BEACON LIGHTS

FOR PROTESTANT REFORMED YOUTH

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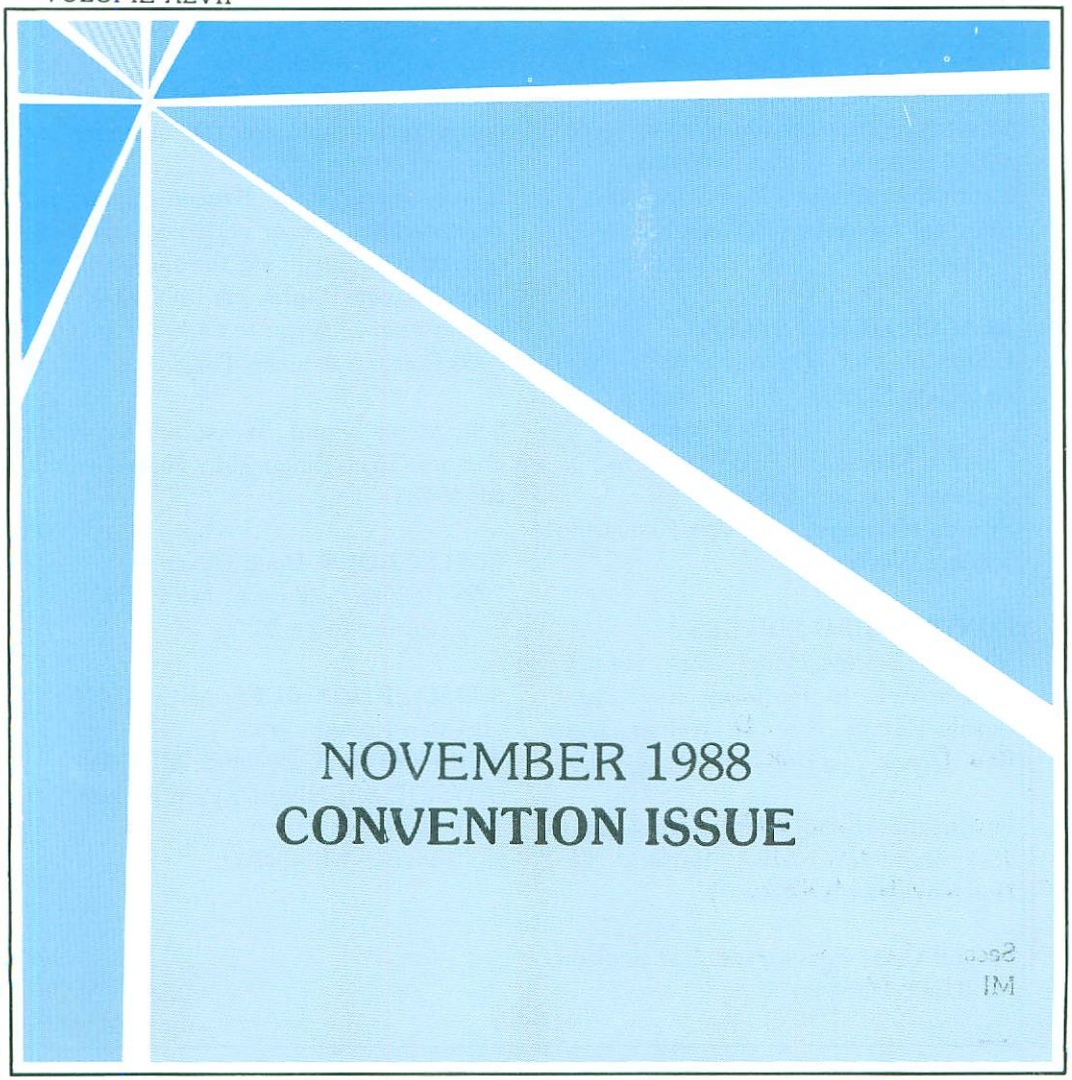

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CONVENTION ISSUE

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MINUTES OF THE 49th ANNUAL PROTESTANT REFORMED YOUNG PEOPLE'S CONVENTION

by Robin Kuiper

Minutes of the 48th Annual Protestant Reformed Young People's Convention, held at Hope College, Holland, Michigan, August 8 through 12, 1988.

Hosted by the Southwest Young People's Society.

Theme: "Jehovah's Covenant With Us"

Psalm 103:17-18: "But the mercy of the Lord is from everlasting to everlasting upon them that fear Him, and His righteousness unto children's children; to such as keep His covenant, and to those that remember His commandments to do them."

Psalter No. 241

Speech Topics:

I. "The Covenant: A Blessed Truth", Prof. Hanko
II. "The Covenant and Marriage", Rev. De Vries
III. "The Covenant and the Antithetical Life", Rev. Key

Monday, August 8

Registration was held from 11:00 to 1:00 in Phelps Hall. After lunch, conventioneers took the afternoon to settle in their rooms and met outdoors for the convention picture. After supper, they met for the first of the three speeches that week, "The Cov-

enant: A Blessed Truth", by Professor H. Hanko. After the speech, the younger group of young people went rollerskating and the older group went bowling. Afterwards, they returned to the dorms for devotions with their chaperones.

Tuesday, August 9

Devotions and breakfast were held in Phelps Hall. After breakfast, discussion groups met to discuss "Prayer in the Light of the Covenant." At 10:00, busses left for Silver Lake where the Young People ate a picnic lunch, and participated in various activities, such as tug-of-war, volleyball and swimming. In the evening, they left for Grand Haven, where they ate pizza and had free time. They returned at about 11:00 for devotions and sleep (for some).

Wednesday, August 10

After devotions and breakfast, the conventioneers discussed "Baptism and the Covenant" in their discussion groups. At 11:00, the delegate board meeting was held. The minutes of that meeting are as follows:

Art. 1: Bryan Van Baren read from Romans 6 and opened the meeting with prayer.
Art. 2: Roll was taken of the delegates and alternates.
Art. 3: The minutes of the 1987 Delegate Board meeting were read and approved.
Art. 4: Steve Lotterman read the financial report. The balance on hand as of April 30, 1988, was $5,900.98. The floor was opened for discussion.
Art. 5: A motion was made, supported, and passed to accept the financial report.
Art. 6: Randy Corson announced the scholarship recipients for 1988.
Art. 7: A motion was made, supported and passed to accept the scholarship recipients.
Art. 8: Nominees for the Federation Board officers were announced. The floor was opened for additional nominations.
Art. 9: The nominations were closed.
Art. 10: The delegates voted on the nominations.
Art. 11: A proposal to reapportion the dues ($7.00 to the convention, $4.00 to the scholarship fund, and $1.00 to the Beacon Lights) was passed.
Art. 12: A motion was made, supported and passed to accept the Lacombe Young People's Society into the Federation.
Art. 13: A motion was made, supported and passed to adjourn.
Art. 14: Rev. Slopsema lead in closing devotions and prayer.

