BEACON LIGHTS

FOR PROTESTANT REFORMED YOUTH

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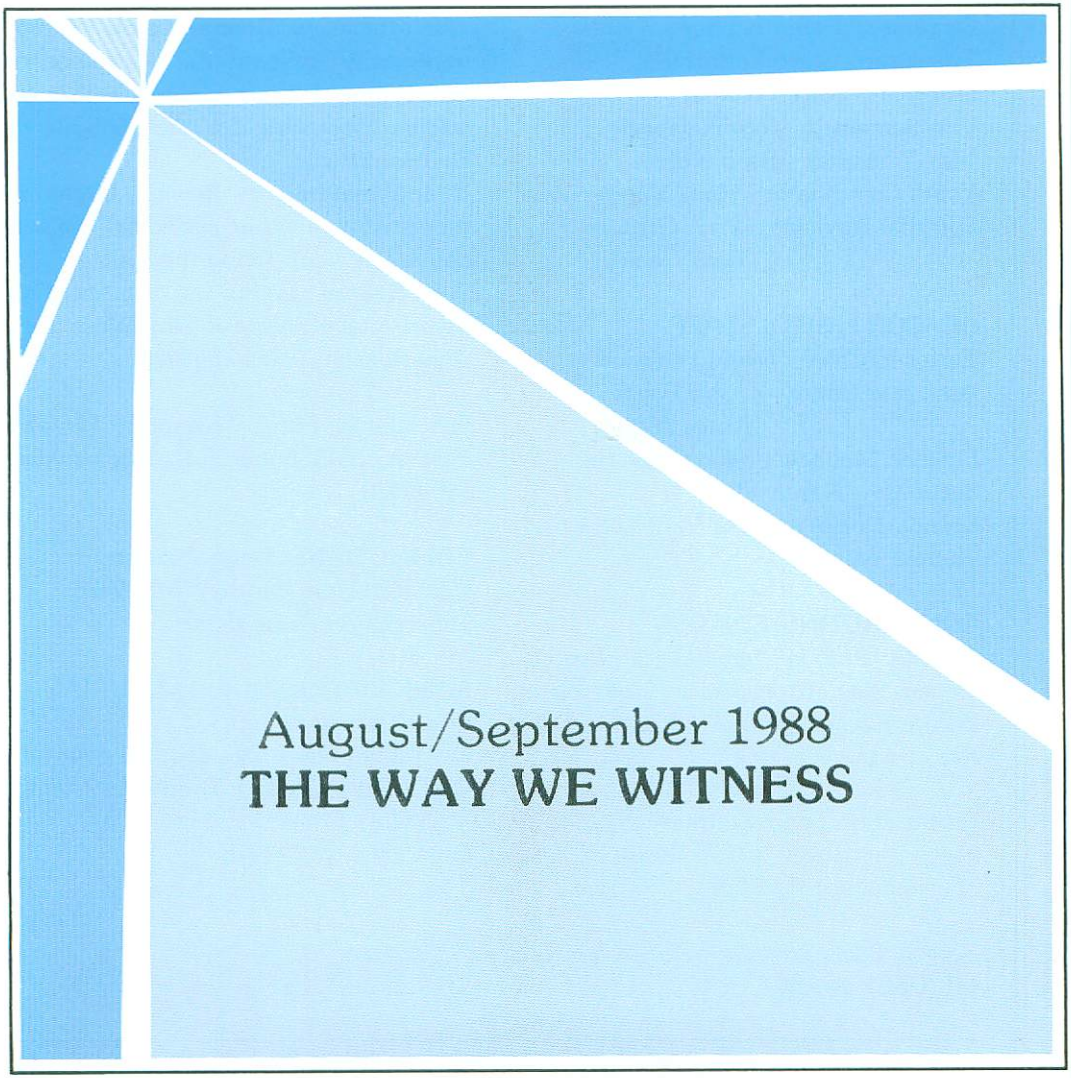

August/September 1988

THE WAY WE WITNESS

BEACON LIGHTS

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Contents

Editor's Notes - David Harbach 1
TRUTH VS. ERROR
Apostasy In The Last Days
22. Jude's Doxology Exalting Our Savior 2
Concerning The Zeal Of Those New To The Faith - Rev. R. Van Overloop 6
Book Review For Beacon Lights - Rev. C. Terpstra 8
The Way We Witness - Rev. Ron Hanko 11
That First Year Feeling - Brother Shaffie 13
Explaining To Others What We Believe - Rev. K. Koole 15
What's Happening - Ruth Bleyenberg 19

EDITOR'S NOTES

by David Harbach

In the June-July Issue you probably noticed the blank space below the NEWS EDITOR. We are very happy to report with this issue that Ruth Bleyenberg has agreed to take over this rubric. Ruth is enthusiastic about her new work and is a welcome new face at our staff meetings. We also appreciate the fact that she was willing tc become a member of the staff so soon after moving to the Michigan area. We hope that other young people will follow her example. Church bulletin clerks should take note of her address on the inside cover page. We encourage all bulletin clerks to send their bulletins to Ruth so that she can prepare the news.

Rev. Ron Hanko surprised me with another article on witnessing: "The Way We Witness." Three articles on witnessing is really not surprising since Rev. Hanko is a prolific writer and prepares his material carefully. We are glad he has taken the time to prepare "Our Calling To Witness", "Our Conduct As A Witness," and "The Way We Witness." I do think that Rev. Ken Koole's article on "Explaining To Others What We Believe" fits in perfectly with these articles on witnessing. That means we have the writing flavor of two ministers to enjoy as we read about the importance of witnessing.

Rev. Ron Van Overloop's article on "Concerning The Zeal Of Those New To The Faith" emphasizes the fact that often the spiritual zeal of those whom God has given faith later in life puts to shame the zeal of those who have been Christians for a long time. The encouragement in this article is that every Christian must be zealous of good works because of the great work

of salvation that God accomplished for His people. Two other pieces of writing I hope will be printed in this issue. Brother Shaffie's article, "That First Year Feeling" will give a personal look into the life of a believer from Singapore. Mike Brenneman's letter and poem, "On Predestination" is another example of the spiritual enthusiasm God gives to those new to the Reformed faith. Mike comes from Hot Springs, Arkansas and the staff is grateful that he was willing to share his poem with us.

We thank Mitch Dick for the articles he has written in the recent past. Mitch resigned as a contributing editor because of his preparation and studies for the ministry, and other concerns. May God bless Mitch as he continues his studies in our seminary.

As promised, Rev. Charles Terpstra has prepared some book reviews for us. Look for one in this and the next issue. And speaking about coming issues, remember that the Convention issue has been moved to the month of November.

