his veil and let you read his name on that goldplated sign. IT IS THE ANTI-CHRIST.

O:K. now, let's leave this awful house of images and come with me to my house to which the postman delivers my mail. Gram has the kitchen table ready with milk and graham crackers. Mmm, doesn't that look good! Now then, which of those rooms in my image house did you detest most? The dark one in the basement? I agree that might be the most horrible, but I really think that the modern, sophisticated one on the topmost floor is the most dangerous.

Finished with your snack? Then I will reach for my Bible off that shelf and flip it open to the bookmark near the front and find Joshua telling his people, "Choose ye this day whom ye shall serve." Then another bookmark way at the end of the Book we find where the people of God are gathered, at the promise of Jesus, "Surely I come quickly", with their response, "Amen, even so, Come Lord Jesus."

Love, Gramps

Critique THE DANGER OF THE FALSE CHURCH

by Ben Wigger

You know there are times when we like to hold this present generation up on a pedestal for all to see. We all, both young and old, like to be recognized for what we have accomplished. And perhaps one could say that this generation is the smartest, the most advanced of any to date. But let's look at the spiritual side of the coin for a moment. Are we really any different spiritually than any generation that has gone on before us? To be very specific, are we any further along the road of religious maturity than say the people

we read about in the Bible? Or do we see the same weakness, the same sin, the same denial in our own lives as we are so quick to point out in those we read about in the pages of God's Holy Word?

These questions need to be answered by each one of us. For if we are to grow and develop in things spiritual we have to be very aware of just where our own strengths and weaknesses lie. Once we know, we can do our best to correct any problem that exposes itself.

You know that it can often seem completely impossible to us that the Jews of Jesus' day could deny that Jesus was the promised Messiah. They had Him right with them, preaching and performing miracles on a daily basis; and yet they wanted no part in His Kingdom. Just read the account of Jesus feeding the five thousand with five loaves of bread and two fish as it is recorded in John Chapter Six. The day after Jesus performed this miracle the people asked Jesus how He had gotten across the Sea of Galilee when the day before they had seen his disciples go away by ship without Him in it. But Jesus who knows the inner workings of all men answered their question by saying: "Ye seek me not because ye saw the miracles, but because ye did eat of the loaves and were filled". Verse 26

These "followers" of Jesus were denying the Kingship of Christ. They had only one thought; to make Jesus their earthly king. After all, any man who could feed them like He had done the day before would make a fine earthly king. They were seeking after the bread that perisheth, and they wanted nothing to do with Jesus who calls Himself the Bread of Life later on in the chapter.

And the church of today does much the same thing as we read about in this gospel account. There are many who also deny the Kingship of Jesus by making of Him that which He is not. Some who call themselves followers of Christ want no part in any spiritual kingdom which has as its head a meek and lowly Saviour who died a shameful death on the cross. Rather, they are looking for a Christ who is a revolutionary, or a Christ who is a reformer, or they desire to make Christ nothing but a mere man.

The important point to remember thru all of this is that despite these obvious departures from God's Word which we see all around us today, those who depart still go around and claim to be followers of Jesus and His teachings. The false church of course never goes about calling itself the false church. It should then become very obvious to us that it will be up to us to determine just where the false church lies today.

Now it would be nice if the false church posed no threat to us, or specifically to you the young people of our churches, but to assume such a position would be rather naive. For if there is one age group on which the false church, especially the so-called cults, seems to thrive, it is the youth of this country and that means you.

Some like the appeal of the false church because they feel it is merely trying to bring a breath of fresh air into old outmoded traditional forms of worship. Others like the appeal of the false church because they feel it is simply providing answers to life's basic questions. These people's lives are in crisis, and the false church is giving them a sense of stability and of belonging. The false church, especially

cults, can provide a warm environment for troubled individuals. It offers a home, a safe place, an identity in a difficult choatic world.

But perhaps there are really two major reasons why we have seen an explosion in the numbers of the false churches and in the numbers of people who flock to them. And those two reasons are ignorance and uncertainty. Where you have church people who are both unfamiliar and uncertain about just what they believe, there you will find the false church on the attack. It uses these two weaknesses as a wedge to gain entrance into the church. It is sad to say, but no less true, that at best the average Christian is totally unprepared to defend his or her faith. In a word, we are all guilty of perhaps knowing what be believe, but not why. And this could make anyone of us a potential target for the false church.

