BEACON LIGHTS

FOR PROTESTANT REFORMED YOUTH

VOLUME XLVII NUMBER 2

FEBRUARY 1988

DRAMA: HOW FAR SHOULD WE GO?

BEACON LIGHTS

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

EXECUTIVE BOARD
President - Bryan Van Baren
Vice-President - Greg Holstege
Secretary - Robin Kuiper
Treasurer - Steve Lotterman
Librarian - Karen Kuiper
Vice-Secretary - Jory Kalsbeek
Vice-Treasurer - Brad Kuiper
Youth Coordinator - Hank Vander Waal
Spiritual Advisors - Rev. Gritters
Rev. Haak

BEACON LIGHTS STAFF
Editor-in-Chief - David Harbach
Associate Editors - John Faber
Bruce Jabaay
Finance Manager - Doug Dykstra
Secretary - Karen Vink
Brenda Holstege, Lisa Van Koevering, Thelma Westra

CONTRIBUTING EDITORS
Mrs. H. Brands, Mitch Dick, Rev. C. Hanko, Rev. R. Harbach, Rev. Heys, Bernie Kamps, Rev. D. Kuiper, Dave Rau, Deane Wassink

Postmaster: Send address changes to Joel Zandstra, 6157 Balsam Dr., Hudsonville, MI 49426

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: Nancy Van Baren
6066 Wilson Ave. S.W.,
Grandville, MI 49418

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.

The **Beacon Lights** is available on cassette tape. Write to Dirk Westra, 7960 Ronson, Jenison 49428

Scholarship Fund Treasurer: Howard Pastoor. 5511 Bauer Rd., Hudsonville, MI 49426

COLLECTIONS: Doug Dykstra
7928 Parklane, Jenison, MI 49428
Subscription Price $5.00

SUBSCRIPTION DUES: MICHIGAN
Lisa Van Koevering
3810 100th Ave., Zeeland, MI 49464
OUTSIDE Michigan: Brenda Holstege
7663 Bliss Court
Grandville, MI 49418

Contents

EDITORIAL
Young People: An asset to the Church - Bruce Jabaay 1
Seeking God's will For My Life - Jeff Terpstra 4
FOCUS ON CHRISTIAN WOMEN - Responsibilities of Conception:
VII Spiritual Training Emotionally - Mrs. H. Brands 6
Drama - How Far Should We Go? - Rev. Robert C. Harbach 9
CRITIQUE
Opinionating in Love (2) - Mitch Dick 13
TRUTH VS. ERROR - Apostasy In The Last Days
19. Apostates Predicted by the Apostles 15

Editorial

YOUNG PEOPLE: AN ASSET TO THE CHURCH

by Bruce Jabaay

Young people, you are a distinct and very important part of the church. You are the future leaders of God's Church and must prepare yourselves to maintain the truths of scripture held forth by the Church. Paul directs Timothy in chapter 3:15, "know how thou oughtest to behave thyself in the house of God, which is the church of the living God, the pillar and ground of the truth". Fathers, mothers, pastors, elders, teachers, young people's leaders, and all of God's Church express with John in the third epistle, "I have no greater joy than to hear that my children walk in truth". If you have that truth revealed to you through faith, then James tells us you will show that faith by your works. Now the question is, since you are "a peculiar people, zealous of good works" (Titus 2:14), what can **you** do to be an asset to the church?

First and foremost, you must continue to walk and grow in truth through constant prayer and study of God's word. You need strength from God to be part of the "pillar and ground of the truth". Isaiah 40 inspires the weary and humbles the young by saying, "Even the youths shall faint and be weary, and the young men shall utterly fall: But they that wait upon the Lord shall renew their strength; they shall mount up with wings as of eagles; they shall run and not be weary; and they shall walk, and not faint".

Studying scripture is very hard work and demands a lot of time, but the spiritual rewards are very gratify-

ing. If you are studying the prophesies of Daniel or the act of justification as taught in Romans, you need to do more than simply read the chapter(s). You must "search the scriptures" as Christ commanded the Pharisees in John 5:39 for "they are they which testify of me". When searching through the Bible, it is extremely helpful to have ready access to cross references, commentaries, study guides, and a concordance. Remember "All scripture is given by inspiration of God . . . That the man of God may be perfect, throughly furnished unto all good works" (II Tim. 3:16-17).

Let's talk about the power of prayer. The real power of prayer is often overlooked. You will not change the will of God through prayer, so what good is prayer? Prayer will make you more conscious of God's will and bring you closer to God and His people. When praying, apply God's Word to your surroundings and circumstances, remembering in everything to give God the glory, and ask Him what He wills you to do. If you pray about the needs of the congregation you will be mindful of her needs and hopefully pricked in your heart to help in any way you can. When praying for the sick, you are mindful of their needs for comfort and God's continuing mercies of which they are reminded by your visit. When praying for the poor, you can give of what God has given you. You must also pray to "be not weary in well doing"!

It is then through Bible reading and prayer that you have a deep and clear sense of what your calling is in the church; and from which you receive strength and courage to be zealous in good works. Keeping this in mind, let's see how we can put this into practice.

In some ways young people, these are the best years of your lives. You do not have the afflictions of old age or the grave responsibilities of raising a family. This is the time to busy yourselves with doing good works for God's people. "Remember now thy Creator, in the days of thy youth, while the evil days come not, nor the years draw nigh, when thou shalt say, I have no pleasure in them" (Ecc. 12:1). Satan is very clever in tempting young people with the sinful pleasures and vanities of youth. Do not give the best years of your life to Satan!