Truth Vs. Error

APOSTASY IN THE LAST DAYS

Conclusion

22. Jude's Doxology Exalting Our Savior

by Rev. Robert C. Harbach

"Now unto Him that is able to keep you from falling, and to present you faultless before the presence of His glory with exceeding joy, to the only wise God, our Savior, be glory and majesty, dominion and power, both now and ever. Amen."

-Jude 24, 25

The German school of biblical criticism, all of whom are behind the many modern Bible versions, put forward many different renderings of this text based on the manuscript sources they deem the best. Not using any of the Greek New Testament texts they recommend, but following the F. H. A. Scrivener text (1894), we translate:

"Now to the One being able to keep you exempt from falling and to place you in the sight of His glory faultless with extreme joy, to [the] only wise God, our Savior: glory and majesty, dominion and authority, both now and for all the eternities. Amen."

Here we have "Jude's Doxology Exalting Our Savior," in which we consider, I. Its Address (v. 24), and II. Its Ascription (v. 25). In verse 21 the exhortation is, Keep yourselves in the love of God. Here we are told that God has the power to keep you and preserve you in His love.

"Now unto Him who is able to keep you from falling." Jude was

thinking of generations of souls who fell from the faith once-for-all delivered to the saints to become ungodly men denying our Lord Jesus Christ (v. 3, 4). He was thinking of the people the Lord had saved out of Egypt, but afterward had destroyed the unbelieving of them (v. 5). He was thinking of the sinless angels who had fallen (v. 6), and of Sodom, Gomorrah and all the cities of the plain which God had destroyed by pouring hell out of heaven upon them (v. 7). He was thinking of the apostasies of Cain, Balaam, Korah (v. 11) and of the sinners in Enoch's day (v. 14-16). All of these failings and fallings have been down into the most awful sin. We must therefore, with Jude, praise God for "the One being able to exempt you from falling. . . ." God's people often do fall into temptation, into sin, into error; they fall from the exercise of faith, from a degree of stedfastness in truth and grace. They surely would fall into final and total apostasy, if God did not keep them from it. Man created in the state of rectitude was made lapsible: he could fall. The angels also could fall; many of them did, the elect unfallen angels alone being preserved and kept from falling. But fallen man cannot keep himself. He must be kept by the power of God, who is able to keep, has the power to do it, being the Savior, the Mediator, the Mighty God with all power in heaven and in earth.

It does not inevitably follow that because God **can** keep us that therefore He **will** do so. However, Scripture nowhere teaches that an elect child of God can become an apostate; for God has promised that He will keep His sheep (Jer. 31:10), and has also promised the believer that "though he fall, he shall not be utterly cast down: for the Lord upholdeth him with His hand" (Psm. 37:24). At present, our sins fill us with fears, doubts, regrets and sorrow, but our comfort is in the knowledge of the reality to come that He shall place you in the sight of His glory with extreme joy where there is no more sorrow. It does not say so here, but He is as **willing** as He is **able**, for it is the Father's will that He should do so, and He has made Himself responsible for them. So one man said, "If Thou **canst** do anything, help us" (Mk. 9:22), while another said, "Lord, if Thou **wilt** Thou **canst**!" (Matt. 8:2).

". . . Keep you from falling. . . ." There is a relatively new "sport" (?) called "sky-diving" in which the participants wearing parachutes make free falls from an airplane for as long a distance as they dare before "pulling the rip-cord." If we go to see such a dare-devil demonstration, do we not sin, as they, against the sixth commandment? Then as spectators are we not in principle guilty of murder? For if, in making their breath-taking falls out of the sky, these human guided missiles do not kill themselves, the observers encourage them to the circumstances where they easily could do so. Satan tempts to play such deadly games, and if we are so foolish and presumptuous to take such chances, will the ascription of praise to Him who is able to keep us from falling be of any comfort? Would we have the right to claim such comfort?

"And to present you faultless." This does not mean that we can be viewed subjectively as never having been faulty. For all men are at fault due to both their original and actual sin. As for our many sins, what is once done is done and can never be undone, even by God almighty Himself. But to

present us faultless means that God does not impute to us the blame, blot and responsibility for our faults. But rather, as John Gill had written, we have sinned in Adam and are wretchedly guilty and filthy in our own natural state, slip often into many backslidings, are full of sins committed after regeneration and through life drag along with us a body of sin to the grave; yet at last we are presented by Christ in perfect holiness, complete righteousness, "and in the shining robes of immortality and glory."

"To present (place) you before the presence of His glory (in the sight of His glory) with exceeding joy." He will place **you** there with exceeding joy. You will have that extreme joy there because you will be presented there faultless, sanctified, cleansed with the washing of water by the Word, a glorious church, not having spot or wrinkle, or any such thing, but holy and without blemish (Eph. 5:26, 27). The faithful minister, too, will be set in the sight of His glory "bearing precious seed . . . with **rejoicing**, bringing his sheaves with him" (Psm. 126:6). Those sheaves will be his joy and crown (Phil. 4:1). The angels who have joy over one sinner that repents will have exceeding joy over the whole company of elect sinners faultless, perfected in glory everlasting. God Himself, Who shall place His whole glorified church in the sight of His glory, will do so with exceeding joy flooding His infinite being. "The Lord thy God. . .will rejoice over thee with joy. He will joy over thee with singing" (Zeph. 3:17). When we shall be set there, before the presence of His glory, we shall be entertained with God Himself **singing** for joy that we are finally all there with Him.

"His glory." He gave His disciples a foretaste of this (Lk. 9:31, 32) when in the mount He was so transfigured (metamorphosed) that His face did shine as the sun, and His raiment became as white as the light (Matt. 17:2). So shall He "place you in the sight of His glory." He dwells now in this glory, His head bright as the sun reflected from pure snow, His eyes flashing like lightning. His feet blindingly glistening like incandescent gold-bronze and His whole appearance like the sun shining full strength (Rev. 1:14-16). In that day we shall see Him as He is.

"To the only wise God, our Savior." This refers, in general, to the triune God (I Tim. 1:17), but especially to Christ, the second Person of the trinity, who is Wisdom personified (Prov. 8), and in whom are hidden all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge (Col. 2:3). The Apostle Paul also taught that He, Christ, is "God our Savior" (Tit. 1:3, 4; 3:4), "the great God and Savior of us, Jesus Christ," (2:10, 13, Gk.), and "the God of us and Savior of us, Jesus Christ," that is, "our God and our Savior, Jesus Christ," (II Pet. 1:1, Gk.). The point of the Scripture here is that God is Savior only in **the** Savior, Jesus Christ. Neither do they really believe in God who profess doing so without believing that Christ is our God and Savior. For no man honors the Father who does not honor the Son as God incarnate (Jb. 5:23; 1:1, 14). No man comes to the Father but by Christ who is God equal with God (Jn. 5:18; 14:6).