Thus it becomes very obvious to all of us the important need to be completely familiar with just what it is we believe, and perhaps even more important, why. We can be thankful that our churches still place a great deal of importance on developing instruction in the doctrines of the Reformed faith. For where churches have failed to instruct and emphasize a definite systematic plan of just what it believes doctrinally you see the false church rushing in to fill the void.

However, no matter what you hear, the false church is not based on Scripture. It is true that all of these so-called churches or cults attempt to build themselves a foundation on the Word of God, but if you take a careful look at each you will almost always find that the founder of this specific church tells you what the Bible says. He in a sense becomes the source of all knowledge that is given to the members. They say this is what the Bible says, or that is what it teaches. The members then are obligated to get their information from those in control.

The false church also usually makes some sort of appeal to a person's reason and rationality. They like to apply a person's reason and rationality to look at specific doctrines of the church. Hell is unreasonable for a loving God. A Triune God is irrational. Christ being born of a virgin is unreasonable, and so on and on they go.

It can not be stressed enough that we all have to be aware of just how real the danger of the false church is. It is a mark of the development of the false church which will give rise to the anti-christ himself. So we can expect that it will only get worse and continue to grow at a faster and faster pace. For that reason alone, it is important to apply your Christian home life, your Christian church life, and your Christian school life to every aspect of your daily life. You can not leave it behind or hide it under a bushel so that none can see it. For the minute you do that you leave yourself wide open to the temptation of the false church. After all, the lie of the devil can be much more appealing to our sinful nature than the truth. And if it were not for the grace of God in our lives we would be unable to withstand the onslaught of this wicked world in which we live. We can thank God daily that we have become reconciled to Him by the death of His Son. For without that death of Jesus Christ, the false church would prevail. However, such is not the case. The victory over evil, in this case religious evil, is ours; no one can take that away from us.

Truth vs. Error
APOSTASY IN THE LAST DAYS

by Rev. Robert C. Harbach

"Mercy unto you and peace and love be multiplied!"
—Jude 2.

THE SALUTATION. This is more than the expected, nice, polite introduction to a letter. It is Scripture, given by inspiration of God, and is therefore profitable. For we, too, live in these last days of the Church afflicted with apostasy. What shall be our comfort, since we are not only unable to escape such last-day affliction, but must endure it? Exactly this: not only the effectual, fervent prayer of a righteous man on behalf of the churches, but a divine, unconditional effectual command—Mercy to you and peace and love be multiplied! This is the sort of command that when the Lord speaks it, it is accomplished; whatever He commands, it occurs and stands fast. Psm. 33:9. Does He command that all these mercies shall sustain us in these last days? Then they most certainly shall be our source of strength in the evil day! What we have here is the comfort God commands (ordains) for us. In that connection we consider (1) the content of the commanded comfort, "mercy, peace and love," and (2) the abundance of it, "be multiplied."

THE CONTENT. **Mercy.** First of all, mercy is what God is, then what God gives. Mercy is that attribute of God according to which He is in Himself absolutely the Most Blessed One, the eternally happy God, who purposes to make His people everlastingly blessed, forever happy in covenant fellowship with Him. Therefore, it is highly improper to speak of "common mercy", for God in His very nature is the highest and only good, who knows and loves Himself as the Most Blessed One forever. Nor can God's name, nature or essence be profaned or rendered common. God always remains God. He is immutably the God of mercy. To conceptionally make mercy common is to blaspheme God's name. For mercy is an attribute of His name. Neither is the divine attitude of mercy common. Read Psalm 136. God's rich earthly gifts are not to be compared to nor equated with His free, sovereign, discriminating mercy. To speak of a non-saving mercy is to speak of a non-mercy. But a mercy that is no mercy is not only intellectually intolerable but unimaginable. Mercy is particular, that is, to the elect only.

John Gill, correctly distinguishing the decree of election as the decree of the end and the decree of the means, sees, however, the divine **love** in the end, but **mercy** in the means to the end. For he sees the objects of love as the glorified (unfallen) elect, while the objects of mercy are the miserable (fallen). He illustrates this in the holy angels, objects of God's love, but not objects of God's mercy, since they were never miserable. But the divine attri-

bute of mercy reveals God the ever Blessed One and never miserable. In the decree of the end, God ordains all His glorified (unfallen) elect, rational-moral creatures, men and angels, according to our conception of mercy, to the state of perfect blessedness forever. Therefore we can not accept Gill's distinction at this point between love and mercy. As to the decree of the means, mercy continues to be shown the elect through the way of sin (the Fall) and grace. This means that mercy is not only electing mercy, covenant mercy, but also redeeming mercy, pardoning mercy, forgiving mercy and complete saving mercy. Tit. 3:5. All this mercy we need and have to cause us to stand in these last days of "the (great) falling away."