What can you do within the church? Be active! Come to society and catechism (post confession as well), and sacrifice your time and energies preparing for these meetings. Visit the sick, lonely and down-hearted. Assist the needy. You don't have to be a pastor, elder or deacon to help members of your church. Neither do you have to act as a society when helping, but rather "Let no man despise thy youth: but be thou an example of the believers, in word, in conversation, in charity, in Spirit, in faith, in purity" (I Tim. 4:12). You must be an example to all God's people. Encourage young people around about you to seek the kingdom of God rather than the sinful pleasures of youth - even when its not the popular thing to do. Fellowship with the younger and older generations, the rich and the poor, the simple and the wise, the strong and the weak, the meek and the bold; for we are "all" God's people.

How you conduct yourself outside the church is also important to the church's well being. "Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father which is in heaven" (Matt.

5:16). Defend the truth and let it be known you are a child ot God both in deed and conversation. When you pass up an opportunity to witness, ask yourself: "Is it because I am ashamed of the gospel and fear for my own honor and reputation?". When your Arminian friend remarks about God's love for all mankind, be ready to point out the truth of Scripture. Your actions are also very important, for remember you show your faith by your works. Not only must you witness but you must be careful not to fall into the ways of the world. Be on your guard, for "The wicked watcheth the righteous, and seeketh to slay him" (Psalm 37:32). You must not be a bad example and let the world point its finger and say "A Ha!".

Being a good witness in your home is also very important to the church. Your younger brothers and sisters are watching you closely and are often caught saying, "Well, if he (she) can do it, so can I". Your parents will also be encouraged by your good works. The spiritual well being of the family is the life and breath of the church.

"What doth the Lord thy God require of thee, but to fear the Lord thy God, to walk in all his ways, and to love him, and to serve the Lord thy God with all they heart and with all thy soul" (Deut. 10:12).

MY FATHER'S CARE

My Father, God, lives up in Heaven;
His boundless wealth is mine
For thru His Son I am an heir
Of everything Divine.

My Father made the world so fair
And put the stars in place,
And thru His wondrous lovely Son,
Sends down His love and grace.

My Father knows what's in my heart;
He knows my every need,
And He will surely help me out
For He's a friend indeed.

My Father knows when I am ill;
He sees the sparrow's fall
And He who really loves me so
Will hear me when I call.

My Father guides each step I take;
He is my shield and song
He watches o'er me day and night
And keeps me all day long.

My Father knows just what I need;
He sends down blessings rare,
And all the time both day and night
He lifts my every care.

My Father knows how Weak I am;
He knows I am but "dust"
And all my "good" compared with Him
Is naught but worthless rust.

My Father chastens me when wrong;
Makes use of staff and rod,
And guides me in the narrow way
For I'm a child of God.

SEEKING GOD'S WILL FOR MY LIFE

by Jeff Terpstra

Although my life is already predestined by my Creator, I am still responsible for the following of the Lord's plan or will for my life. Even though God has laid down my path of life, I still must seek His guidance and strength.

But more often than not, God's will for us is not as clear as it might be for others and these times are often full of doubt and are discouraging for the Christian.

This path of life includes many major decisions. Some of these are as such: our calling, which is in itself a vast collection of decisions. There might be the question of college; how long, where?

Another major decision may be to start looking for a job, or yet another, to look for a wife.

Since most of these decisions must be made at the end of high school. I shall address this article to those people who are now going through the struggles that I did a few years ago. The post high school years, I feel are the most traumatic as it seems that all these decisions are coming all at once and the confusion and pressure are also coming from all sides. During these times it is all important to pray to our heavenly Father who is divinely watching over His people at all times, but it is also important to seek the counsel of our parents and close, serious-minded friends.

In the article, I am going to discuss with you what I have learned about discovering and understanding God's will for my life and share with you some of the instances in my life that will possibly help illustrate what I'm saying. Also those of you that are going through this time of your life, I sincerely empathize with you, having been there myself and maybe our discussion of it will help you.

I gave some examples earlier of major decisions. Let's concentrate on our calling which is the most important of all. My experience has been that no matter how much preparation has been made in earlier years in high school, I wasn't very serious about it because the time to implement what I was learning was so far away. Also during this time I began to romanticize various careers like being a great and distinguished teacher or a silver tongued minister with a large church. Then I realized that I was going about these decisions in the wrong way. I was thinking only of myself and that what ever I chose to be, I automatically had the talents for. But my motivation was all wrong and when I got to college, the desire and dedication soon wore off. Confusion set in and I began to get depressed as the future looked bleak. While I was in the middle of one of these times, a close friend at college gave me a note instructing me to read Psalm 139. I did and I learned an awful

lot from this simple yet beautiful Psalm. You know, we sometimes feel as though we are completely on our own and that we are suddenly thrown out into the world of wolves, completely unequipped for life. But although we are responsible for our actions, the decisions we make are merely the will of God. The depression began to disappear as I realized that my "downsitting and my uprising" is already known by God and that He is guiding me. What a beautiful comfort for a Christian!

I also mentioned earlier that sometimes our future isn't as clear as it might seem to be for others. This is the heart of the matter. Most of the time we have to literally seek God's will for us. Sometimes, in the process of seeking, we come up against the few tightly closed doors which indicates to us that it wasn't God's will for us. We must continually pray to God that He might show us His plan. This means that every time we begin a new course of study or apply for a new job, we ask that His will be done. But how do we know if we are doing His will? God blesses us when we do His will and His blessings include the opening of doors such as an acceptance of an application or a conviction in a particular field of study. We have to remember that no matter what God calls us to do, He will equip us with the necessary talents. This does not mean that we can just sit back and let God take over, but rather we strive wholeheartedly to do the best of our ability and if it doesn't work out, we call on God to guide us to the next course.