"To God our Savior be **glory**." The meaning is, may the God of all glory, who never gives His glory to another, have His own innate glory even more fully manifested, more frequently ac-

knowledged, more widely ascribed to Him, and that we may increasingly see others glorify Him. What is ascribed to Him here is the glory of His deity, as we have already demonstrated. **Glory** is that attribute of God's which shows that He **is** His attributes and that they are all **one** in Him, all embraced in **glory** as the colors of the spectrum are united in the **light**! Glory is the manifested excellence of the divine radiance which blinds the unbelieving eye (Acts 22:11), which cannot be endured by unglorified humanity (I Tim. 6:14-16), nor by the angelic beings in Heaven's glory (Isa. 6:2, 3).

"and **majesty**." What is meant by God's **majesty**? It is that excellence of His person, character, mein and manner which inspires reverence and awe in the beholder. So say Webster (1828) and Funk and Wagnalls (1913). Webster adds that this concept is with peculiar propriety applied to God and His works. Then he quotes Psm. 93:1, "Jehovah reigneth; He is clothed with majesty," and Psm. 29:4, "the voice of the Lord is full of majesty." Therefore, the Lord Himself is the primal, original Beholder of His own majesty. He knows, loves and rejoices in His own inherent, independent, essential, incommunicable majesty, grandeur, sublimity, magnificence and infinite splendor. "The greatness and glory of God" is the earliest meaning of the word **majesty** in English. So say Funk and Wagnalls. Another said, "All earthly grandeur in comparison to the majesty of God is but the dream of a shadow."

"**Dominion**." God has (1) a natural dominion. "The Lord hath prepared His throne in the heavens, and His kingdom ruleth over all" (Psm. 103:19), over all nature, all creation, all the universe; (2) a gracious dominion over His elect, redeemed church; (3) a glorious dominion in which He reigns in the final glory of the New Heaven and Earth over all the glorified saints, and from the glory of Heaven in the glory of His justice over condemned angels and men.

"**Power**." God's power is seen in Creation (Psm. 33:6, 9), in Providence (Heb. 1:3), in Redemption (Lk. 1:35, 37; Eph. 1:19), in Conversion of the elect (II Cor. 4:7; Rom. 1:16), and in the Preservation of the Saints (I Pet. 1:5). God alone has all **authority** in these spheres.

"**Both now and ever. Amen**." This expresses the desire of the saints that not only this present age glorify God, but also "all the future eternities." When we are all dead and gone, the Lord remains, and we would not have Him ever to be without glory, honor and praise. We rejoice in the knowledge that we shall live for ever to glorify God (Psm. 106:48; Eph. 3:21). Do we take care to preserve God's truth and glory in the lives of our children after we are dead and gone to Heaven? (Gen. 18:19). Then we make this doxology our own with the desire that the promise of the covenant continue to all generations to the end of the world. **Amen** means, It is so; let it be so; it shall be so, world without end! (Psm. 72:19).

Finis

Humility is a strange flower; it grows best in winter weather, and under storms of affliction.

- Samuel Rutherford

CONCERNING THE ZEAL OF THOSE NEW TO THE FAITH

by Missionary Pastor
Ronald Van Overloop

The spiritual zeal and enthusiasm of those new to the faith often put to shame those who have been Christians for a long time.

• • • •

Most Christians, according to the promise of God's covenant, are born and raised within the sphere of the Church. But God does not call all of His people from the line of the generations of believers. When He blesses the work of church extension and missions with positive fruit, then there is brought into the visible Body of Christ those who are young in their own faith. They have come to the realization of their salvation and to a knowledge of and appreciation for the beauty of the Reformed faith later in life as adults. The result is that the visible Church is a gathering together of those who are early in their spiritual life along with long-time Christians.

• • • •

It is often the case that those who become Christians later in their life are characterized by a greater than usual amount of godly zeal. This is because their previous experience was one of spiritual starvation and of confusion. When they finally find the beautiful and comforting truths of the sovereignty of God's grace, they are ecstatic. Their joy is similar to the shepherd who found the lost sheep (Luke 15:5-7), the woman who found her lost coin (Luke 15:9) and the father of the returned son (Luke 15:32). The experience of finding the riches and richness of the truth of the Reformed faith and of knowing for the first time the undaunted assurance of their salvation gives a foretaste of the joy unspeakable and full of glory. This truth and experience is the source of their greatest joy and comfort in this life. Such is the case for every believer, but especially for those who know the fear of hell without hope or help.

And these cannot be silent. They will speak of it as often as they can and with whomever they can. They eagerly present these new-found truths to their friends and relatives. They avidly read all the materials they can obtain. The highlight for them is the attendance of worship services where their joy is fueled by the preaching and by the fellowship of the saints. It is usually obvious that a high priority is given to religion in the life of the new Christian. In sum, they are zealous with a first love.

• • • •

These new Christians with all their zeal are an important part of the Church. They give the other believers reason to pause.

There are always dangers and snares which the devil sets before the people of God. And the constant danger for those who have grown up or are growing up within the covenant and

of the Reformed faith is the presumption of faith and taking for granted the preciousness of the truth. Church attendance is only a habit; the name of Jesus is like any other name; prayer and devotions are neglected; busyness with this life is consuming.

In those who are new to the faith there is a zeal which can be coveted.

* * * *

On the other hand, those new to the faith also face the snares and temptations of the devil. One temptation is to become proud when they see the lukewarmness (either real or imagined by contrast) of those raised within the sphere of the truth. Hasty and harsh judgments can be made which lack in charitable understanding. Another snare of the devil is discouragement when they find their extreme joy vaporizing like the morning dew before the hot sun of time and trials. Their faith is young and will be often tested by which process the Lord brings their faith to greater strength and maturation. Like a child, their faith can quickly take extreme swings. They can covet the stable strength of the life-long, spiritually mature saint.

* * * *

There is a perspective to be gained by both the new and the long-time Christian. Everyone with faith (with any amount of faith) is admonished not to think of themselves more highly than they ought to think, but to think soberly, according as God has given to every Christian the measure of faith (Romans 12:3-5). Obviously one who is sober has a correct grasp of reality.

The sober-minded person is mindful of the horrible corruption of his human nature, the greatness of God's mercy and grace to save him, the fierceness of his spiritual warfare, and the longing for the perfection of the heavenly kingdom. He sees himself as being essentially no better and no worse than any other Christian. He realizes the continuous need he has for Christ, a need which God often fills by means of fellow-saints. Also the sober-minded Christian knows that God, in His infinite wisdom, is pleased to have the Church to be made up of different kinds of members, all of which are important and necessary for the function of the body as a whole and for the well-being of each individual member.