PEACE. This concept may be defined as wholeness, soundness, health, well-being, prosperity, security, safety, I Thess. 5:3, good (of every kind: peace as opposed to war, concord as opposed to strife, peace as opposed to evil, Isa. 45:7). Peace is expressed in greeting: "Peace be unto you," Lk. 24:36, in dismissal: "Go in peace," Mk. 5:34, in benediction: "the Lord give you peace," Num. 6:26; "Now the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace in believing," Rom. 15:13; "the Lord of peace give you peace at all times in all ways," II Thes. 3:16.

"Mine own familiar (intimate) friend" (Ps. 41:9) is "the man of my peace" (Hebrew). God is "the God of peace" (Heb. 13), His gospel is the gospel of peace, Eph. 6:15; His Son is our peace, Eph. 2:14; He is Melchizedek, the King of peace, Heb. 7:2. The peace of Christ is His gift to us: "My peace I give unto you. These things have I spoken to you that in Me ye may have peace," Jn. 14:27, 16:33. God thinks thoughts of peace toward His people, Jer. 29:11. Expecting peace while living in sin is self-deception. Jer. 8:11. Peace is not for the wicked. Isa. 57:21. God's covenant is a covenant of peace. Isa. 54:10. Proclaimers of the gospel publish peace. Isa. 52:7. The promised Messiah is the Prince of Peace. Isa. 9:6. He promises to bless His people with peace. Psm. 29:11. The increase of His government and peace shall have no end. Isa. 9:7. The "meek shall inherit the land and delight themselves in the abundance of peace." Psm. 37:11. Jerusalem's peace shall be like a river. Isa. 66:12. Peace shall be within the walls of (the new) Jerusalem. Psm. 122:7. In His temple God gives peace. Hagg. 2:9. Saints go into it with joy and are led from it with peace. Isa. 55:12. The very officers of Israel shall be peace. Isa. 60:17. God shall extend and speak peace to the heathen. Zech. 9:10. Right now, "we **have** peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ." Rom. 5:1. With the apostasy already upon us (Jude 3-4), the history of apostasy a warning to us (5-7) and apostate teachers corrupting souls in the churches (8-19), what would we ever do if peace were not multiplied to us!

LOVE. The love of God is first. The first and principle object of His love is Himself. Because God is perfectly pure, holy, just and good, arrayed in eternal glory, He loves Himself as the only good, and has made Himself and His own glory the ultimate end of all things in heaven, earth, grace and providence. God is attracted to Himself as to no other. He needs no other to love or be loved. He delights in contemplating Himself, His infinite nature and lovely attributes. He needs nothing and no one outside

Himself to increase His happiness. He lives within His own triune being among the three divine Persons of the Godhead in mutual and eternal love. The Father loves the Son through (never apart from) the Spirit, and loves the Spirit in the Son. The Son loves the Father through the Spirit, and loves the Spirit through the Father. The Spirit loves the Father through the Son, and loves the Son in the Father. God is the overflowing Fountain of all good, the infinite Source of love. The love in the text then is God's love to us, rather than our love for God. This is more in keeping with the effectual prayer that "love be multiplied unto you"—the same as in I Pet. 1:2 and II Pet. 1:2, "Grace and peace be multiplied unto you." Grace, peace and love are not virtues in us which we are to multiply Godward. It is rather, may these be multiplied to you. The verb is passive. God alone is the active performer of this blessed multiplication. Mercy multiplied! Is that not the only saving good that shall keep our heads above all the raging waves of apostasy? "And love be multiplied!" Then in these last days, though all men about us fall away and we only are left, God's unfailing love to us shall not diminish but increase.

THE ABUNDANCE. Mercy, peace and love be **multiplied** unto you! This is not a command underscoring our responsibility to God, but an expression of what God commands for us. "The Lord shall command the blessing on thee" (Deut. 28:8). "The Lord will command His lovingkindness (lit., **mercy**) in the daytime" unto me. (Psm. 42:8). The Lord multiplies unto us the unsearchable riches of Christ. God is rich in mercy because of His great love wherewith He loved us. (Eph. 2:4). His love to us is so multiplied that it "passeth knowledge." (Eph. 3:19). Blessings multiplied are greater than those which come by added increase. The latter come one after another. Then there is an increase of two. But two multiplied by two (or by three!) is so much richer! God gives mercy, peace and love multiplied, squared and cubed!