Among the many means God uses to guide us is His gift of good Christian parents. Through our years under our parents, we are guided to see our talents and instructed in the ways to use them. How many times haven't our parents seen a musical ability and prodded us to take piano lessons or join band, or seen a linguistic or writing talent and told us how to utilize these talents in college or in various jobs. So why not talk to our parents who should know more of what is best for us than any college counsellor? Parents are an excellent source of encouragement and motivation because God works directly through them right in our homes.

Another means of direction might be our friend. I already mentioned how a good friend helped me with just a little note of encouragement. Pick your friends carefully because you never know when you might need them in a time of trouble.

In conclusion, seeking God's will is sometimes very confusing and discouraging; it was for me. But the experience invariably drew me closer to my great God and heavenly Father as it will for you. I am comforted when I realize how tiny I am compared to the great God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, yet He can lead me through my distressing times. Paul also speaks of this in Ephesians: "I beseech you that you walk worthy of the vocation where with you are called. . ." knowing that there is ". . .one God and Father of all, who is above all, and through all, and in you all."

I think a fitting conclusion to the matter of seeking God's will for our lives are the final two verses of Psalm 139:

"Search me O God, and know
my heart; try me and know
my thoughts:
And see if there be any
wicked way in me, and lead
me in the way everlasting."

Focus On Christian Women
RESPONSIBILITIES OF CONCEPTION: VII. Spiritual Training Emotionally

by Mrs. Brands

One of modern day's worst impacts on us as Christians is the teaching that emotions are a part of life all by themselves and that we aren't responsible to control our emotions. Even the world is bit by bit starting to realize how faulty this idea is and to recognize that the way to help those with emotional problems is to restructure their thinking.

For us as Christians, our emotional lives (like all of our lives) must be subject to the Word of God. We recognize that our natural emotions are all sinful, born with grossly wicked and self-centered tendencies. Parents must help children to see that all the wicked tendencies of their emotions are derived from Adam **via themselves** (and therefore they may not be hyper-critical, either) Then parents must help children learn to control their emotions through prayer and application of God's Word.

Wrong emotional attitudes among us are expressed in comments like these:

"I tell my children to do their best in school. . .but they don't have to LIKE SCHOOL!"

"If I don't enjoy something, I don't have to do it."

"I can't help being the way I am. I have a temper and so that's that!"

We could make quite a list of similar everyday expressions we use but these are enough to summarize some main areas of erroneous thinking we have. Probably all of us feel all of these ways sometimes, and the expressions are so common we have to make ourselves stop to evaluate them. But are these ideas about our emotions Scriptural? Are they submissive to God?

Rather than letting our emotions control us, we must control our emotions. Don't misunderstand: surely, "but of course", emotions are important; surely our tears can be legitimate; but they must be under the control of holiness, not a servant to sin. **This control over our emotions is a spiritual and a mental task.** We must pray that God will mold our emotions by grace to serve Him. As we study His Word, we must prayerfully allow that Word to teach us what our emotions should be.

• • • • • •

Many passages of Scripture teach us emotional values. Were we to make a thorough study of Scripture on the subject, we would scarcely know where to begin. But one place where we can certainly begin is with the Psalms. God's book of spiritual songs for us throbs with emotions. Just start once from the very beginning and look at the first ten Psalms:

Psalm 1: **delight** in God's law

Psalm 2: "serve the LORD with

fear"

Psalm 3: "I will not be **afraid** of 10,000 enemies"

Psalm 4: "Thou hast put **gladness** in my heart"

Psalm 5: "Let them that **love** thy name be **joyful** in thee"

Psalm 6: **vexed**. . .**grief**. . .**weeping** due to trouble

Psalm 7: "Arise, O LORD, in thine **anger**"

Psalm 8: (no emotional words, but the emotion of AWE at God's works)

Psalm 9: "I will be **glad** and **rejoice** in thee"

"Put (the nations) in **fear**, O LORD"

Psalm 10: "Lord, thou hast heard . . .the **humble**."

We find Scriptures which speak to the emotions of **sorrow**, of **fear** (versus **faith**), of **love**, of **anger**, of **envy**, of **covetousness**, of **humility**, of **joy**, of **forgiveness** from the heart, of **worry**, of **honoring** those in authority. . .and more. Always, we are called to submit our emotions to God, both our emotions of sorrow due to sin or persecution and our emotions of joy resulting from God's deliverance. God's grace can overcome sinful emotions and can strengthen sanctified emotions.

One among many Scriptural passages speaking to the emotions is found in the vibrant fourth chapter of the Epistle to the Philippians. There we have the admonition to "Rejoice in the Lord alway. . .": rejoicing is a duty, a command from God! There we have the admonition to "Be careful for nothing . . .": we are commanded not to indulge in worry! And there we are presented with the tools necessary to obey these commands: (1) prayer; (2) spiritual thinking; and (3) imitation of Paul (who imitates Christ) in our deeds. Paul promises that God will keep us in perfect peace if we thankfully present our requests to God, if we think on those things that are true and pure and virtuous, and if we do the things he does. That means that our emotions must be subject to our thought patterns and to our will through the power of God received in prayer. Philippians 4 should be memorized by us and contemplated often.