In many passages of Holy Writ the heavenly Father places upon His children the calling of doing everything they can to edify their spiritual brothers and sisters for the sake of the cause of Christ in the world. Romans 14:1-15:8 has much to say about the treatment of one who is weak in the faith by those who are strong. I Corinthians 10:28-33 and Galatians 6:1-4 point out the responsibility of the believer always to keep in mind his weaker brother or sister. And Philippians 2:1-11 urges each Christian to walk in lowliness of mind esteeming others better than themselves, which was the mind of Christ when He became a man, the servant of men, and died the cruel and shameful death of the accursed cross.

From these passages we can only conclude that every Christian has enough weaknesses to warrant great humility.

Sometimes and with regard to some things the new Christian is stronger. At other times and with regard to other things it is the life-long Christian who is stronger. Usually the long-time Christian has the stronger faith. He should!

Thus every Christian is conscious of his need for and dependence upon

other Christians. The long-time Christian is very conscious that he can learn from the young Christian's zeal of first love. And the younger Christian will be equally aware of the fact that he can learn from the life-long Christian's great knowledge and experience. With each saint esteeming the other better than himself, the Church of Christ will be edified and God will be glorified. Then there will be peace (Psalm 122:6-9).

• • • •

Let this mind be in you, which was also in Christ Jesus!

Think not of yourself more highly than you ought to think!

Esteem others better than yourself!

And may every Christian, young and old, be greatly zealous of good works, motivated by gratitude for so great a salvation.

_____ • A distinction must be made between spiritual youth and spiritual immaturity. Usually these are identified. Often they can be, but not in every case. It is not always the case that those who are young in the faith are immature in their faith. On the other hand, we note with sadness that it cannot always be said that those saved for a long time (their life-time) are mature in the faith. (There are saints who are strong in faith and saints who are weak in faith. Most often the weakness is for a certain time or with regard to a certain subject, but sometimes this weakness is true for all of one's life.)

BOOK REVIEW FOR BEACON LIGHTS

by Rev. Charles Terpstra

". . .Of making many books there is no end. . ." (Eccles. 12:12. If this was true already in the days of Solomon, then its truthfulness is even more evident in our day. There is a literal glut of literature available on the market today, designed to satisfy the tastes of any and all kinds of readers. This is true also of books directed toward the Christian audience. There is an abundance of Christian books available on the market, including many which are geared specifically for **young people**. Perhaps never before has there been so much Christian literature accessible to our young people, material addressing the wide spectrum of interests and needs of the Christian young man and young woman. But as we might expect, the spiritual quality of these books varies tremendously. Many, if not most, are lacking in sound principles and advice; some are even seriously harmful to our young people.

Yet it is my conviction that there is a large number of books that are good and worthwhile, books that we would desire to see in the hands of our Christian youth. Naturally, we want our Christian youth to read **good** books.

and in that way to grow up in their faith and walk in the midst of the world. We desire them to find books that will strengthen and encourage them, and help them face and handle the unique struggles of the teenage and young adult years. But the problem we face is, How do we sort through this glut to find what is truly sound and helpful? How may our Christian youth know what is spiritually profitable and what is spiritually harmful? How can we as parents, teachers and pastors help our young people to obtain and read sound books that will help them in their Christian lives?

One way in which this might be done is to have someone review books for our young people, and then either recommend them to them or warn them about them. This is where the purpose of this article enters in. It is my desire to begin a regular series of book reviews in the **Beacon Lights** designed specifically for the help and nurture of our young people. I have long held a special place in my heart for our young people, and have long had the desire to help them in any way possible during the difficult teenage years. Another love I have is reading. By writing reviews for the young people I can, to use an old cliche, "kill two birds with one stone".

In this venture, however, I would like your help. I would like to ask two favors of you. First, that you young people read these reviews, then read the books, if they are available. Along with that I would like you to write either myself or the editor of the **Beacon Lights** and tell us what you think of the books. The second favor I would ask of you is that you give me suggestions as to what books to review. I try to keep up on what books are available and might be helpful. But obviously I cannot keep up with everything (that's not due to life in **Iowa** by the way!). And so I would like you young people to send either myself or the editor suggestions. Perhaps you were assigned a book in high school or in college. Perhaps you came across one in a Christian bookstore, or saw a title in a Christian periodical. If you judge the book profitable and would like to see other of our young people read it, why not pass this along to us? I will do what I can to include it in one of my reviews. I would extend this invitation also to our parents, teachers, and fellow-pastors. If any of you has a suggestion or recommendation, please let me know. I welcome your help too.

In this first review I would like to recommend two books, **The Pursuit of Holiness** and **The Practice of Godliness**. They are written by Jerry Bridges, who works for "The Navigators", a world-wide, evangelical organization. Both are published by NavPress, the publishing ministry of the above named organization, and are available both in paper (for around $4.00 each) and hardcover (around $8.00 each) from most Christian bookstores. I am sure that these books can be obtained through the Reformed Book Outlet of our Hudsonville congregation, or through Family Book Services, operated by Mr. Gary Vander Schaaf of our Southeast church. You might even be able to get a discount (nothing like starting a little friendly competition!).

As the titles suggest, both of these books have to do with the Christian's responsibility to pursue holiness and to practice godliness. These are however no simplified, superficial "how to" books. They are written from Bridges' serious conviction that God's demand

on His people to be and strive to be holy and godly is a current theme in the Scriptures. He bases this responsibility of the believer on God's work of salvation for and in him. From this starting point, he draws from the Scriptures the principles that God's redeemed, sanctified people must use to enable them to walk in holiness and godliness. Bridges stresses throughout the importance of obedience to the Scriptures, as well as the absolute necessity of the Spirit of Christ in this pursuit and practice. I was impressed both with the biblical viewpoint and (much to my surprise) with the Reformed theology of the author.

In the Preface to **The Practice of Godliness** Bridges tells us how these two books complement each other as regards their content. Together they treat the calling of Ephesians 4:20-24, to put off the old man and put on the new man. **The Pursuit of Holiness** deals chiefly with putting off the old man - how the Christian deals with sin in his life. Some of the subjects treated in this book are: "Holiness is Not an Option"; "The Battle for Holiness"; "The Place of Personal Discipline"; "Holiness in Body"; "Holiness in an Unholy World" **The Practice of Godliness** deals primarily with the other aspect, putting on the new man, or as Bridges puts it, "growing in Christian character." The first part of this book is general in nature, as Bridges treats such topics as "Devotion to God" and "Taking on God's Character". From here he deals with the specific virtues that belong to godliness - virtues which the Christian must put on and practice - contentment, joy, self-control, peace, gentleness, and love, to name but a few.