After lunch, many young people participated in "The Dating Game". After supper, Rev. De Vries gave a speech entitled "The Covenant and Marriage." The young people enjoyed "all-you-can-eat" pizza before devotions and lights out.

Thursday, August 11

After devotions and breakfast, conventioneers met for the final discussion called "The Covenant and Our Friendships". At 10:45, an awards assembly was held where some of the more outstanding conventioneers were recognized. A Sports Tournament and open gym was held. The punch bowl began at about 5:45 p.m. after which the banquet was held in the air-conditioned Kletz Hall. After the banquet, Rev. Key spoke on "The Covenant and

the Antithetical Life." The newly elected members of the Fed. Board were announced as follows: Vice President, Jay Kalsbeek; Vice Treasurer, Todd Feenstra; Vice Secretary, Sharon Hanko; Librarian, Shari Huizinga; Youth Coordinator, Dan Schipper; and spiritual advisor, Rev. Russ Dykstra. Following this, a carnival was held providing entertainment for the rest of the evening.

Friday, August 12

The conventioneers ate breakfast together for the last time and cleaned up their rooms (which, of course, were kept very neat during the course of the week) and said their good-byes.

A special thank you to the Southwest Young People's Society for making this an eventful and memorable convention. We sincerely appreciate the hard work that was put into planning this convention. But, above all, may our thanks be to God for giving us the opportunity to gather as young people to grow in friendships together and to grow in the knowledge and fellowship of God and His Word.

Convention Speech
God's Covenant: A Blessed Truth

by Prof H. Hanko

(Substance of a speech delivered in Dimnent Chapel for the 1988 Young People's Convention, sponsored by the Southwest Protestant Reformed young people.)

The truth of God's covenant stands at the very heart of our Protestant Reformed heritage.

The origin of our churches goes back to the common grace controversy of 1924; and the heritage which comes from that controversy is the truth that God's grace is not common to all men, but is sovereign and particular, shown only to the elect.

But the truth of God's sovereign and particular grace has been held by many in the past and is held by many today outside our own circles. We share this truth with a great company of saints past and present.

What is the one doctrine which is our unique and distinctive heritage? The answer is: the truth of God's covenant.

It is a heritage given to us to treasure and keep.

It is a heritage which was particularly the work of Rev. H. Hoeksema, who developed the doctrine over his entire lifetime, but especially in connection with the split in our churches in 1953. It was prior to this split that the one distinctive truth of our heritage was under fierce and unrelenting attack.

We are the spiritual heirs of that truth; it is ours to know and love; it is ours to treasure and keep; in its truth we are called to the privilege of walking as God's covenant people in the world.

• • • •

Ever since the time of the Reformation, the covenant was defined as an **agreement** between God and man. The general idea was that God and man came together and joined in an agreement on a certain policy and procedure for the future — much like two nations sign a peace treaty after years of war. Man and God were at war. God comes to man with overtures and proposals of peace, various provisions and promises to which God binds Himself, and an expressed willingness and desire to see the warfare ended. The agreement of the covenant is concluded at such a time as man on his part accepts the provisions and promises set forth by God, assumes responsibility for keeping his side of the agreement, and promises to remain faithful to the covenant just concluded.

Many objections can be raised against this notion of the covenant. We mention briefly three or four.

This notion of an agreement is found nowhere in the Bible and cannot be sustained with Biblical support. It is a cold and mechanical way of describing a covenant relation with God; it has nothing attractive or desirable about it; it has no warmth, no life, nothing that stirs the blood. It makes God a God Who wants to get all men into the covenant, for the conditions of peace are held out to all. It makes the whole covenant dependent upon man and introduces into the covenant an Arminianism that robs God of His glory and puts salvation into man's hands.

The Biblical idea of the covenant is something quite different. While many different metaphors are used in Scripture to help us understand this idea of God's covenant, the one which is very rich and warm is the figure of a family. God is, in Himself, a family God. He is this because He is three in Person: Father, Son and Holy Spirit; but also He is one in essence. In this family life which God lives, God has perfect joy, perfect happiness, perfect blessedness.

God reveals His own covenant life by taking His people into His own family — the family of His trinity. He does this through Jesus Christ. Jesus Christ is God's own Son, the most important person in the family, the Firstborn. Jesus Christ is both God and man, both divine and human. His body is the temple of God in which God dwells and in which the church dwells, for the church is the body of Christ. So, through Christ, God takes us into His own family life which He lives in Himself. He reveals His covenant life to us, not only by telling us about it, but by making us a part of it.

A family, walking down a city street, may perhaps come upon a homeless orphan who has been abandoned at an early age to the streets. She may be wearing rags for clothes; she may be dirty and unkempt with hair full of lice and huge boils and open sores on her scrawny body. If that family begins to talk together about how tragic it is that the little orphan has never known the joys of family life, the family can do two things — and it is not hard to tell what would be the better. The family can decide to tell the wee orphan a bit about its life together as a family so that she may know something of these joys, but if she is left to fend for herself in the cruel streets, all the glowing descriptions do not mean very much. But if the family shows the orphan the joys of family life by taking the little girl home, bathing and cleaning her, putting cool salve on her sores, feeding her, and finally truly

making her a part of the family so that the parents are her mother and father and the boys and girls are her brothers and sisters — then she will truly know the great joy of family life. So God does with us when He tells us of the joy of His family life by taking us into it.

But God does this in sovereign and particular grace. He does this as His own mighty work in Christ without the will of man. He does this to us who are undeserving sinners. And He does this only to His own people whom He has chosen from all eternity in Christ and whom He has redeemed through the blood of the cross. It is all God's work and He receives all the glory.

• • • •

The Bible uses various figures to describe this truth. As we said already, sometimes the figure of a family is used. In that family, God is Father, Christ is the elder Brother, and all God's people are brothers and sisters. It may be something of this idea that Jesus has in mind when He talks in John 14:1-3 about His Father's house of many mansions.

Sometimes the covenant is described as a marriage in which Christ and His people are married and become one flesh. Heaven is said to be a great wedding feast to give us some idea of the wedding not only, but to tell us of the great joy of that wedding, the happiness and laughter, the blessedness and joy.

Sometimes the idea of friendship is used. The idea of friendship is well-known to all of us. Everyone needs a friend. And friendship has in it all the connotations of fellowship, of speaking to each other, of opening one's heart to someone who can be trusted, of sharing one's life with someone very dear. That too is the relationship between God and His people. Abraham was the friend of God.