* * * * * *

Through example and teaching and enforcement, parents must also train their children to control their emotions. Let us take anger as one example. STEP 1: TRAINING BY EXAMPLE. Anger in itself is not always sinful but too often — almost always, in fact — our sinful natures do sin in our anger. When do children see their parents angry? Does every small annoyance, like spilled milk or coats on the floor, upset parents? Is our anger over things that are a personal offense (like a child's recognition of some sin I commit?) Do our children see us quickly retaliating (husband to wife or wife to neighbor)? Do we hit our children too quickly, thoughtlessly, sometimes undeservedly? Or, by contrast, do we practice self-control over our emotions? Do we take personal offense meekly, quietly? Are we gentle and kind with our children? When we rebuke them, is it with humility rather than rage, acknowledging that we also sin and that discipline is not punishment but love?

STEP 2: TRAINING BY INSTRUCTION. When our children show sinful anger themselves, how do we react? Do we ignore their anger, hoping they will outgrow it someday? Do we show self-righteous indignation as though we ourselves never fall into sin? Or do we

rather point them to the Scriptures, to God's will for our lives? Do we confess that we too, fall into this sin but that God calls us to confess and forsake wrong anger, loving our neighbor, never letting the sun set on our anger, fighting continued anger through repentance and prayer? We might well teach our children to memorize a key verse or two and to repeat these each time they fall into sinful anger.

STEP 3: TRAINING BY ENFORCEMENT. Training always proceeds as gently as possible: first the gentle word, then the sterner word, then enforcement as it is needed. Enforcement may take various forms depending on the child and the particular cause of his anger; a spanking is not always the answer. Sometimes the rebelliously angry child needs time to be alone first, then to be talked with and then to straighten things out with the object of his anger. Sometimes the child is willfully and deliberately angry without repentance so that the rod used firmly is necessary to bring him to repentance. **The one thing that is never right is for the parent to do nothing** and to permit the child's anger to go uncontrolled. The child must be made to confess and forsake his sin in anger . . .otherwise he is not being trained to submit his emotions and all of his life to God.

* * * * * *

Yes, Young People, your parents often fall. We parents are imperfect examples; we often neglect instructions; we often train poorly. We ourselves are constantly in need of God's chastening hand! How we, first of all, need God's abundant grace in Christ! We must look to God for His pattern of dealing with us to be guided in our training of our children. As He deals with us in love — by His Example, by His Word, by His staff of chastening — so we also must try to deal with our children in love.

When your parents fail, what then? Then your calling may be to remind them in all respect of their calling. If you know you really need the rod, have you ever thought to ASK your parents to apply it? Seek Godliness at all costs, surrendering all areas of life to God as our gracious Sovereign . . .also in our emotions. "And the God of peace shall be with you."

"Ofriend, if what you have within you is natural, and only natural, it will not save you! The inward work must be supernatural; it must come of God, or it will miss the covenant blessing. A gracious life will be your own, even as Isaac was truly the child of Abraham; but still more it will be of God; for "Salvation is of the Lord." We must be born **from above**. Concerning all our religious feeling and actions, we must be able to say, "Lord, thou hast wrought all our works in us."

DRAMA - How Far Should We Go?

by Rev. Robert C. Harbach

The theme, as assigned, is intended not only to be eye-catching, but also to give opportunity to consider drama from the point of view of some Reformed principles. As worded, the theme suggests a presupposed obligation or duty, and so no "Christian liberty," as there is, for example, in, "Nutrition: How Far May We Go?" Christian liberty allows for numerous legitimate possibilities: (1) Forget it! (2) Sometimes. (3) Go for it! Christian liberty does this, too, according to the standard of, and within the bounds of, Christian love—agape love—so that one should go as far as, and no less than as, Christian love dictates. But, and this must be recognized and tenaciously held, where there are divine commands and/or divine prohibitions, these possibilities do not exist. For divine commands are not options, but indispensable requirements, "musts;" and neither are divine prohibitions left to whim or choice; they are absolute "must nots." But then, too, the divine law, consisting of commands and prohibitions, is the law of love and liberty, demanding that we love the Lord our God, and our neighbor as ourselves. So the "should" part is the "should," the obligation, of love.

Therefore the Christian may never put it this way: In regard to the Divine Commandment/Divine Prohibition — How Far Should We Go? For there **must** be exact compliance with God's commandments, and utter rejection of what He prohibits.

Consider further that "How Far Should We Go" part. If ever asked, in forgiving an offender, how far should we go? the only answer is, Until seventy times seven. If asked, in trying the smoking of marihuana, how far should we go? the only answer to that, that we dare entertain is, "into that treacherous area, go not **any** distance: Say **No**! Refuse!"

Still further on How Far Should We Go? — Suppose this is applied to our Reformed (biblical) principles. Then it would imply How far, on and on, into this modern age, should we continue holding this principle that drama is inherently wrong? Then it would seem, the thinking back of this question is, that we ought to soon get rid of those old principles governing our Reformed stance on drama. Our reply to this thinking must be. "Be not conformed to this world. . ." (memorize all of Rom. 12:1-2). Otherwise, though our **position** is, "We reject 'common grace' " yet our **practice** is to idolize it! Do we in principle and profession detest "common grace," but in practice cherish it; give it "bed and board"?