In setting forth this calling of the believer Bridges is both idealistic and realistic. He shows that the holiness we must pursue is nothing less than God's own perfect holiness, and that the godliness we must practice is nothing short of God-centeredness and God-likeness. But Bridges is no perfectionist in the bad sense of the word. He also realizes and deals concretely with the fact that the Christian is a sinner, and that the pursuit of holiness and the practice of godliness involve a life-long battle against our sins and failures, and an intense struggle to be what God would have us be and to act as He would have us act.

The content of these books is also written in a form suitable for the young mind whose attention is not easily gained nor easily held for a long period of time. Each chapter is a brief study on a specific aspect of the theme. The chapters are short and to the point; the style is plain and penetrating. The average young person can pick up either of these books at his/her convenience, read one of the short chapters, set it down again, and have something to meditate on for a time.

These two books are of great value and importance for our young people. Why do I say this? Because young people need to realize their calling to strive for holiness and godliness already - even especially - in their teen years. Too often (and I speak from my own experience as a former "young person") our Christian youth postpone serious thought to a devout and holy life until they have "grown up" and made confession of faith. The excuse is that you need time to pursue your own interests and pactice your own lifestyle - which excuse (if we are honest with ourselves) is really rooted in our desire to experiment with and walk in sin. But

you must understand, young people, that this responsibility does not lie on you only when you become older and more mature, when you decide to "settle down", marry, and begin your home. No, God lays this burden on you right now. It is never too early to begin this "pursuit" and "practice".

So I encourage you to get these books and read and study them. I believe you will profit richly from them, so that you too with all the saints may "press toward the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Jesus Christ" (Phil. 3:14).

THE WAY WE WITNESS

by Rev. Ron Hanko

That our conduct is our first and most important witness in no way detracts from our calling to witness with our mouths. In fact, if our conduct is a witness we will have to speak, for we will have to give an answer to those who see our hope in our conduct and ask the reason for it (cf. I Pet. 3:15). This calling to speak for Christ is inseparably connected with our own salvation as Romans 10:9 reminds us. It is that important.

Usually our failure to speak is due to a lack of holiness and godliness, but there are times when we do not speak openly of our faith because we do not know how to witness or are afraid that we do not know. With that in mind there are some things we should all remember about witnessing - things we can learn to make our witnessing more effective. Let us not forget, however, that this all assumes that we are willing and eager to witness and are not ashamed of Christ or of our faith in Him.

In the first place, our witness must be humble. This is the first great qualification laid down by Peter in I Peter 3:15. "Give an answer," he says, "With meekness and fear." Our attitude in witnessing is of critical importance. A wrong attitude will destroy our witness, no matter how eloquently we speak.

The humility required is the knowledge that we are not of ourselves better than those to whom we witness, though we may know more than they and even be Christians while they are not. Pride is the death of witnessing, because if we are proud we are not witnessing any longer but boasting. No matter what we say, our attitude will speak much louder than our words. This is one of the most difficult parts of witnessing, but exceedingly important especially for us who believe in salvation by grace alone. We must not deny what we believe about salvation as a free, gracious gift, by a proud attitude that says the opposite, that is, that we have made ourselves to differ.

One symptom of pride, perhaps the chief symptom here, is being argumentative. Instead of that our witness must be direct. That is the second thing. A good witness is a clear,

simple statement of the truth as Scripture teaches it. Argument must be avoided. The examples of Christ on trial and of Paul before Aggrippa show us this. Argument is strife and Paul says in II Timothy 2:23, 24 that "the servant of the Lord must not strive, but be gentle unto all men, apt to teach, patient." Remember that our witnessing is primarily a **confession**. That is the very opposite of argument.

In the third place, our witness must be Biblical. In this connection Paul tells us in the passage just cited to avoid foolish and unlearned questions (vs. 23). This is not to say that the only thing we may speak of in witnessing is a passage of Scripture, but that our witness must be about the things taught in Scripture. How can we, after all, be interested in something that Scripture is not really interested in?

In II Timothy 2 Paul makes it very clear that both strife (argument) and an undue interest in unprofitable questions are symptoms of pride, for here too he enjoins meekness as the opposite of these things (vs. 25). Likewise, Paul says that being un-Biblical, that is, getting into foolish and unprofitable questions genders strife. To put it very simply, the way to avoid argument and strife is to stick to Scripture.

Fourthly, we must be bold in witnessing. To fear men and what they say is deadly. This is the second thing, then, that Peter mentions in I Peter 3. We must not be afraid of their terror, nor be troubled. The solution, Peter says, is to fear God. That, of course, brings us back to something we said earlier about the close connection between godliness and witnessing, for to fear God is not only to stand in awe of Him but to serve Him. Serving Him and Him alone, we will be very bold, for we will know His power and blessing.

In the fifth place, our witness should be positive, especially when we are asked about what we believe. With a first contact it is extremely important that we emphasize what we do believe and not so much what we do not believe or what we are against. It is probably best, therefore, in most such cases to begin with the sovereignty of God, the truth that He is God, great and holy in all His works and ways. But even in a more extended discussion we must be positive in this sense, that we do not just refute certain errors, but also show clearly what we believe and why it is important to us.

This will come about if our witness is personal, and that is the sixth thing. The most effective witness is not the one that is eloquent and logical, but one that is from the heart, though logic and eloquence do have their places. We must show, and this involves our whole attitude, that the truths of which we speak mean something to us.

Finally, our witness must be distinctive. That is, we must witness, not just as Christians, but as reformed Christians, and even more, as Protestant Reformed Christians and young people. By this I mean that the truths of the reformed faith that we hold dear must be at the heart of all we say, especially the truths of sovereign irresistible, particular grace, of the sovereignty of God, and of the covenant of grace that God has established with us. It is not difficult to see that if our witness is not distinctive there is really no reason for us as Protestant Reformed people and young people to be busy with witnessing.

Above all else it is necessary for

witnessing effectively, that we do it for the glory of God and out of love for Him. Without that our witness at very best will be dead. Nor will our witness serve any good purpose, for the reason for witnessing is not first of all the "winning" of souls, but simply God's glory. If we ever make "soul-winning" the purpose of witnessing then we will soon lose true Christian witnessing and will be left with the mechanical kind of witnessing that is so common today among those who have made soul-winning the only object of witnessing.

So too, if we forget the glory of God as the reason for all our witnessing, we will soon be discouraged, for our witness is not always received or effective in bringing others to faith. Even it is rejected by those to whom we speak, it will not be ineffective if it glorifies our God.

Nevertheless, God has given the promise that all witnessing that seeks His glory will also be "effective" for the gathering of His church. So much so, that without witnessing, mission work cannot and does not prosper. Without a good profession from our members and our young people the mission work of our own churches cannot prosper. If only we would realize how often our conduct and unwillingness to speak of spiritual things openly dismay those who have already been attracted by our doctrine! That is true also of you young people. You are the ones in whom our testimony lives on. May it live in you and be heard from you. May many see by your witness that you also have that living hope that never makes ashamed. May God so use you for the gathering of His church.