So always the covenant is described in Scripture as a close and intimate bond of communion, love, friendship, fellowship. It is something warm, living, pulsing with life, attractive and unutterably blessed.

At the same time Scripture is very clear that this warm and personal relationship is not between two who are equals. It is between God and His people. God is great. He is infinite. All the nations of the earth are less than grasshoppers in His sight. We are not very much at all, really less than nothing. And we are so very little because, besides being only creatures, we are sinners.

But this great difference means that the covenant is always a wonder of God's grace, God's unmerited favor and love. And because it is of grace, other things have also to be said about it. For one thing, it is always one-sided. That is, God does all that is necessary that that covenant may be a reality. He establishes that covenant with His people without their doing anything — just as Abraham was sleeping when God established the covenant with him (Genesis 15). God takes us into that family life, adopting us as His children. God makes us His bride even though we are adulteresses. God keeps us faithful, forgiving always our unfaithfulness, and blessing us when we do not deserve it. God brings us to heaven where we dwell with Him forever. And so there are no conditions to the covenant at all. All is the work of God. And to God belongs all the glory.

That covenant is also established with believers and their children in the line of generations. Not all the children of believers, for Esau was born of

believers too, but he was a reprobate. But among the children of believers are the elect. And so children too are taken into that covenant. New families are also brought in through the mission work of the church. But new **families** are brought in, new converts and their children. For God always works in the line of generations.

• • • •

While we are still in the world, God makes us His covenant people. This is a great privilege. We are called to represent God's cause in this world of sin. When the world speaks of its devotion to sin, we are called and have the privilege of witnessing and testifying of our devotion to God.

The calling is there because we are members of God's family who are proud of our Father in heaven and our elder Brother. Our calling is a privilege because we are the bride of Christ, married to Him and faithful to our Husband. No more than a person who betrays the secrets of his friend who confided in him, would we betray the love of God which He has confided in us. This is a place in the covenant of which the wicked world has no idea and which is our pride and boasting.

This does not mean that we never sin. And two things need to be said here. First, a child of the covenant, when he sins, is always sorry for his sin, confesses it to God and Christ, runs to the cross to find forgiveness, and seeks from the cross of His Savior greater power to be more holy. So, second, if one who is born in the covenant sins, but is not sorry for his sin, will not confess it, finds great pleasure in his sin and keeps living his ungodly life, he only shows that he is like Esau, not a true child of the covenant after all, a reprobate, unless he does yet repent and turn to God.

• • • •

We are the heirs of a great heritage, a heritage which is distinctively Protestant Reformed. To this heritage we must be faithful if our churches are to endure.

It is a heritage which has been a great blessing to our church. It has brought about happy and stable marriages. It has resulted in rich and blessed family life in our homes. It has stood at the foundation of our whole Christian school system. It has led us all to realize how precious children are as a heritage of the Lord.

To forget this heritage will lead to a loss of these very things we consider so dear. And such is surely possible if we refuse to walk as God's covenant people. We must never forget that the lines of election and reprobation run through covenant lines. To be born of covenant parents is not in itself a guarantee that we belong to the covenant and will go to heaven. If we despise the privileges of the covenant given to us as those born and raised within the covenant, we are as unfaithful wives, as truant children, as untrustworthy friends who betray confidences of dear friends. All the privileges will be taken away.

But if we do walk in the ways of God's covenant, then we will be blessed with the friendship of God Himself, already in this life and fully in the life to come.

The Lord's Day is a day, not to feast our bodies, but our souls.

- Augustus Toplady

Letter Concerning the Federation of Young People's Societies

by Bryan Van Baren

Again we begin this new season with anticipation as the past season has concluded with the 1988 Convention. We look forward to meeting together in our societies, attending mass meetings and singspirations, as well as meeting each other in events sponsored by the Federation Board.

This past society year was a busy and enjoyable one. Those societies in the Grand Rapids area were especially busy due to three mass meetings during Thanksgiving, Christmas and Easter and each society had three combined meetings with other societies. In addition, we had our society parties, and fundraising and patron collecting. It was another year of the blessed study of God's Word.

For those near Grand Rapids there were also many activities put on by the Federation Board. On the whole, there was good attendance at the events. In October of last year we had a hayride at the Daling farm and we had about 50 young people in attendance. In November, we held a weekend Retreat with the theme "Reforming or Conforming" at the Circle A Ranch in Rockford. About 60-70 young people participated and we all experienced a fun and worthwhile weekend. During the winter and early spring months, the Fed Board sponsored occasional volleyball parties at Covenant. We enjoyed much friendship and fellowship in these activities.

In July of this year we held our annual "Road Rally." Although only about 25 people showed up, we all had a good time and we swam and played volleyball afterward. Later in the summer, the Fed Board also sponsored a Volleyball/Beach Party and again we had a good turnout and a very enjoyable evening.

Finally, we had a week of fellowship at the Young People's Convention. The 48th Annual Convention was sponsored by the Southwest Young People's Societies and was held at Hope College August 8-11. The theme of the convention was "Jehovah's Covenant With Us." Prof. H. Hanko, Rev. M. De Vries, and Rev. S. Key presented excellent speeches on "The Covenant: A Blessed Truth", "The Covenant and Marriage", and "The Covenant and the Antithetical Life", respectively. Discussion groups discussed "Prayer in the Light of the Covenant", "Baptism and the Covenant", and "The Covenant and our Friendships." Many of the discussion groups were led by the young people and the discussion was very enjoyable because many were prepared. The convention was well-organized and the

chaperones and members of Southwest Church were very supportive of the convention.

In the coming season we have much to look forward to, including Society meetings, mass meetings, sing-spirations, and many other activities such as a hayride, the Fall Retreat, and other activities which will be announced later. Especially we look forward to the 1989 Convention.

The 1989 Convention will be organized by the Societies of Hope Protestant Reformed Church. If we are to have another successful Convention, we need to have support from everyone including parents and family and church members. The costs of these conventions have been rising substantially, although dues are still $12 and registration fees were only $75 per person this past year. This means that we must collect additional funds to cover costs from fundraisers and patron collection. So the more we collect in fundraisers and patron collection, the less expensive it is for the young people. Thus it is very important to have two fundraisers per church and patron collection.

The convention steering committee is doing its best to make the coming convention as economical and enjoyable as possible, but they need your help. If you would like to help out with ideas for the next convention, please contact Steve Lotterman (453-6552) or if you have not been contacted for patron collection and would like to be a patron, please send your contribution to Randy Corson, Treasurer of the Federation Board (2231 Chelsea NE, Grand Rapids, MI 49505)

Also, if you have ideas or recommendations for the Federation Board, please send them to Randy or call a Federation Board member. Your partipation is greatly appreciated.