Apostates creep in and lurk everywhere. They threaten the whole cause of the true church. The Lord commands not, Get up and fight them, but, "Mercy and peace and love be multiplied unto you." God's blessing on His people will be the defeat of the enemy. God's blessing on His people shall preserve them from modern corruptions. There is a tidal wave of fearful wickedness out there in the world, as the current political activity reveals. We expect that of the world. The sad thing of it is, the very same vileness is sweeping through the churches. The enemy is strong, but best of all, God is with us. Our safety is in Prince Emmanuel. The Diabolonians fear Him and His mighty power worse than anything. Apostasy runs rampant in and through the visible churches. There is a terrible infection killing off many. Our best protection is in the sovereign mercy of Christ's blood; in the confidence that "the Lord will give blessing and strength to His people; the Lord all His people will comfort with peace"; and in a sense of the love of God shed abroad in our heart by the Holy Spirit. Yet there is more assurance and comfort, while so many are falling away. Read verses 20-23 and go in the way of that charted devotion. Then you will know that the benediction (verses 24, 25) applies to you, making you to differ.

Delighting In The Lord's Day

by Rev. Ron Hanko

Perhaps you remember the beautiful words of Psalm 37:4; "Delight thyself also in the Lord". Have you ever wondered what that means? The Word of the Lord in Isaiah 58:13, 14 tells us that we find our delight in the Lord when we call His day, the Sabbath, a delight: "Call the Sabbath a delight . . . **then** shalt thou delight thyself in the Lord."

Have you ever called the Sabbath a delight, or even thought of it in that way? Have you ever waited as eagerly for the Sabbath, the Lord's Day, as for other "delights," maybe a week's vacation, a day at the beach, or an evening with your friends? Are you so delighted with this one day out of each seven that, like David, you count it better than a thousand other days (Ps. 84:10)?

Often it happens that the Lord's Day is merely a part of our weekly routine, or worse, that we cannot wait until the Lord's Day is over, so that we may resume the business of the rest of the week. When the Lord's Day is viewed as something that interferes with the routine of our life, then we are like Israel in the days of Amos, who said; "When will the new moon be gone, that we may sell corn? and the Sabbath, that we may set forth wheat" (Amos 8:5)? Such failure to enjoy the Sabbath with all its duties and privileges can only be an indication of our failure to delight ourselves in God.

In these verses Isaiah also reminds us that the greatest threat to our appreciation of the Sabbath is our own pleasure. He tells us that the Sabbath is like holy ground on which we stand in the presence of our great God. We must not, Isaiah says, try to stand with one foot on that holy ground and the other foot in the way of our own pleasure. If we do that we will find that we take less and less pleasure in the Sabbath and in God Who gave the day. It is one or the other, our pleasure or pleasure in God. We cannot halt between the two.

Listen!

"If thou turn thy foot from . . . doing thy pleasure on my holy day . . .

"And call the Sabbath a pleasure . . .

"Then shalt thou take pleasure in the Lord."

Keeping both feet on the holy ground of the Sabbath without turning away our feet to do our own pleasures means two things, not doing our own ways and not speaking our own words.

Not doing our own ways means that we put aside for this one day all the work and cares of our daily life in the world. Those ways are not necessarily sinful, but they belong to this present life, and on the Lord's Day we live the life of heaven. Our present life and daily activities shall never be a part of that heavenly life. God says in Isaiah 65:17; "Behold, I create new heavens and a new earth: and the former shall not be remembered, nor come into mind. That begins in this life on the Lord's Day. And what greater delight can there be than that of forgetting for a few hours each week our present life of toil and tears and beginning to live as we shall live in glory.

"Call it a delight!"

"Cease from your own ways."

We must also cease from speaking our own words. It is very striking that Isaiah mentions this especially. The Lord's Day is not for idle chatter about the weather or the latest ballgame. It is a day, not for talk about our business, our pleasures, our life, but a day for remembering, for listening to God's Word, and for meditating. It is a day for speaking, singing, confessing, and teaching God's Word. On this day the seed of the Word is planted and watered that it may grow and bear fruit through the coming week. It must not be disturbed by idle chatter, or covered so deeply with other talk that it fails to take root and grow.