Consider other "in regard to" and "how far" possibilities: 1) in regard to "Russian Roulette," how far should we go? (a loaded question, really!). 2) in

regard to the "slit skirt", how far should we (young women) go? (Don't skirt this question.) 3) in regard to "petting", how far should we (single young people) go? (Who says we **should** go into **that**?)

Therefore, it is not a question of "**should** we" where God's commandments/prohibitions are concerned; it is not even "**may** we" (have we the **right** to) in that regard; for it is there all a matter of **must/must not**. Suppose the theme were, Drama—Good? Bad? or Indifferent? Then we would have to say, What is commanded is good; what is prohibited is bad, and that nothing, really, is strictly "indifferent." There are **so called** things indifferent, that is, things neither commanded nor prohibited, but left to the options of Christian liberty as guided by love. Here there must be no interference with individual Christian preferences. For example, Romans 14:2, "one believeth that he may eat all things; another, who is weak, eateth herbs." Perhaps the one chooses to live on an island, and eats neither meat nor herbs, but fish, fowl and fruit. So—let him! Another is a strict vegetarian by choice. We say, Fine! have a ball! Either is welcome to his preferences, as long as there is no imposition of his options upon others, and Christian love is not trampled.

Paul says, "All things (not absolutely "all things," but all things neither commanded nor forbidden, the adiaphora) are lawful for me, but (these) all things are not expedient (not beneficial); (these) all things are lawful for me, but I will not be brought under the power (domination) of any." Think of those who go to extreme in their enjoyment of nature, as Nimrod (hunting), and Esau (the out-of-doors and hunting). (Compare I Cor. 6:12 with v. 9, 10, 13).

How does this apply to modern popular **drama**? It is certainly not commanded. Is it an adiaphoron? Is it as such **verboten**? The latter, I think. Why do I think so? Because the contents of its productions are forbidden and because drama is not a defensible medium for presenting the truth: "dramatic production is always the lie, the living lie" (TSB, 43, 464). Therefore, whether the drama of the theatre stage, the movie set, the silver screen, or that run on television, is always lies. Test this out as follows: "Try (test) the spirits, whether they are of God." Doing so, we learn that dramatic productions and producers are not of God, not of the truth, but are the lie. Five minutes exposure to a TV drama will lash anyone's conscience with the reality of this. For producers, performers, and the common commercial movie house audiences are extremely vocal on this point; they make it known in no uncertain terms that they are **not of God**. How, then can we become partakers with that which is not of God and with those who hurl it into our teeth that **they** are not of God? Also there are other considerations: consider Tertullian, the stand of the Puritans on drama, the position of **The Standard Bearer** (see the new TSB index on drama, movies, theatre, etc.), and the Word of Holy Scripture.

Tertullian (198 A.D., in **De Spectaculis**, i.e., **Of Public Shows**) wrote: "The theatre is. . .the shrine of Venus," or the Great Whore. It is "the private council-chamber of immodesty . . .Harlots. . .victims of the public lust are brought forward on the stage. . . They. . .fan the sparks of carnal lust." For Christians to go to the theatre "is to go from the Church of God into the

church of the Devil, from the sky to the sty." In the theatre, those on stage and those in the audience do "minister (the one) with the tongue, (the other) with the ears, to the Devil against God. . ." (**The Theatre: Three Thousand Years of Drama, Acting and Stagecraft** by Cheney, David McKay Co., Inc., N.Y., (C) 1929. . .1966, — Lib. cat. No. 792:09; Chap. VI, The Theatre in the Church, pp. 134, 135; Chap. XIII, The Puritans and the Chapel of Satan, p. 285ff.) "The Theatre. . .the Devil invented. . .(he) had. . .given it to the pagans. . .(who) bequeathed it to the papists, who allowed it in the House of God." —Puritan William Crashaw, 1607.

"Satan hath not a more speedy way, and fitter school to. . .bring men and women into. . .concupiscense and filthy lusts of wicked whoredom than those places. . .plays and theatres . . .People. . .shame not to say, and affirm openly, that plays are as good as sermons, and they learn much or more at a play, than they do at God's Word preached. . .Many can tarry at a vain play two or three hours, when as they will not abide scarce one hour at a sermon. . ." At the theatre "You will learn how to be false. . .how to play the harlot. . .how to flatter, lie, swear, to allure to whoredom, to murder, how to poison, how to disobey and rebel against" authority, to stir to "lusts . . .to be idle, to blaspheme, to sing filthy songs of love, to speak filthily, to be proud, to mock, scoff and deride" all good. —Puritan John Northbrooke, 1577, p. 286.

Phillip Stubbes complained that those of the theatre draw "the people from hearing the Word of God, from godly lectures and sermons. . .to flock thither, thick, and threefold, when the church of God" is left "bare and empty . . .They maintain bawdery, foolery, heathen idolatry, whoredom, uncleanness. . . . They devour maidenly virginity and chastity. . ." (287-88).

These attacks by the Puritans (1550-1620) brought bitter answers from the theatre in caricatures of Puritans in scores of comedy plays. Cheney, author of the above work, then wrote, "but now the theatre is definitely down on the side of the anti-Puritans. . .on the side of the loose-livers. . .