We hope to see ALL you young people at Federation Board activities this season and we hope you parents will encourage them to attend and remind them if they forgot.

HAVE A BLESSED SEASON!

Calvin's Tracts: Vol II, page 213.

Nature of the Knowledge of Christ

"We must hold therefore that Christ, being the eternal Son of God, and of the same essence and glory with the Father, assumed our flesh, to communicate to us by right of adoption that which he possessed by nature, namely, to make us sons of God. This is done when ingrafted by faith into the body of Christ, and that by the agency of the Holy Spirit we are first counted righteous by a free imputation of righteousness, and then regenerated to a new life: whereby being formed again in the image of our heavenly Father, we renounce the old man."

Convention Speech

Jehovah's Covenant With Us
The Covenant and Marriage

by Rev. Michael De Vries

Covenant young people, friends and lovers of Jehovah's covenant: I'm delighted to have the opportunity to address you at this your convention, especially in light of your theme: "Jehovah's Covenant With Us." How unspeakably beautiful is God's Covenant - that intimate bond of love and fellowship that God Himself makes with His own children. How utterly amazing it is that Jehovah God has established that relation of friendship with us - that He would account **us** to be His friends! Can you imagine that the Almighty God takes us, as it were, into His arms, clasps us to His bosom - sharing with us His own blessed life! Can you comprehend a love so great, that God would establish that covenant by the shedding of the blood of His own Son, our Lord Jesus Christ?! Is it any wonder that this doctrine of God's covenant stands at the very center of Holy Scripture, and that it stands at the very heart of the truth that we love and cherish?!

And I am convinced that there is no revelation of that covenant more beautiful and more enlightening, perhaps especially for you as covenant youth, than that of the **marriage relationship**. We have in marriage a picture of God's covenant with His people in Jesus Christ. Of course one would never know that, or dream that that is possible when beholding the corruptions of marriage today. On the one hand, many live together without marrying. But there is no shock any more when unwed couples shack up together. It has become an accepted statistic of cohabitation which carries no shame; it serves as the plot for the television sitcoms.

While the herpes epidemic and the terrifying spread of AIDS dramatize just how devastating and deadly promiscuity can be, many continue to jump into intimate sexual relationships while they hold marriage in contempt. The world is in the midst of a frantic search for safer ways to commit fornication and adultery. But all the while many young men and women continue to boast of their sexual prowess.

On the other hand, many entering marriage do so as if the relationship is an experimental thing. And the rich and the famous are often in court battles to see whether their prenuptial agreements, their marriage contracts, are valid. The social stigma of divorce is almost entirely gone! Divorce is almost taken for granted! And remarriage is almost as common - it is not at all uncommon anymore for individuals to be married and divorced several times - it comes about as easily as buying and selling a car.

But the sad thing is that the evils

that corrupt marriage also creep into the **church**! What is worse, increasingly much of the church itself condones these evils. Much of the church has given up any kind of a Scriptural position on marriage, divorce, and remarriage. To their shame many pastors and Christian counselors fail to warn the youth to flee fornication, and instead would educate in so called "safe sex". They fail to guide married couples in the way of repentance and reconciliation, and instead recommend divorce for those who have troubled marriages.

And **we** may not sit back, smugly smiling as if all is well with us. No, our churches, by God's grace, do not condone the corruptions of the marriage relation. But we are nevertheless influenced by these evils in more ways than we care to admit. And in one way or another, sooner or later we are all touched by the misery and grief caused by the evils that threaten marriage.

No, it is only in the light of Scripture that we see the beauty of marriage. It is by grace that we behold Jehovah's covenant in terms of that relationship of marriage. And that is our purpose this evening - to praise and glorify our God as we contemplate how rich and how beautiful His covenant is and as we consider how highly God esteems marriage as a reflection of that covenant. Consider with me, THE COVENANT AND MARRIAGE. We will notice first of all: The **Covenant** in light of Marriage, Secondly, **Marriage** in light of the Covenant, and finally, The **Premarital Implications**; what does it all mean for you, as young people?

* * * * *

The Covenant in Light of Marriage:

In many places Scripture reveals that marriage is a picture of Jehovah's covenant. The passage that probably comes to mind in that connection is in the Epistle to the Ephesians, the last part of chapter 5, where the apostle compares marriage to the union between Christ and His elect Church. In this passage the Apostle Paul gives instruction regarding the holy bond of marriage. Wives are called to submit; husbands are called to love. And their perfect model for their behavior is the relationship between Christ and the Church. Wives must submit "as the Church is subject unto Christ." Husbands must love their wives "even as Christ also loved the Church."

He also directs our attention to the intimacy of the marriage relation, again as patterned by the closeness of Christ and the Church. A man must love his wife as his own body; he nourishes and cherishes his own flesh "even as the Lord the church." Why? Verse 30 tells us: "For we are members of his body, of his flesh, and of his bones." The Apostle then shows how the marriage bond takes precedence over even the relationship between parent and child. A man **leaves** his father and mother for his wife. He is joined unto his wife and they two shall be one flesh.

And then, in reference to marriage, especially from the viewpoint of the closeness, the intimacy of marriage, Paul says: "This is a great mystery." Now in Scripture, the word "mystery" has a very special meaning. A "mystery" is not just something puzzling or baffling that we can't figure out. In the Bible "mystery" always refers to God's great and gracious **salvation**. That salvation which we would never know or understand, but which God has revealed by Christ Jesus. And this is the idea **here too**, for Paul goes on to say: "but I speak

concerning Christ and the Church."

Oh, yes, he is giving instruction and guidance regarding marriage all right. But underlying it all is the blessed truth of the union of Christ and the Church. God wills that our marriages reflect the bond which He makes with His Church in the blood of Christ. The fundamental significance of marriage is that it pictures the marriage of Christ and His bride, the Church. Salvation is that wonderful work of God whereby we are united with Christ - yea, we become **one** with Him!

This great mystery was foreshadowed in the Old Dispensation. The Psalmist in Psalm 45 prophesies the marriage of Christ the King, who is God Himself, to a Gentile woman. The Song of Solomon is really a love song in which the covenant relation between God and His people is described in terms of the ecstatic love of marriage between Solomon and his beloved. But especially this is evident in the prophets such as Ezekiel, Hosea and Malachi. These prophets present the covenant relation between Jehovah and Israel as a marriage. Jehovah God was Israel's husband, and Israel was Jehovah's wife. Her spiritual faithlessness was adultery!