"Call the Sabbath a delight . . . not speaking thine own words."

Isaiah sums this all up when he says that we must not only call the day a delight, but "the holy of the Lord." It must be "holy" or "separated" from all other days even in our speech.

The key to all of this is that day be "honorable," that is, filled from beginning to end with the honor and glory of God. It is His Name which must be honored in worship, the glory of His deeds which must be remembered, and the delights of fellowship with Him that must be our pleasure. It is His sanctuary which must be reverenced, His people who must be our companions, His grace that we must seek.

All of the promises of the preceeding verses of Isaiah 58 are fulfilled in the way of obedience to this great Sabbath admonition.

"Then shall thy light break forth as the morning . . . .

"Then shalt thou call, and the Lord shall answer; thou shalt cry and He shall say, Here I am.

"Then . . . the Lord shall guide thee continually. . . .

"Then . . . thou shalt be like a watered garden, and like a spring of water, whose waters fail not."

But above all, "Then thou shalt delight thyself in the Lord."

Then too, God will take pleasure in us, for in the way of delighting in the Lord's Day we show positively that we are God's redeemed people, consecrated to Him and sanctified for His glory. Then we are a crown of glory in the hand of the Lord, and a royal diadem in the hand of our God (Is. 62:3). Then we shall be called by a new name which the mouth of the Lord shall name. We shall no more be called "Forsaken" but our name shall be "Hephzibah," that is, "My delight is in her."

Call the Sabbath, the Lord's Day, a delight!

Current Events and Comments

PERILOUS TIMES

by David Rau

II Timothy 3:1-5 "This know also, that in the last days perilous times shall come. For men shall be lovers of their own selves, covetous, boasters, proud, blasphemers, disobedient to parents, unthankful, unholy, without natural affection, truce-breakers, false accusers, incontinent, fierce, despisers of those that are good, traitors, heady, highminded, lovers of pleasures more

than lovers of God; having a form of godliness, but denying the power thereof: from such turn away."

The apostle Paul wrote this letter to instruct Timothy, who was at that time a young minister. In this chapter, Paul is warning Timothy about the signs of the times. We also must take note of these perilous times in which we live. It is clear that the danger of which Paul warns Timothy is not from without the church, but from within. Paul does not warn of violent persecution, but rather of those people who have a form of godliness. They call themselves Christians. They are in the church.

Are these last days and perilous times upon us? It is clear, looking at the world, that they are. We only have to glance at the newspaper to find that all of these signs about which Paul writes are commonplace in the world. Most of these signs are considered normal, acceptable behavior by the world. In fact, Paul had described, for the most part, what the world around us is like today.

We don't have to look at the world though. Look at the church. Look at our own lives. Does this list describe us? Do we love some of these sins which Paul lists: lovers of our own selves, covetous, boasters, proud, blasphemers, disobedient to parents? If so, then we have a real problem. We are not walking separately from the world. We cannot expect God's blessing upon us when we walk in unrepented sin. Does this list describe us? If so, these are the last days and these are perilous times.

Are we lovers of pleasure more than lovers of God? Do sports come before catechism in your life? Do we come unprepared to society because our social life is too busy? Perhaps we can skip a few Sunday services to vacation: after all, we need rest. We try to justify our sins, but there is no justification for sin, only repentance. If God does not come first in our lives, then we are lovers of pleasure more than lovers of God. If we would rather watch T.V. all night, listen to worldly music, or go to the movies, then something is spiritually wrong with us. God is not foremost in our lives. These are perilous times, and the end is near.

Paul refers to people who have a form of godliness, but deny the power thereof (verse 5). He refers to people who call themselves Christians, who are baptized, probably go to church, catechism, and Christian schools; however their walk does not show Christianity. They do whatever they please. They do not show repentance, but rather continue in the sinful ways. Paul says, "From such turn away." Do not "hang around" with these kinds of people. Tell them they are sinning, but don't count them as your friends. Certainly we see people like this around us. These are the last days, and these are perilous times.