THAT FIRST YEAR FEELING

by Brother Shaffie

Although it is only a little over a year since I came to know Christ, so many changes have taken place in my life, that looking back at them now, I can't help but marvel at the way the Lord had orchestrated my life, calling me out of darkness into His marvellous light. From a strong Muslim background, God had called and showed me the only way to everlasting life - through His Son Jesus Christ.

As recently as two years ago, I was a typical Singaporean young man, an avid competitor in this mad rat race and very much bound by materialism. I had 'everything' - a job, regular pay, 'good' buddies, so there was no reason to complain. The world was my home.

Looking back now, I realized how corrupt my world was then. But how great the Lord had been to me! For as my sin abounded, God's grace did much more abound.

In early December 1986, I attended the Toa Payoh Mission service at Eng Hong's invitation. That was my first experience of the Christian faith. As I

have never been to any other churches, I am in no position to sit and ponder over the differences in the doctrines preached. But I am thankful to God, for I now firmly believe in the truth of the Reformed Faith. I realized now that by the grace of God, I'm saved through faith and that not of myself, I'm nothing and He's everything.

After the first visit, I began to go more regularly to Toa Payoh Mission, enjoying the warm fellowship. But more important, my going there pleased Eng Hong - that was what mattered or so I thought. But I did not grow spiritually. There was no conviction in my heart. I became a 'Sunday' Christian. Then suddenly, something wonderful happened to me. God spoke personally to me. While browsing through several cards, pamphlets and books, I kept coming across a verse in the Bible (John 3:16) which constantly reminded me that God sent His only begotten Son to save me. From then on, my Christian faith seemed to gather momentum. I attended the June camp, which opened up a new way for me to grow and get to know more Christian friends. I was so convicted after the camp that I resolved to come to church regularly. I quitted my job which was detrimental to my spiritual growth and a few weeks later, I joined the Catechism Class.

It was during this time that I began to see God's guiding hand working in my life. I got a new job which give me time for personal devotion and allowed me time to attend church on Sundays. I began to yearn for His Word, looking forward to every Sunday morning and evening.

But deep within me, I was still struggling, my faith was still weak and I continued to covet the things of this world. I guess the real issue was that my conversion was a secret that I kept from my family. I was grieving everyday. With each passing day, the burden in my heart grew heavier. It got to such a state that I began to question myself whether I was a true child of God or a fake. Was I just someone who enjoyed the benefits found in the Church?

Although I enjoyed Catechism Class, I began to dread, with the passing months, the coming of baptism. My conversion was still a secret. I began to question my faith and sincerity and the old struggle came back. I was struggling to convince myself that God had called me by His grace and I was not doing this for anyone or anything else. But as before and always, God showed me the way. Through much encouragement and prayers from everyone in CERC and FERC, I finally managed, by the grace of God, to pluck up courage to confess to my family. What followed was something quite unpleasant and bitter and will continue to be that way for some time, but my heart is light now and all the burdens are gone. Though I shattered my parents' world, I was strengthened by God's grace. I had taken the lighted candle from under the bed and placed it by the window so that the world may see the light. Throughout those times and now, God continues to sustain me, carrying me through each day with new confidence and joy. Now my prayer is that my family would come to know the wonderful God, my Father. Today I'm of good cheer for I know Christ has overcome the world.

At this stage of my Christian walk, baptism is something that I'm really looking forward to. It thrills me that I can become a member of the Reformed

Church and give whatever gifts that I have for the furthering of God's kingdom.

I've come to the end of testimony - my first year feelings. My prayer to God is that otners reading it might find encouragement in my sharing. I am what I am today only because of the wonderful grace of God. Amen.

EXPLAINING TO OTHERS WHAT WE BELIEVE

by Rev. K. Koole

What I intend to bring out in this article is the fruit of a couple of discussions we had in the last year or two in the Redlands' Y. P. Society. The question simply stated is straightforward terms was, how do we explain to people what we believe? What should we tell people, especially young people our age with whom we have contact, when they ask "What does your church 'believe'?" (i.e. 'confess and maintain'). This is a very practical and important question.

The question is not **whether** we should witness. Neither is it the intention of this article to enter into the proper motive and reason. I think by now we have pretty much been persuaded that bearing witness is something we have every reason to do, and it is something that we ought to do better and more often. A number of convention speeches found in a past issue of the 1986 Beacon Lights did an excellent job in laying that out. Yet, though we know we ought to speak up, we hesitate. Why?

To a great extent the reason why we hesitate to say anything, I am sure, is that we are not sure what to say, or at least where to begin. It is a bit like speech class. We would like to get up there and make a decent speech. Expressing one's thoughts belongs to the very heart of man. But what if we get up there and have nothing to say, or we can not remember anything very clearly, and we get all muddled up and begin to speak complete nonsense, non sequiturs, and monsters of a hundred different names. Horrors. The stuff nightmares are made of. Ask any preacher facing the business week after week. We would make great fools of ourselves. And making great fools out of ourselves would be of greater embarrassment than the embarrassment of saying nothing at all. So we say nothing at all.

We should remember, of course that, being willing to be counted a fool for Christ's sake is not the unique calling of ministers, but it belongs to the very business of Christianity.

When a person asks, "What does your church teach?" they certainly are not interested in a detailed account of the Reformed system of doctrine, at least not at the beginning. They want something brief and to the point, that

'something' that sets us apart from what everybody else teaches. This is what we want as well. So the question is, where to begin, and what to zero in on. I am convinced that if we KNOW where we intend to begin we will have the necessary confidence to begin. So a few practical suggestions.

In the first place keep in mind that two things that belong to the heart of the Christian faith as we hold it and as the Reformers held it are the truths of 'Salvation **all** of grace' (with emphasis on the ALL) and a high esteem for the Scriptures. In any presentation of what the churches we attend believe these two things ought to be made clear from the outset. Anyone who is ever going to be attracted to our faith and feel at home in our churches will have to be attracted to those two doctrines.

If someone, in friendly curiousity, were to ask me what our churches 'believed' (and this is usually the approach. People are not simply interested in what we believe personally, but why we are members of these Protestant Reformed churches, rather than of some other), I would answer "That our salvation is all of God's grace, God's great, free grace." This is where I would normally begin. If there is anything that defines what we as churches have struggled to maintain in its purity throughout our existence it is this truth.

Now, undoubtedly some would want to add the word 'sovereign' to this 'free grace', and they would be right. At some point it must be added. But we ought to be warned that most of those with whom you have contact will have never heard of the word 'sovereign'. It will be to them as a foreign word, and you will have to immediately answer the question 'Sovereign'? Why do you mean 'sovereign'? I would prefer to say something about 'grace' before I have to explain 'sovereign'.