In the opening chapters of Hosea, God describes His relationship to His people in these terms when He instructs the prophet to take a wife from whoredom. In this way God demonstrates to His people that He enters into a covenant of marraige with a people who are, by nature, wicked and adulterous. But Jehovah preserves and maintains that covenant of marriage as we read in Hosea 2:19: "I will betroth thee to me forever; yea I will betroth thee to me in righteousness, and in judgment, and in lovingkindness and mercies, and in faithfulness; and thou shalt know the Lord."

And finally, in the book of Revelation we see the glorious future perfection of that marriage of Jehovah and His people in Christ. In Rev. 19:1-10 the final salvation of the church is pictured as the marriage supper of the Lamb. That is the full realization of that blessed covenant fellowship which is the final destiny of God's people. And in Rev. 21:2, 9 the Church is described as the bride of Christ: "And I John saw the holy city, new Jerusalem, coming down from God out of heaven, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband. . . . And there came unto me one of the seven angels which had the seven vials full of the seven last plagues, and talked with me, saying, Come hither, I will shew thee the bride, the Lamb's wife."

What a glorious revelation of God's covenant we have then in marriage! What a fitting symbol marriage is of the covenant relation of Jehovah with His people in Christ! In this light we see that Jehovah's covenant is a warm, living, vibrant relation of friendship and fellowship of the most intimate sort. What a sovereign infinite **love** is displayed in God's covenant! It is an indestructible love; Solomon describes this kind of love in his song chap. 8:6, 7: "Set me as a seal upon thine heart, as a seal upon thine arm: for love is strong as death; jealousy is cruel as the grave: the coals thereof are coals of fire, which hath a most vehement flame. Many waters cannot quench love, neither can the floods drown it: if a man would give all the substance of his house for love, it would utterly be contemned."

What an amazing **intimacy** we share in Jehovah's covenant! Even as

in marriage, the two become **one**, so in the covenantal relation Christ Jesus is the Head, and the Church, His body. The two are one. That union takes place when we are regenerated by the Spirit. The sign of this union is the covenantal sign of baptism, for we are baptized into Christ. So we are taken into God's own covenant life to commune with Him forever.

What an **abiding** relationship! That covenant relation is a relation which can never be broken! Even as marriage is a bond which can never be broken, except by death. This is not because both parties in this heavenly and spiritual relationship are always faithful. No, we are often unfaithful, and Scripture calls us spiritual adulterers. But Christ is always faithful! He always maintains His covenant of marriage and always takes back His bride unto Himself. He guides us safely through life until He takes us into the everlasting blessedness of His covenant in the day when the tabernacle of God is with men!

And finally, we may not overlook the fact that the purpose of it all is that God may receive the glory. In the institution of marriage, the woman was not made first but second; she was made for Adam, not Adam for her. So in the Counsel of God, not the Church, but **Christ** is first. Christ does not exist for the Church, but the Church exists for the sake of Christ, to serve and praise Him forever! What a great mystery! To God be the glory!

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Marriage in Light of the Covenant:

Beloved, young people, how honorable the marriage state is then! We now, so to speak, turn things around, and consider **marriage** in the light of God's covenant. We realize then at the outset that marriage is no human institution, that it is not of human origin. It is not so that marriage somehow evolved through the years of early human history. It is not a social contrast that men worked out and found useful to society for a time.

God, the covenant Jehovah, ordained marriage to reflect His great glory in His covenant. God Himself officiated at the first marriage ceremony in the garden of Eden. It was not good for man to be alone - and God created the woman from the rib of Adam. And God Himself then brought the woman to Adam. This was the instituting of marriage as an ordinance of God to be observed by us.

Marriage is then **good**! We read in Hebrews 13:4: "Marriage is honorable in all, and the bed undefiled." Marriage is good in God's eyes; He has an intense and deep love for the bond of marriage. Jehovah has a high regard for marriage; He is **jealous** for it! Why is all this true? Fundamentally because marriage is a picture of His own blessed covenant.

And thus, the Word of God even refers to marriage in terms of the covenant. In Proverbs 2:17 we are warned against the adulteress who flattereth with her words, "which forsaketh the guide of her youth and forgetteth the covenant of her God." In leaving her husband, she is accused by God of forgetting and therefore, of breaking His covenant.

So too the prophet Malachi refers to a man's wife as "the wife of thy covenant." Mal. 2:14 That's beautiful, isn't it? "The wife of thy covenant." The same word is used to describe the covenant of Jehovah with His people in Christ Jesus. This emphasizes that marriage is a covenant bond and thus

an unbreakable union!

And that is precisely the concern of the prophet: The men of Judah were divorcing their wives and marrying others. We read in Malachi 2:11: "Judah hath dealt treacherously, and an abomination is committed in Israel and in Jerusalem; for Judah hath profaned the holiness of the Lord which he loved and hath married the daughter of a strange God."

How God hated that! That's vs. 16: "For the Lord the God of Israel, saith that He hateth putting away." Why? Because He loves His covenant! Our marriages are to be a reflection of His marriage, that covenant relation He has made with His people in Christ. In His covenant God reveals the very nature of His relation to us. It is a bond of love - and love Scripture calls the "bond of perfectness." It is an abiding and faithful love. It never puts away - divorces, but it forgives through the blood of the cross. God does not cast us off the moment we sin and are unfaithful to Him. But He forgives in the blood of the cross and restores us through the grace of the Holy Spirit.

Don't you see, young people, the seriousness of divorce, of remarriage, of all violation of God's marriage ordinance? It is not first of all, that to disobey God's Word regarding marriage is going to bring all kinds of turmoil, sorrow, heart-ache, and misery into one's life, sometimes consequences that remain through all our earthly life. That in itself is true. Many of us, perhaps **all** of us have seen that in the lives of friends or relatives. Even the world recognizes that the corrupting of marriage is the cause of all kinds of traumatic problems and grievous evils with which society struggles.

No, to violate God's marriage ordinance is to show contempt for God Himself and for His covenant! That's why God views it as treachery! In marriage we deal with God Himself. For **God's** sake, for the sake of His covenant, we must properly maintain the marriage bond!

Finally, of course, it is within the blessed bond of marriage that the covenant children are brought forth. That implies that sex is a good gift of God, an honorable aspect of marriage. In the sexual relationship there is a unique realization and expression of the closeness of marriage. And it symbolizes the love that Christ has for His Church and that the Church has for Christ - a relentless, unswerving, jealous, sovereign love!

And our covenant God gathers His Church in the covenant generations of His people. God's covenant with us, as well today as in Old Testament times, includes as a precious element, that God will be the God of our children after us.