What makes these times so perilous? The devil is very clever. He is working harder than ever, but he is not making a frontal assault on us. The government is not bothering us, we are not suffering severe persecution, nor are our lives in danger. In fact, we live pretty comfortable lives. The devil is attacking us where we are weakest: from within. The devil is lulling us into a false security. Everything is going fine, or so it seems. But gradually we are being rocked to sleep. It isn't happening overnight, but little by little, we are losing our spiritual sensitivity. Our sins don't bother us quite as much. More and more our sins are considered

normal, acceptable behavior. We are becoming more tolerant of the world and of sin. This can not be. They are our enemies. We must fight. Our lives must be a continual struggle against all sin. Do not compromise the most important thing in your life for a night out on the town. The devil knows what you, by nature, want. He makes it so available to us: so easy to get. Just a turn of a dial gets the radio or T.V. on. Fight him, continually.

James 4:7 & 8 says, "Resist the devil and he will flee from you. Draw nigh to God, and he will draw nigh to you." This means if you give in to the devil and your own sinful flesh, the next time the devil tempts you, you will give in that much easier. Gradually you become insensitive to a sin. Your conscience no longer bothers you. That is when you hear yourself make comments like, "I know I shouldn't be doing it, but it isn't hurting anyone, and besides, everybody else is doing it." That is not resisting the devil. If you try to resist the devil in and of your own strength, you will fail. Only in and through God's strength can we overcome.

Resisting the devil is, first of all hearing and living what we hear preached to us every Sunday. That is most important. Study your catechism and prepare for society. Do not let worldly cares push spiritual priorities out of your life. Learn and love God's word. We must leave plenty of time, in our busy lives for our own personal devotions. Our lives must revolve around our gratitude for our faith and salvation. That is resisting the devil. When you do that, then he will flee from you.

Then also, you will draw nigh to God. You will become more aware of your salvation. You will be prepared for these last, perilous days that are upon us. You will have to struggle, but the victory is sure. God will protect us in these perilous times in which we live.

Convention Article

RELATIONSHIPS IN THE HOME

by Rev. Van Baren

The subject of "relationships" in the home is rather broad. It does, however, point out an area of concern both for parents and their children. What these relationships are, and what is demanded of each in these relationships, is not difficult to determine.

One might mention first of all the relationship which exists between parents: your mother and your father. The Bible is clear when it speaks to this relationship. Of wives, we read in Eph. 5:22, 23, "Wives, submit yourselves unto your own husbands, as unto the Lord. For the husband is the head of the wife, even as Christ is the head of the church: and he is the savior of the body." And of husbands that same chapter declares in verse 25, "Husbands, love your wives, even as Christ also loved the church and gave himself for it."

Scripture, then, admonishes wives to be "obedient" and husbands to

"love". These two admonitions point to the problems which often arise in the marriage relationship. Where the wife refuses the Scriptural admonition to obey in the Lord, and where the husband refuses to rule in love, there one finds marital problems—with consequences for the children as well. Where Scripture is obeyed, there is unity and harmony in the home.

There is also the relationship between children and their parents. Of this too, Scripture clearly speaks. In Eph. 6:1, 2, we are told, "Children, obey your parents in the Lord: for this is right. Honor thy father and mother which is the first commandment with promise." Here, obedience is demanded in harmony with the fifth commandment. There are no qualifications given. Parents are to demand that this command be obeyed. Children are required by God Himself to obey. Where one does not heed the command, there is trouble and disruption in the home. Where the command is obeyed, there the blessing of God rests.

Parents, too, have the reminder not to "provoke your children to wrath, but bring them up in the nurture and admonition of the Lord." (Eph. 6:4). Rule, then must not be arbitrary nor unfair—which provokes to wrath, but rather must be proper and in harmony with the demands of Scripture.

Finally, there is the relationship between brothers and sisters in the home. The Bible also here is very clear. All of the passages which demand that we love one another, that require us to seek the other and his advantage, that require that we do not betray nor speak evilly of one another - apply to this area as well. Envy and jealousy have no place in this relationship.

There is seen strain in the relationships within the home. That strain is seen differently in different homes—but some is always seen. That is true because we are each still sinners who struggle with that old man of sin.

Children see often the strain which exists between father and mother. Arguments, disagreements, are not always hidden from children. Possibly the mother works—and tries to take care of a family at the same time. Perhaps father puts in many hours of labor in order to support his family. There is little time for each other—and little time to help their children or establish close bonds with them. There might be disagreement about spending of money. There might be disagreement as to how one would seek entertainment. There is often disagreement with respect to life-styles. Possibly drinking is a problem. On occasion, there is disagreement on church matters. All of this makes life difficult for growing children. Have you observed some of this too? What ought children or young people do when this kind of trouble arises? Is it possible to talk with parents about this? Might it be necessary to talk to the minister or elders about the difficulty?