"In 1632, after seven years' labor on the work, William Prynne. . .the very type-figure of Puritan, published **Histrio-Mastix** an 1100 page blast against the stage and its immoralities . . ." Prynne happened to include a remark that actresses were "notorious whores" —a fact well-known— but at the moment of publication of his treatise, Queen Henrietta Maria was rehearsing for an amateur theatrical performance. Prynne was stood in the pillory, condemned to life imprisonment, fined, branded with S.L. (seditious libeller) on both cheeks; then his ears were cut off! (290)

"In our own twentieth century, managers and playwrights, with nothing but money in mind, put on the stage sensational pieces, parading violence, nudity and sexual perversion . . ." —Cheney, ibid., 291. ". . .if one reads through some of the more successfully suppressed plays of the time of the Stuarts. . .one may feel that a great many people were using the stage simply for the exhibition of pornographic situation and filth. . ." (ibid., 290). "We have today our exploiting producers who cloak pornography under 'realism'. . .We may wonder at the open and apparently

officially arranged soliciting by prostitutes. . .customary in some of the larger theatres of Paris even today. . ."

"The Puritans closed all theatres in 1642. Then after the Puritan era there followed the so-called 'Restoration times.' (ibid., 292). The audience for which the Restoration comedy was written was the. . .king's own circle . . .of fops, beaux. . .and the light-thinking and easy-living court ladies, headed by a debauched king (ibid., 300). . .and. . .reflected the life of the trivial-minded and licentious . . ." (ibid., 302). So that, if one were to write an essay on the theme, Drama—How Rated?, it would all boil down to one word — condemned!

Why is this so serious? Because acting is committing double or multiple sin, depending on how many parts one performer plays in a drama. Sometimes an actor is able to demonstrate his superior acting skill by appearing in any given drama under the guises of two, three, or even four different character parts. Since acting out sin is sin, the actor not only acts out his own sin, but the sin of as many character parts he plays. Dramas have always been full of profanity and bad language. Today the wicked profane misuse of the word "hell" is nauseatingly prevalent on TV, even on the local, national, and world news, plus the fact that Christ's name may be taken in vain two or three times in one "show." Now add to this the fact that the profanity-ridden movie is shown in local theatres over all town, and so, similarly, in towns all across the country. Thus cursing, swearing and blasphemy are multiplied almost astronomically. Any person in a drama who utters but one word of profanity is not only responsible for that one instance but also for the ever multiplying repetitions of it, including the re-runs soon to be rescheduled, and very likely repeated years later, even after the performer and perpetrator has been long dead. So it is possible for a sinner to be held responsible for a long line of sins occuring after his death.

The one great Reformed principle which condemns drama is the Reformed doctrine of the Antithesis. Read II Cor. 6:14-18. Watching a drama, we become so taken up and involved with the intensity of the actions of the performers that we become unequally yoked with those unbelievers. As we watch their portrayals of adultery, fornication, and robbery, etc., and listen to their profanity, we who profess to be righteous in Christ have fellowship this way with unrighteousness; we who profess to be "sons of light, sons of the day, not of the night, nor of darkness" (I Thess. 5:5) enter into communion with darkness. What part do we believers have with infidels? We are the temple of the living God: shall we profane His temple by turning it into a synagogue of Satan? "God hath said, 'I will dwell in them.' " Shall we then take Christ in us (Gal. 2:20), take Him to make Him have concord with Belial? Our calling is to come out and away from such corrupting, defiling contacts, separate ourselves from them, and "touch not the unclearn thing." Not to obey these laws of the Gospel is to commit what kind of sin? Covenant-breaking! Re-read II Cor. 6:14-18.

Can we see how the following texts apply to drama? (If not, we have lost a good deal of spiritual sensitivity to sin.) "Keep back thy servant also from presumptous sins." (Ps. 19:13); "Thou shalt not follow a multitude to do evil" (Ex. 23:2); "Whosoever looketh on a

woman to lust after her hath committed adultery with her in his heart" (Mt. 5:28; Cp. Gen 39:7); "I made a covenant with my eyes not to look lustfully at a girl" (Job 31:1, NIV): "Through covetousness shall they make merchandise of you. . .having eyes full of adultery (lit., an adulteress) . . .that cannot cease from sin" (II Pet. 2:3, 14); "Turn away mine eyes from beholding vanities; and quicken me in Thy way" (Ps. 119:37); "neither can a corrupt tree bring forth good fruit" (Mt. 7:18); Rom. 3:19; "Whatsoever things are. . .pure. . .think on these things" (Phil. 4:8); Keep thyself pure" (I Tim. 5:22e).

Critique

OPINIONATING IN LOVE [2]

by Mitch Dick

Before you or I can love someone in giving our opinions to him or her, we must know what the Bible means by the commandment: thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself. This love for neighbor flows, of course, from our love for God which love for God has, of course, as its spring, its source, the love of God for us. The writer graciously assumes that God's love is already coursing through you. May our attention, while now focused on love for the neighbor be also always focused on our reason for doing this, that is, on our love for God in the first place.

The neighbor, anyone whom God puts on our pathway, we must love **as ourselves.** This love of self with the purpose in mind also of loving others **as** we love God requires that we first know this: **who we are.**

This knowledge of self in some areas of our evaluation is **certain** knowledge or **conviction**. But as we look at ourselves closely, we must also see that we do not always have that certain knowledge, but only various opinions about many details of ourselves.

For example, you and I **know**, because the Bible says so, that we are sinners: we are full of lies and hatred and pride in ourselves. We know for sure also that we are saved only by the grace of God. And we know also that just because our parents **tell us** that we are covenant children does not mean that we ourselves do not have to repent and believe in order to have fellowship with God.

But, though I know that great and beautiful is my salvation and my God, yet how good a piano player I am is a matter of opinion. And whether Johnny or Sue has the ugliest nose is a matter of opinion. Even of the **depth** of my **sin** I am not certain. And of how much worse my particular sin of gluttonly is than another man's sinful addiction to the drug called nicotine, I cannot be sure.