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The Premarital Implications:

As young people you are at the age when you are probably beginning to date or at least thinking about it. Many of you may have been dating for some time already. Some of you may be seriously contemplating marriage. What does this truth of the covenant and marriage mean for you?

Of course, in Biblical times there was no dating as we know it today. Especially in Old Testament times the parents chose the mate for their children as a general rule. And even in New Testament times, when children had some voice in the matter, parents still made the final decision. Betrothal was very significant in Biblical times. It was much more serious than our

modern day engagement, since it could be broken only by a legal divorce.

Let's look at this from the viewpoint of the example of Abraham in Genesis 24: I'm sure you are familiar with the history of Abraham's concern regarding a wife for his son Isaac. First of all, Abraham requires his servant to promise under oath that he will not obtain a wife for Isaac out of the land of Canaan, but would go to Haran to obtain her. Why was Abraham so concerned about this? It was a concern for God's covenant! Very simply, the girls of Canaan were wicked, unbelievers; the Canaanties were under the curse of God; and remember, God had promised the land of Canaan to Abraham and his seed. That seed would come through the line of Isaac. Marriage with one of the wicked daughters of the land would be an alliance between Abraham and the people who were to be cast out and destroyed ultimately. It would unite those who might not be united. So Abraham insists that a wife for Isaac must come from his relatives, the **covenant generations** that lived back in Haran.

What is the principle here? It is this: light and darkness may never unite! The apostle Paul writes the Corinthians: "Be ye not unequally yoked together with unbelievers." You, children of the covenant ought not seek to date and marry with the children of this world. And we ought not look at dating and marriage as some sort of mission endeavor to convert a marriage partner to the Lord. Godly marriage is a sacred relationship between two who are united in the faith and love of God. They have a common goal too - to serve God in their lives, in their home, with their children.

Notice too, that a second important principle is suggested by Abraham's actions. The servant asks Abraham what he is to do should the woman refuse to return with him to the land of Canaan. Should the servant then take Isaac to Haran and have him live there? This is a conceivable problem, isn't it? This girl would have to live in a strange land with strange people, would have to be ready to marry a strange man. But Abraham insists that the servant may never take Isaac from the land of Canaan to return to Haran. - Never! The land of Canaan was the land of the covenant and promise. It was typical of the heavenly and eternal Canaan. To forsake the shadow, even for a wife, would be to forsake the reality. Isaac must inherit Canaan with all the spiritual blessings of God that went with that. Isaac **must** stay in Canaan!

Here the principle is also very important. Often young people can place marriage at the top of the list so to speak. They "fall in love" and what else can be expected but that marriage shall follow? Everything else is pushed into the background. God's covenant, the will of God, the church, spiritual considerations are all made subservient to this: I'm going to marry this person. There is a more important duty in the life of a Christian than marriage. The service and obedience to God are first and foremost. Marriage must be a means to obey God's commandments and glorify Him, honoring His covenant.

Practically speaking, the question is then: Will this relationship, ultimately this marriage lead away from the land of Canaan? Or put it this way - will this conceivably lead me away from the Church? Will I sacrifice God's Word for the sake of marriage? Will I heap

contempt on God's covenant? Abraham recognized and we must recognize that we may not forsake the truths of God's Word - even for a wife or a husband!

And finally I want to call to your attention the fact that God is faithful to His covenant. Abraham reminds his servant of God's faithfulness, in bringing him to Canaan, in blessing him there. Surely God would not forsake Abraham and Isaac now in this time of need. By faith Abraham believed that God would see to it that Isaac would receive the proper wife through whom the promise would be realized. And how marvelous it was that God provided Rebekah as the wife Isaac must have!

What does this mean? God still brings two people together. The marriage form puts it this way: "Witnessing thereof that God doth yet as with His hand bring unto every man his wife." Very simply, God will provide! You, as young Christians, must believe that - God is faithful. Don't worry and fret - even when in a few years many of your friends may be getting married. Don't allow yourself to be pressured into an unhappy marriage out of desperation. The point is that God has already determined who your husband or wife shall be, if it's His will that you marry. It remains for **you** to **learn** His will in this respect. And that must be the goal and purpose of dating.

At this time in your life, especially during high school years, dating should not be taken too seriously. It should be fun, casual, with the purpose of getting to know each other. But even now, you should approach dating from a **spiritual** viewpoint, seeking to honor God's covenant! You shouldn't be playing the field, making dating a game, trying to see how many broken hearts you can leave behind! Even now, be looking for a fellow Christian, a fellow believer to love and be loved in the love of God!

And, young people, don't be deceived by the distorted and perverted idea of **love** presented by the world in which we live! You know as well as I do that the ungodly present love as lust - sex - feeling. Young people, flee fornication! For the sake of God's covenant, show modesty and respect for each other, also here at the convention! The love portrayed on television, in the movies, on much of the music of the radio, in so many magazines and novels is a perversion of true romantic love.

Love is presented as a matter of feeling, emotion, intense emotion, emotional fireworks accompanied by lightning and thunder - that's "falling in love." It's presented as magic and mysterious and sudden! The popular music of the world has put it that way for years already. Love just **happens**, "some enchanted evening. . .across a crowded room." Think of some of the songs you listen to -very often you can substitute the word "lust" for "love" in those songs and have perfect sense and bring out the real intent.

Following that influence, you girls will look for the tall, dark, handsome stranger to walk out of the darkness. You fellas will look for the sweet, sexy stranger to sway in out of the mist. You won't be inclined to even think about the covenant - about those you may even go to church with or your classmate in your Christian High School. Love is not something you **fall** into, it's something you **grow** into by the love and grace of God as His children. Open your spiritual eyes! Look for **spiritual** beauty and strength, for **spiritual** compatibility!

Date and enter marriage prayerfully! Dating can be very difficult and trying. Marriage is never easy. But place your faith and trust in our Covenant-keeping God! Seek His grace that, whether single or married, you may honor and esteem His Blessed Covenant, even by a life of obedience to His ordinance of marriage.

CONVENTION IMPRESSIONS

by Jodi Brummel

Another Convention has passed by, leaving many more great memories. But this time it is with the setting of Hope College. The Federation Board and Southwest Young People's Society did a great job of hosting and made the 1988 PRYP Convention very enjoyable for everyone.

Thank you to everyone who gave up a lot of free time to make it possible to put on the Convention and also plan events to keep everyone busy. There was always something to do for everyone.

The discussion groups on prayer, proper friendships, and baptism were very interesting and helpful. These were topics that we could all apply to our lives and learn from other's ideas. We all learned how Jehovah's Covenant is connected with everything in our lives.

I think there was a good variety of activities at the Convention. There was swimming, basketball, volleyball, raquetball and tennis (and water fights).