Then there are strains in relationships between parents and children—especially when the children become teenagers. Young people become increasingly independent. Rules and restrictions are considered oppressive. Parents appear to be unfair and arbitrary in their rules. Other young people seem to have greater liberty than yourselves. What must be the attitude of young people against their parents? Are parents always right? If they are not, what ought one to do—disobey? What does the Heidel-

berg Catechism say concerning this in its treatment of the fifth commandment? Ought parents to establish the time when one must be in at night? Must parents know where we are going and what we will be doing?

How important is it that young people establish a trust-relationship with their parents? If one is caught doing what he is not supposed to, or going where his parents would not approve—can parents still trust that young person in the future?

What sort of punishment is appropriate for young people who disobey their parents? Is it fair or right to be "grounded" for a time? If you were in the shoes of your parents, how would you deal with a disobedient teen-ager?

Finally, strain exists within familes among children. There is, of course, the normal bickering and arguing. But beyond that, there is the envy and jealousy which exists because one child believes himself unfairly or unequally treated. Do parents sometimes treat one child differently than another? Do you ever believe that you yourself were not always dealt with properly—that a brother or sister was favored above yourself?

There must be a proper solution for the Christian to all problems which result in family strain. The heart of the problem, surely, is that there is not spirituality present as it ought to be. It is not just a question of "relationships", but all this comes down to a matter of the condition of the heart. It is a "heart-problem". To the degree that strain exists, sin is involved: sin which must be confessed and forsaken.

Though often minimized, the answer to problems for the Christian can be found in the Word of God. The more he knows the Word, all other things being equal, the less are his problems. What might cause strain in the home, is resolved when principles of Scripture are applied. There must, then, be a regular study and searching out of Scripture. That is done in connection with societies (where often not a great deal of effort is put forth), that is done in our private devotions. The Word, as preached each Sunday, serves also as guide for us in our lives. He who heeds the Word, experiences the blessings of God.

Prayer too is essential. To tell God of our difficulties, to confess our own sins to Him, to ask His guidance and blessing—all this is essential unto the resolution of our problems. This also results in a blessed unity and oneness within the home.

When difficulties arise, there must be the effort to work out problems and find the Scriptural answers. Perhaps weekly "conferences" could be held by families to encourage this sort of effort. "Communication" is essential for good home relationships. Talking promotes closeness. Where there is mutual concern about spiritual matters, there the love of God will show itself in our actions.

What effort ought young people to put forth in order to encourage unity within the home? Is this only, and exclusively, the responsibility of parents? How can each work towards a proper relationship with parents and siblings? How much value do young people place on Scripture and prayer? Sometimes there appears to be a lack of interest in spiritual responsibilities. How can this change? Or, is it simply not "cool" to be spiritual? Proper spiritual attitudes alone result in good home relationships.

Convention Article
DATING — LEAVING FATHER AND MOTHER

by Pastor W. Bekkering

Introduction

A. Godly young people must be careful and serious in all of their life.
   1. This is true especially in dating and marriage.
   2. Dating is serious because it is the usual means that one uses to find the right wife or husband.

B. This subject is a good one for our Convention.
   1. Convention is a time when the young people are especially conscious of dating.
   2. Most of the conventioneers are at the age when they are at least beginning to give dating some thought.

C. There is an excellent book on this subject that all of us can profit from.
   1. The book is entitled LEAVING FATHER AND MOTHER, by Rev. C. Hanko.
   2. In preparation for this discussion please read at least chapters 2 & 3.

I. Since dating stands closely connected with marriage we ought to say a few things about marriage first of all.

A. Even young people can see that marriage has fallen upon bad times in our day.
   1. The divorce rate has reached the point where nearly one half of all marriages end in divorce.
      a. Untold misery lies in the wake of divorce.
      b. God hates divorce. See Malachi 2:11-16.
   2. What is the cause of this deplorable situation?!
      a. This is a good question for young people to ask and answer.
      b. Is the cause of divorce to be found in the charge that "traditional marriage" is too restrictive?

B. Marriage is a wonderful institution from our God.
   1. Marriage is a help and a joy to those who are married "in the Lord", and live in obedience to Him.
   2. Marriage is not easy.
      a. It requires selflessness on the part of both husband and wife.
      b. Marriage requires planning, love and prayer.