That salvation is all of grace means simply that salvation is undeserved, in fact contrary to what we deserve. It means salvation does not depend upon us. It does not depend upon anything good found in men, neither does it depend upon the will of man. Rather it depends utterly and entirely upon the power of God's almighty grace. It is determined wholly according to God's good will and purpose, and is found entirely in Christ Jesus and is based upon His work.

That salvation depends upon **sovereign** grace means that it is dependent upon the Divine will and power of God alone. God determines who shall be saved.

So, having said we believe salvation is all of grace, God's almighty grace, we go on to say briefly, "And this means all of our salvation comes from God. It is not dependent upon man. We can not save ourselves. We can not make ourselves worthy of being saved. Our very will to be saved is according to the power of God's great grace."

there are a couple of advantages in beginning with this 'all of grace' emphasis. In the first place it says something positive, and 'faith' by very definition is positive. We believe after all, IN Someone and IN truths about Him, and not simply **against** various things. And this is precisely why we take a stand against a great many teachings that are popularly supposed to be Biblical today, but which are not. Not simply because we are negative and are against teachings that are popular, but because we are **for** the truth of God's grace, God's great

sovereign, free grace.

Thus, we must state that we are **for** the doctrine of salvation all of God's great and mighty grace. And because we are **for** that we take our stand against many of the popular doctrinal teachings and views of our day.

This brings us to the second advantage of beginning with our emphasis upon 'salvation all of grace', it prepares us immediately to explain why we take exception to teachings such as Arminianism, Roman Catholicism, the theory of Common grace, and so forth. Almost everyone, of course, will subscribe to the statement that salvation is all of grace. What is so distinctive about that?

What can and must be shown, if the opportunity presents itself, is that while these systems claim to teach salvation is all of grace, in reality they deny it.

Arminianism with its 'Free-willism' denies it because it teaches that one's salvation depends upon a man's choice and his natural ability to love God, and not simply upon the power of grace. Roman Catholicism, with its meritorious works notion, makes salvation depend upon a man's works, earning his salvation, and not upon free grace at all. And the theory of common grace does an injustice to grace too, because it teaches that there is a grace of God that does not save; a grace more over that does not come through Christ and the cross; and that apart from the grace of the cross men can do things pleasing to God.

In brief, all these systems do an injustice to the truth of God's grace as it is in Christ Jesus, and to man's utter dependency upon it if he is to be pleasing to God and spiritually alive. If opportunity arises we can show this to them. The point is, we do this in order to maintain the purity of grace, salvation all and entirely of this unmerited, irresistible grace.

Something ought also to be said about our high regard for Scripture, that it is God's word, and that we believe everything that it says and teaches. In the midst of today's apostasy that is much more distinctive than one may realize.

But before I touch on that (in a following article) let me say that in connection with our stating that we believe that salvation is all of God's almighty grace (meaning it is not dependent upon man's will or worthiness) we ought to know the five (5) points of Calvinism.

Calvin's name ought to come up early in any introduction to our 'beliefs'. To some he is known; to others not. In either case his name is likely to give rise to further questions either because the person has heard various rumors concerning him (most, most likely false), or they know nothing and wonder who this Calvin was, and what he taught. The 5 points of Calvinism present us with a good way of presenting what we believe in an organized way.

Do you know the 5 points of Calvinism? You should. A Protestant Reformed young person ought to be as familiar with them as the Lord's Prayer. If you know what the 5 points are, you will have some confidence in your ability to give at least a brief summary of what we believe and teach. And confidence is the main ingredient in any attempted and useful explanation.

The 5 points of Calvinism are:
Total Depravity
Unconditional Election

Limited Atonement
Irresistible Grace
Perseverance of the Saints

All one has to do is to remember that the national Dutch flower is TULIP and one has a good memory device for recalling these five doctrines that give the heart of Calvinism.

A brief explanation of each of the five could be as follows:

Total Depravity - This means that man is spiritually dead and that he is in bondage (a slave) to sin and Satan. How can such a man do anything pleasing to God apart from grace!

Unconditional Election - This means that our salvation is dependent upon God's sovereignly free choice of man; it is not dependent upon a man first choosing God. God has eternally chosen whom He will save.

Limited Atonement - Christ died not for all men but for His sheep, those whom the Father had given Him, the elect. All those for whom Christ died will be surely saved!

"What! You mean God does not love everybody?"

"That's right."

"What about John 3:16, 'God so loved the world. . .'?"

If the conversation takes this turn one ought to be prepared to answer. (Read the pamphlet "God So Loved the World. . ." by Rev. Homer C. Hoeksema. DH)

Irresistible Grace - No man of himself wants to be saved if it means having to give up the world and serve Christ. It is only God's almighty grace that overcomes this natural resistance and makes us willing. Christ's Holy Spirit changes our hearts.

Preservation of the Saints - True faith can not perish. It brings eternal life. How can eternal life perish?! God will keep from Satan those who belong to Christ in time and eternity.

This in brief is what the 5 points teach. Much more could be said. I only intended to refresh your memory. I will suggest Biblical proof texts in the next article D.V. This will do as a beginning.

If we know and confess that our salvation is all of God's mighty grace, for which we give Him daily thanks; and if we remember we are Calvinists in churches of Dutch ancestry who confess God's sovereignty and favor 'TULIPs' we are on our way.

We do not have to feel embarrassed that we have nothing to say. We do; something very important. And we ought to be confident in stating in simple, clear terms what belongs to the heart of our confession.

"Amazing grace, how sweet the sound That saved a wretch like me."

To be cont.

That which begins not with prayer, seldom winds up with comfort.
- John Flavel

As for those parents who will not use the rod upon their children, I pray God He useth not their children as a rod for them.
- Thomas Fuller

WHAT'S HAPPENING

by Ruth Bleyenberg

CONFESSIONS OF FAITH:
-Brent DeYoung and Dan Van Baren of Hudsonville made confession of faith on January 24.
-Steven Barnard and Marvin Barnard of Hope (Walker) made confession of faith on May 15.
-Brian Butyn, Rachel Butyn and Heidi Buiter of Randolph made confession of faith on February 24.
-Steve Kuiper and Judy Kuiper of Southwest made confession of faith on June 5.
-Tim Zylstra and Trudy Stork of Edmonton made confession of faith.