As we can begin to see, not only

certain knowledge of self is crucial to our love of self, but also our uncertain knowledge, our opinions of ourselves is involved here. The first basic step to proper self-love, which step we have already taken in this article, is simply this: distinguishing between the two! For, as we will see bye and bye, if we cannot distinguish say, between a sin to be repented of and a personality weakness we have been given to live with, we will have no peace and be frustrated constantly in our vain efforts. And this unrest and frustration in ourselves will cause us not to love but to plague our neighbor even with our opinions of them.

So please: let us begin to know ourselves better. Let us repent of our conceit! But let us be long-suffering and content with our long noses. Let us desire earnestly to be delivered from our sins and not from our brother's horrible singing voice. Speak out of this knowledge of self, **His** truth and **your** opinions, in love. Why? For no less reason than that we may all be perfected and grow as in the body of Jesus Christ (Eph. 4:11-17).

Think on these following statements, will you? Which ones are true? Which are opinions? Which are said in love, and which are not? Is it always possible to tell just by one's words if he is loving or not?

"Repent, you big fat sinner!"

"That John really is a big-talker."

"I can't stand being around Mike. He always thinks he knows it all."

"This rain really stinks. It's ruined our whole vacation."

"That Sally, she really made my day by her smile!"

"Mitch, let's go to the cross together, shall we?"

"Praise the Lord, brother!"

JUST THOUGHTLESSNESS

A little bit of hatred
can spoil a score of years,
And blur the eyes that ought to smile
with many needless tears.
O little bit of thoughtlessness,
and anger for a day,
Can rob a home of all its joy,
and drive happiness away.
A little bit of shouting
in a sharp and vicious tone
Can leave a sting that will be felt
when many years have flown.
Just one hasty minute of uncontrolled
ill temper can offend,
And leave an inner injury
that years may never mend.

It takes no moral fibre
to say harsh and bitter things,
It doesn't call for courage
to employ a lash that stings.
For cruel words and bitter
any fool can think to say,
But the hurt they leave behind them
many years can't wipe away.
Just a little bit of hatred
robs a home of all delight,
And leaves a winding trail of wrong
that time may never right.
For only those are happy
and keep their peace of mind
Who guard themselves from hatreds
and words that are unkind.

Truth vs. Error

APOSTASY IN THE LAST DAYS
19. Apostates Predicted by the Apostles

by Rev. Robert C. Harbach

"But, Beloved, remember ye the words which were spoken before of the apostles of our Lord Jesus Christ, how that they told you there should be mockers in the last time, who should walk after their own ungodly lusts. These be they who separate themselves, sensual, not having the Spirit." Jude 17, 18, 19.

Jude, having described the character, behavior and speech of the seducing apostates in the church, now shows that not only the ancient prophet Enoch, but the apostles, who addressed their age, had foretold and forewarned of these scoffers and sons of Belial. Therefore, we must not be surprised, think it strange, be offended or have our faith shaken because apostates arise in the Christian church. Rather, our faith should be strengthened by the fulfilment of the prophetic Word. Also it should comfort us to know that in the confusion of error, ridicule, persecution and increase of false teachers Christ will preserve and prosper His church.

Also when we observe the connection with the previous verse we cannot escape the implication of the words that the very common habit of murmuring and complaining — murmuring against God's providence, the way He has led us, and complaining of one's lot in life — is a mark of apostasy. Let that strike us with all its heart-searching and flesh-withering force! Remember, too, that by scoffing men refuse and dodge the abrasive sting of truth.

"But, you, Beloved. . ." The true believers are viewed in sharp contrast to the hypocrites identified in "these" (v. 12, 16) as over against "**you**, Beloved." **You** are "beloved of God, called saints" (Rom. 1:7). Those so addressed are also the elect (Rom. 11:28), are brethren (I Cor. 15:58; Jas. 1:16, 19; 2:5), whereas **these** are reprobate concerning the faith (II Tim. 3:8) and are false brethren (Gal. 2:4)! Observe how the Spirit of God many times in Scripture addresses His people as "Beloved," while these "mockers in the last time" are denominated "hypocrites" (seven times in Matt. 23).

"Remember." Jude exhorts his hearers and readers to remember not the letters and doctrines of the apostles, generally, but their prophecies warning of the false teachers that were shortly to appear. A remembrance of these prophecies would preserve from error and delusion and would comfort in times of heresy. Read Paul's prophecy in I Tim. 4:1, in II Tim. 3 and Peter's in his second epistle, chapter

two.

". . .the words which were spoken before. . ." With these prophecies before us we see them fulfil'ed right before our eyes in star after star falling from heaven, in pseudo-teachers turning from the faith, in the love of many becoming cold, error arrogantly boasting against the truth. All this the Lord foreordained in His secret counsel (Eph. 1:11) and foretold through His apostolical prophets. See these things come to pass which "were spoken before" and let that all the more establish you in the truth of Scripture.

". . .of the apostles of our Lord Jesus Christ. . ." The Church is built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets (Eph. 2:20), that is, upon the more sure word of the prophecy of Scripture, which holy men of God spoke as they were moved (inspired) by the Holy Spirit. (II Pet. 1:19-21). That underlying foundation is verbally, plenarily inspired inerrant Scripture. We must always dig down through the rubble of man's word and human tradition "to the Law and to the testimony," to "this Word" of holy and divine Scripture. (Isa. 8:20). There alone in self-authenticated Scripture is our only infallible rule of faith and conduct.