II. The proper attitude toward dating.

A. What the Bible says about dating.
   1. In Bible times there was no dating such as we know it today.
      a. Most of the parents chose mates for their children.
      b. Godly parents were deeply interested in godly mates for their children.

2. Some significant passages on this subject. Please look them up and read them.
   a. Gen. 24 tells how Abraham found a wife for Isaac. Note God's sovereign direction.
   b. Gen. 26:34-35 is a negative example of Esau choosing his wives.
   c. Gen. 27:46 and Gen. 28:1-5 tells about the beginning of Jacob's search for a wife.

B. God's sovereignty in dating and marriage.
   1. God still brings two people together. As our marriage form puts it: ". . . witnessing thereby that he doth yet as with his hand bring unto every man his wife."
      a. God does this in many different ways, and we may expect His help.
      b. We believe that God has already determined who our partners in life shall be.
         1(It remains for us to learn the will of God in this respect.
         2(Generally speaking this will be the goal and purpose of dating.
   2. Prayer ought to play a significant part in seeking a life partner.
      a. Prayer does not stand overagainst God's sovereignty.
      b. Prayer is a means God gives us to seek and find His help. See Phil. 4:6-7.
         1(Sometimes young people become overly concerned about finding a mate and fail to wait patiently on the Lord.
         2(Sometimes young people neglect the means of prayer, and seek and find mates in the way of carnal lust.
      c. Prayer keeps us conscious of God's good way for us, and of our need of His help.

III. Some practical considerations about dating.
   A. Some dating guidelines.
      1. Christian young people should only ever consider dating and/or marrying other Christians.
         a. Look up and read Ps. 119:63.
         b. I Cor. 7:39 limits Christians to marrying other Christians (". . .only in the Lord").
         c. "Be ye not unequally yoked together with unbelievers." See II Cor. 6:14-18.
      2. Dating should be a time to get to know each other well.
         a. Because of the intimate nature of the marriage relationship this is so important.
            1) Getting to know each other well takes time. Hasty, passionate courtships are dangerous and often do not really accomplish the goal.
            2) Learn about your differences and similarities. e.g. Family background, church connections and areas of individual interests.
         b. Get to know each other spiritually.
            1) Talk about spiritual things on dates to get to know the doctrinal

and spiritual convictions of each other.

2) Agreement on spiritual principles cannot be stressed too much. If there are serious differences, get them settled before marriage!

3. Love and respect each other in the Lord.
   a. Do not let your sexual impulses get out of hand.
      1) Avoid sensual situations such as scanty clothing, trips to the beach and close physical contact.
      2) A reasonable curfew should be strictly observed.
   b. Christian love honors God and the neighbor.
      1) Our love for God is shown by keeping all His commandments.
      2) Our neighbor, in this case, is our boy friend or our girl friend.
         a) Love does not behave itself unseemly, seeks not her own. See I Cor. 13:5.
         b) Such love God blesses.

B. We want to make some distinctions between dating in high school and dating after high school.
   1. High school dating can be more casual than later dating.
      a. Young people in high school should not take their dating too seriously.
         1) They are undergoing tremendous physical and psychological changes, as well as spiritual growth.
         2) More maturity often changes a person's outlook on life, and along with that, the idea of a life mate.
      b. Too serious dating ("going steady") in high school has its problems.
         1) It limits the opportunity to get to know other boys and girls.
         2) It implies a serious commitment that many young people are not ready to make.
   2. Later dating (courtship) is the time for a more serious seeking of a wife or a husband.
      a. A few added years and more maturity often help to shape one's perspective of marriage and a marriage partner.
      b. Most of what we said about dating applies more specifically to courtship.

IV. Some questions for discussion.
   1. What is a proper age to begin dating?
   2. May we date other Christians outside our churches?
   3. What are some good things to do on dates?
   4. What role ought parents to play in the choice of a mate for their children?
   5. How far should parents set up rules to control dating?
   6. What is a reasonable curfew time?
   7. May a girl refuse to date with a Christian boy without feeling guilty?
   8. Do you think that there is too much pressure applied to have dates? From parents? From peers?
   9. What should one do if he or she never has any dates and would like to have them?

COME!!

All are Invited

to the

45th Annual Young People's Convention

Theme: **All Whom I Have Chosen**

Theme Text: **II Corinthians 5:20**

Speakers:

I Missions Abroad - Rev. Woudenberg

II Missions of the Body Church - Rev. Van Overloop

III Personal Missions - Rev. Haak

July 29 - August 2