MEMBERSHIP TRANSFERS:
-The membership papers of Tim Hoving were transfered from Southwest to Southeast.
-The membership papers of Mrs. Bert Mulder were transferred from Lacombe to Edmonton.
-The membership papers of Mr. Tim Zylstra were sent from Edmonton to Lacombe.
-The membership papers of Mrs. Laura Lubbers (nee Kamminga) were received by South Holland from Southeast.
-The papers of Elizabeth Abel were received by South Holland.
-The papers of Mr. & Mrs. Eric Ophoff and 3 children were received by South Holland from First Church (G.R.).
-First Church (Holland) received the papers of Mr. & Mrs. Clarence Kamstra from Overisel C.R.C.
-The papers of Jim VerHey were received by Loveland from Doon.
-The papers of Mr. & Mrs. Ken Feenstra and 3 children were transferred from Southwest to Kalamazoo.
-The papers of Mrs. Helen Schipper were transferred from Southeast to Southwest.
-The papers of Cal and Wendy Kamps were transferred from Hudsonville to Faith.
-The papers of Heidi Ondersma were transferred from Faith to Grandville.
-The papers of Elizabeth Ondersma were transferred from Hudsonville to Grandville.
-The papers of Mrs. Denise Haan were transferred from Hudsonville to Byron Center.
-The papers of Jennifer Lubbers were transferred from Hope C.R.C. in Grandville to Hudsonville.
-The papers of Carol DeVries were transferred from Southeast to Hudsonville.
-The papers of Mr. & Mrs. Peter Kamps and family were transferred from Grandville to Hope (Walker).

THE LORD BLESSED:
-Mr. & Mrs. Gary Boverhof of Southwest with a son, Joel Thomas.
-Mr. & Mrs. Harry Rutgers of Southwest with a son, Matthew Joseph.
-Mr. & Mrs. Tom Buiter of Southwest with a daughter, Maranda Joy.
-Mr. & Mrs. Dick Kuiper of Southwest

with a son, Jonathon.
-Mr. & Mrs. Richard Critchlow of Southwest with a son, Richard III.
-Mr. & Mrs. Doug Boone of Southwest with a daughter, Jessica Leigh.
-Mr. & Mrs. Doug Wassink of Southwest with a daughter, Melissa Rae.
-Mr. & Mrs. Art Tolsma of Edmonton with a son, Travis.
-Mr. & Mrs. Ed Huizing of Edmonton with a son, Jonathon.
-Mr. & Mrs. Albert Nieuwenkamp of Edmonton with a son, Joel.
-Mr. & Mrs. Tim Zylstra of Edmonton with a son, Joel.
-Mr. & Mrs. Herman Klassens of Edmonton with a daughter, Pamela.
-Mr. & Mrs. Richard Span of Edmonton with a son, Matthew.
-Mr. & Mrs. Doug Tolsma of Edmonton with a son, Jeffrey.
-Mr. & Mrs. Irwin Tolsma of Lacombe with a daughter, Melissa.
-Mr. & Mrs. John Wierenga of Lacombe with a daughter, Maria.
-Mr. & Mrs. Brian Tolsma of Lacombe with a son, Justin.
-Mr. & Mrs. Jon Engelsma of Grandville with a daughter, Andrea Lea.
-Mr. & Mrs. Bernie Kamps of Grandville with a daughter, Katelyn Joy.
-Mr. & Mrs. Rich Peterson of Grandville with a daughter, Heather Lea.
-Mr. & Mrs. Leon Kamps of Grandville with a son, Caleb Adam.
-Mr. & Mrs. Ed Lotterman of Grandville with a daughter, Bethany Jean.
-Mr. & Mrs. Neal Hanko of Grandville with a son, Matthew Robert.
-Mr. & Mrs. Rod Kooiman of Grandville with a son, Randall Alan.
-Mr. & Mrs. Kandy Scott of Grandville with twin sons, Matthew Henry and Benjamin Breckinridge.
-Mr. & Mrs. Tim Tamminga of Randolph with a son, Jordan Daniel Lee.
-Mr. & Mrs. F. Van Den Top of Doon with twin sons, Kenneth Lee and Richard Lee.
-Mr. & Mrs. Erv Kortering of Holland with a son, Jeremy Lee.
-Mr. & Mrs. Gary Nienhuis of Holland with a son, Chad Daniel.
-Mr. & Mrs. Marvin Schwarz of Loveland with a daughter, Jennifer Anne.
-Mr. & Mrs. Rick Tolsma of Loveland with a daughter, Stephanie Joanne.
-Mr & Mrs.Dennis Griess of Loveland with a son, Derek Jon.
-Mr. & Mrs. Brian Kroese of Hull with a son, Brandon Charles.
-Mr. & Mrs. Lee Vink of Hull with a son, Justin Lee.
-Mr. & Mrs. Lee Wiltjer of South Holland with a son, Lee Alan.
-Mr. & Mrs. Louis Regnerus of South Holland with a daughter, Jade Renae.
-Mr. & Mrs. Ken Boer of South Holland with a daughter, Rhonda Sue.
-Mr. & Mrs. Robert Vermeer of Hudsonville with a daughter, Laurie Jeanne.
-Mr. & Mrs. Daryl Kuiper of Hudsonville with a son, Jonathan Jay.
-Mr. & Mrs. Carey Kamps of Hudsonville with a son, Nathaniel.
-Mr. & Mrs. Rich Feenstra of Hudsonville with a daughter, Lisa Anne.
-Mr. & Mrs. Jim Westing of Hudsonville with a son, James Theodore.
-Mr. & Mrs. Mike Cnossen of Hudsonville with a son, Philip John.
-Mr. & Mrs. Scott Boer of Hudsonville with a son, Ryan Scott.
-Mr. & Mrs. Brian Dykstra of Hudsonville with a son, Matthew Lee.
-Mr. & Mrs. Duane Veele of Hudsonville with a son, Benjamin Christian.

KEPT BY THE POWER OF GOD

by Mary Mulligan

Kept by the power of God!
Daily this lesson learn.
Ever brought nigh by precious Blood,
May I His will discern.

Kept by the power of God,
Under His wings secure,
Beneath His shadow forever rest,
Whatever else may lure.

Kept by the power of God,
'Till the long night is done;
'Till in His presence forever more,
His saints will all be one.

Kept by the power of God,
Whatever may betide;
He watches and helps me all the way,
He's ever by my side.

Kept by the power of God,
His saints of every land
Are guided and guarded, day by day,
By His Almighty Hand.

Kept by the power of God,
The sun and moon and stars
Are held in space by the God of grace,
As well as this world of ours.

Kept by the power of God,
Through all eternity,
To praise and honor and adore
The One who died for me.

ON PREDESTINATION

by Mike Brenneman

Every Load He asks me to bear - He carries.
Every risk He asks me to take - He braves.
Every door He bids me enter - He opens.
Every child He chooses - He saves.

For everything He requires - there's provision.
For every trial - there's grace.
For every call - there's preparation.
Though I run - He's won the race.