V. 18, "how that they told you," not in mere oral tradition, but in God-breathed writings. They told you of the approach, trend and spread of apostasy. False prophets furtively crept into the church. For a time they concealed themselves under the deep cover of Christian profession of all the articles of the faith. But soon they throw off all fear of detection. Their strength of numbers made underground cells among them unnecessary. No longer do they cover their tracks, but openly, in superlative arrogance, reveal their heresies, libertinism, feminism, effeminacy, Jezebelism and miscegenationism.

". . .there should be mockers in the last time. . ." John had told them, "Little children, it is the last time" (I Jn 2:18). The last time, in which we live, is bounded by the Victory of the Incarnation at its beginning and the Victory of the Second Coming of the Lord at its end. In the last times Peter says, "there shall be **scoffers**," the same word in Jude translated **mockers**. The word (appearing only these two times in Scripture) is **empaiktai**, and in its verb form means "to trifle with" maliciously as an evil person might do with children in order to delude and deceive them. Mockers scoff at the Christian religion as injurious and inimical to education, as a political tool to advance a party, as a civil or government expedient to keep the masses in subjection. Especially do mockers have scorn and derision for the doctrines of the last things, the coming of the Lord, the resurrection of the body, the final judgment, eternal punishment in hell and the blessedness of heaven. All this they represent as worn out, discarded superstitions which no person of reputation, intelligence or scientific acumen holds. We, at the end of the last time, have lived to see a demonic host of mockers arise as predicted. Hence the Lord's coming has to be near. These scoffers worm their material into some of the Christian book stores in which they crack jokes on the Lord's head making fun of God. The modern movie, TV and text-book industries with their blasphemous productions are full of this sort of thing, and no wonder: there is no fear of God before their eyes.

". . .who should walk after (that is, 'live as slaves to') their own ungodly lusts." They live to enjoy the lust of the eye and the lusts of the flesh. They live in the constant practice of the filthiness of the flesh and spirit. Their outward pretence of good is to conceal a lust while secretly enjoying it. Their main business is to satisfy their lusts, having eyes full of adultery, which cannot cease from sin.

V. 19, "These be they who separate themselves, sensual, not having the Spirit," or, "these are the ones making divisions (from the faith of the Church and unto themselves and their factions), natural ones, not having spirit." Some listen to these mockers and, agreeing with them, center themselves in a schismatical following in the congregation. In this way the Christian unity of the church's membership is split by heresy, schism and apostasy. (I Cor. 11:19, margin). The schismatics no longer contend for the faith once for all delivered to the saints, having gone along with the defection of the false teachers. The saints cannot endure the apostasy of schismatics. The latter usually place the blame for **their** separations (schisms) on those who cannot tolerate their apostasy. But verse 19 shows where blame and guilt lie. Think of Cain, the first schismatic, heretic and apostate; for "he went out from the presence of the Lord" (Gen. 4:19). Keep in mind, too, that apostasy begins in forsaking the assemblies of the churches (Heb. 10:23-25). The apostates and their apostasy give occasion to the occurrence of the many divisions among the churches and the rise of different denominations, for true believers are, because of this, forced to form new churches and denominations in order to preserve the truth of God's covenant in the line of past, present and future generations. Think of Noah and his family who had to withdraw from the wicked, violent, infidel world and seek preservation in the ark. Lot similarly with his own family had to get out of Sodom. Elijah entirely alone stood on the side of Jehovah over against the Baal worshipers. But these wicked apostates were guilty of: (1) casting out the saints, (2) damnable heresies and (3) idolatry.

Next, according to the King James Version, these men are **sensual**. The meaning is not that they are lascivious (which they are, of course), but that they live entirely in the realm of the **natural**. Paul, therefore, speaks of "the **natural** man" (same word, I Cor. 2:14) who neither receives the things of the Spirit of God, nor knows them, but regards them as foolishness (I Cor. 1:18, 23). James (3:15) says they are worldly, **natural**, demonic. The opposite of this word "natural" is "spiritual" which latter term applies only to believers, the saints.

The third factor describing these divisive, natural men is, "not having spirit," that is, not having "spirit" in the sense of John 3:6, "that which is born of **the** Spirit **is spirit**." God's holy Spirit alone produces a spiritual birth, a new life that is **spirit**, the opposite of **flesh**. That new life is produced by **the** Spirit's work of regeneration and is called **spirit**. (Cp. Jn. 4:24; Rom. 7:6). An apostate, then, is not a regenerated person. The unregenerate, born of the flesh, are no more than flesh. They cannot be said to be **spirit** (**spirit** referring to the whole man from the point of view of **regeneration**).

It is not schism (or "separation" in the bad sense) to abandon the false church. Ministers abandon their duty

when they do not exhort their flocks to their duty to leave the false church. It is exhausting, laborious work for faithful pastors to "take heed to their ministry," so that by preaching, teaching, logical argumentation, convincing and warning their sheep they mold a strong, rugged people obedient to the gospel; and if it becomes necessary to withdraw from the false church, they may then form separate congregations to join themselves anew to the true church where the worship and service of God may be carried on in peace.

Singspirations for 1988:

February 21	First Church
April 10	Hudsonville
June 19	Hope
August 7	First Jenison CRC
September 18	Southeast
October 16	Southwest
November 20	Faith
December 18	Hudsonville

Mass Meeting:

March 20	Faith