Thank you also to all the chaperones who put in many sleepless nights because of a bunch of "restless" kids.

I am looking forward to the 1989 Convention, where the Lord willing we will all be able to meet again.

CONVENTION IMPRESSIONS

by Tricia Lotterman

What better way to spend a hot, early August week than to spend it with fellow believers! The 1988 Young People's Convention, held August 8-11, was certainly the ticket to having good, Christian fun with old friends and new of the Protestant Reformed denomination.

Though it was very, very hot, I think everyone at this year's Convention, hosted bu Southwest Protestant Reformed Church, had an enjoyable time. The activities committee did a wonderful job. They put a lot of time and effort into planning our week and the plans worked out without a hitch. Many Conventioneers said they liked the activities part of the convention because the activities were different than previous conventions. The "Dating Game", (and its commercials), the carnival, and the crazy organized activities in the gym certainly made this convention unique. Though the weather wasn't the greatest, the outings to Silver Lake and rollerskating or bowling, too were fun and were very good "mixers." Thanks to this committee, there was always something to keep us busy and having fun was made easy.

The topic for this year's Convention was "The Covenant." This, I believe, is a topic that can never be "worn out" and is always important and beautiful to hear about and discuss. The discussion groups I was in seemed to discuss this edifying topic quite well, and even though the chapel was almost unbearably hot, the speeches, too were easy to relate to and understand.

The convention week was finished off with a very nice (sit-down) banquet - a delightful opportunity to be formal with dates or with other friends "going stag."

Overall I'd say the convention was fun and also spiritually edifying. As a member of Southwest's society, I know how much time and hard work went into the 1988 Convention and all our Young People's Conventions. I didn't do very much for this convention, so on behalf of myself and the other conventioneers, I'd like to say thanks to Southwest's societies for working to make this Young People's Convention special for us. Thanks also goes to our speakers, those who supplied special numbers, discussion leaders and chaperones for the very important part you played at this convention. Because of the fond memories we conventioneers carry from this Convention, I'm sure I can say we all look forward to Protestant Reformed Young People's Convention 1989!

Convention Speech

The Covenant and The Antithetical Life

by Pastor Steven Key

Christian young people and friends, beloved in our Lord Jesus Christ, I thank you for the opportunity to speak to you tonight. I have viewed this night with a certain amount of fear and trembling, but I count it a privilege nonetheless; as I count it my privilege to preach the gospel and to minister in the church of Jesus Christ. And although it probably seems very unreal tonight, you young people are the future leaders and fathers and mothers and teachers within the sphere of God's covenant. That makes the subject at hand all the more important. I am sure you have heard this week that it is the doctrine of the covenant which more than any other doctrine lies at the heart of our existence as Protestant Reformed Churches. To understand and to experience this wonderful truth is necessary, if you are to be used by God for the preservation of His truth in our midst.

Besides that, the subject that I have been requested to speak about tonight is a subject of vast importance to your life personally and mine. Monday night you heard the truth of the covenant explained to you. Tonight you will hear something about the antithesis. (And I will explain that term presently.) But the main point I want you to carry with you from the speech tonight is this: The truth of the covenant has to **live in you**; and the life of the antithesis must be **your** life. You have been called friends of the living God! What effect does that friendship have in your life? Those two—the truth of the covenant and the antithetical life—are inseparable. It is my prayer that you are impressed with that truth tonight. If the truth of the covenant does not live **in** you, then you have no **sound** motivation to live antithetically in this world. You may have a selfish reason to live differently from others, to avoid certain works of the darkness; but if the life of the covenant is not your **life**, then your antithetical walk is only outward, and God hates it.

I will be honest with you, young people. I have no doubt that the troubles we are seeing in our own churches with the increase of worldlimindedness and the ease with which many run with the world, is exactly because some within our churches and maybe some of you do not have a real, experiential understanding of the truth of the covenant. Is it your **desire** to live an antithetical life, with all that that means? And these questions stand connected: Do you **experience** that covenant fellowship of the living God? And when I talk about **experience**, I am not referring to some cloudy feelings

you might have. Rather, I am referring to the conscious realization of the relationship in which you stand to the living God. Do you hear Him saying to **you** through His Scriptures, "You are My friend"? With that introduction I call your attention to the subject assigned me:

THE COVENANT AND
THE ANTITHETICAL LIFE

As I develop that theme, taking into account especially what Paul writes in the first part of Ephesians 5, I ask you to concentrate on the following three points:

I. THE CALLING OF THE ANTITHESIS
II. THE EFFECT OF THE COVENANT
III. THE BLESSEDNESS OF THE CHRISTIAN

I. The calling of the antithesis runs through the entire chapter of Ephesians 5, as well as many other passages of Holy Scripture.

When we speak of the calling of an antithetical life, we are speaking about what is sometimes called "our part in the covenant." The word "antithesis" speaks of a stark contrast. The word actually is a combination of two words, "anti," which means "against," and "thesis," or "that which is set forth." When that which is set forth is **darkness**, the antithesis of that is **light**. When that which is set forth is **evil**, the antithesis of that is **good**. You have the idea, therefore. The antithesis is the **opposite** position of that which is set forth. Now, when we speak of the antithetical life, behind that idea lies the truth that there is something positive and something negative in your life. That antithesis cuts through every aspect of your life, including your environment as well as your own personal life—your ways, your speech, your dress, your opinions, your attitudes. And it means that you are called to say "yes" to God, while at the same time saying "no" to sin and that which Paul calls "the unfruitful works of darkness." That is our part, our calling, in the covenant.

The calling to an antithetical life, to "come out from among them, and be ye separate," is a calling that we see again and again in Scripture. Perhaps it never has been more important to emphasize that calling than today. There is a wide-spread desire in the churches today to make things easy and to make things fun in religion. The English preacher, J.C. Ryle, referred to that attitude as the desire "to saw off the corners and edges of the cross, and to avoid, as far as possible, self-denial." More and more we hear said that we must not be too narrow, that we may go anywhere and do anything, and be friends with anyone and all the while may be very good Christians. I dare stand before you tonight and say that is nonsense and the lie of Satan.

Separation from the world is the positive calling of you covenant youth and all Christians. You and I had better listen to the words of Jesus and His apostles. Jesus said to the ungodly Jews, as we read in John 8:23: "Ye are of this world: I am not of this world." Do you know what that means? That means that if you are a member of Christ, **you** also are not of this world. And so Jesus prays concerning His Church in John 17:16, "They are not of the world, even as I am not of the world." The writings of the apostles also continually bring us before the calling to be separate, to live an antithetical life over against the world. "Know ye not that the friendship of the

world is enmity with God? Whosoever therefore will be a friend of the world is the enemy of God" (James 4:4). And then, to refer to only one more chapter, we already read in Ephesians 5 these words: "For ye were sometimes darkness, but now are ye light in the Lord: walk as children of light. . . . And have no fellowship with the unfruitful works of darkness, but rather reprove them" (Eph. 5:8, 11).

Young men and young women, beware of anyone, whether Protestant Reformed or not—beware of anyone who suggests to you that it is all right occasionally to have fellowship with those works that the apostle calls the unfruitful works of darkness, that it doesn't hurt to be a little bit worldly.

It is true, as a Christian you live in liberty. That is the gospel. That is the proclamation of the work of God's grace whereby the Christian keeps the law of God spontaneously out of love for Him. When as churches we begin laying down all kinds of laws and writing rules with respect to the various footprints into which we may lawfully step or not step, then we are giving a loud testimony that we have lost grips of the truth of the covenant. Legalism destroys and must be denounced with vigor. But don't claim Christian **liberty** when you use the things of the world to satisfy your own lusts and your own carnal inclinations! If you fail to see that the world is an **enemy** to your soul, and that there is **total** opposition between the friendship of the world and that of Christ, you are blinded to the clear meaning of Scripture's words. You need **conversion!** The world—and by that now I mean all that is in spiritual darkness—is an enemy to you, Christian!

I think highly of you young people, and of your ability to think. And I think that you can see that it is not open unbelief of doctrine that is the greatest danger to us today. The greatest danger to you and to me is our love for the world, the things of this world, the money of this world, the pleasures of this world, and the desire to keep in with this world. This is the great rock upon which many young people today, and even older, suffer shipwreck. They do not object to any particular article of the Christian faith. They hope somehow to get to heaven at last; and they know that it is proper to be religious. But they cannot give up their idol. They must have the world! And so the devil attacks us and even takes some out of **our own midst** down the broad way that leads to destruction. Terrible words? Yes, indeed. But that is the truth. For all are not Israel which are of Israel. The calling of an antithetical life is an urgent calling.

Let us take some time now to consider **specifically** our calling to live an antithetical life in this world.

First of all, when we speak of the antithesis as separation from the world, we ought to be clear what that separation is **not**.

The calling to come out and be separate is not a calling to go out of the world. There have been those in the history of the church who would flee as a little group out into the country or their own little corner and live in a commune without any contact with the people of the world. Such, however, is not the teaching of Christ. Jesus prayed in John 17:15, "I pray not that thou shouldest take them out of the world, but that thou shouldest keep them from the evil." True believers are always presented in Scripture with their calling to live **in** the world, but not

of the world, to glorify God in their various callings by patience, meekness and holiness, and not by cowardly desertion.

Secondly, to walk antithetically is not to give up all worldly professions and business. There are those who erroneously would forbid the Christian to serve as a doctor, or attorney, or psychologist, or business owner or the like. There is not a word in the Scripture to justify such a position. Cornelius the centurion, Luke the physician, Zenas the lawyer, Philemon the businessman, are all examples to the contrary. Our churches could be well served by physicians and psychologists and attorneys and businessmen and the like, and indeed have been by the few serving God in those callings.

Thirdly, when God sets before us the calling to an antithetical life, He does not mean that we believers ought not take any interest in anything but religion. To neglect science and literature and so on, to care nothing about the government of your country and the political scene, may all seem right and proper in the eyes of some Christians. But Scripture shows otherwise. Paul knew the importance of government. Nor was it beneath him to use his knowledge of the customs of the world and even to quote heathen writers. Further, if you are watching for the return of your Savior, you ought also to be watching the signs of the times.

Fourthly, when we see the admonition of Paul in Ephesians 5:11, "Have no fellowship with the unfruitful works of darkness," he does **not** refer to the products of the world. The idea that the products of sinful men are in themselves sinful and corrupt is a foolish error. **Things** in themselves are not sinful. You are not forbidden to use the cars manufactured by sinful men, or prescription drugs given to you by your doctor, or radios and stereos and microwaves and so on. The material world and the products invented and manufactured by men of this world are to be used by us in the service of the church and to the glory of God.

Fifthly, the calling to an antithetical life does not mean that you are called to separate yourself from a church in which you perceive there is sin. There have been those who have left our fellowship, accusing us of sin and a lack of love. Well, we may not cover up our sins. In the epistles, we are pointed to specific sins that affected certain congregations; but we are **not** told that sins of persons in a church justify our leaving it or neglecting the gathering for worship there. We must not look for a perfect church or congregation or even preacher, until the marriage supper of the Lamb, when we sit at the feet of the exalted Christ. The marks of the church determine our membership, according to our Belgic Confession. Sin in the church here must be dealt with by proper Christian discipline, not by your desertion for a church that does not maintain the truth of the Scriptures.

And finally in this connection, the separation of an antithetical life is not mere **outward** separation. There are those who boast of their outward walk and who speak of all their so-called "distinctives," while they nourish inside themselves a hideous monster that should be put to death! They think that they are the only roses in the whole flower patch of Christianity, while all the rest are weeds. But if only they would look inside themselves with the eyes of God and the Scriptures, they would see nothing but thorns.

Although we do the most commendable work that can be imagined, if it is not done for the right motive and purpose, we shall be condemned by God. If our church attendance, e.g., is only outward, to maintain a reputation that we are religious, it is but a **show**, filth and darkness in the sight of God. He will reject it all. For—to use a phrase of Calvin—"It is but trash and deception of Satan." But enough concerning what the antithetical life is **not**.

We must understand what that separation really **is** to which you and I are called.

Part of that calling is that we not fellowship with unbelievers. That is clearly set forth in II Corinthians 6:14ff, a passage with which you are all familiar. "Be ye not unequally yoked together with unbelievers." That applies to marriage, certainly. And I sometimes wish, young people, that you could sit as little mice in the corner when I and other of our pastors have to deal pastorally with the overwhelming grief of those who have committed that sin. But that applies as well to all of life. The separation of an antithetical life is a separation from unrighteous **men** and **women**, lest they lead us into their works of darkness.

But it is particularly the thought of Ephesians 5:11 to which I want to call your attention for the next few minutes. That is the calling to self-denial when it comes to the **works** of darkness. Darkness represents the whole area of separation from God. In Scripture, darkness refers to the whole area of sin and death, unrighteousness and hatred against God and one another, all uncleanness, and therefore also, the whole mass of people who are strangers of God the Savior. You are not to have fellowship with the works of darkness. Those are works which arise out of the darkness, and works that promote and develop the darkness of this world.

Now, the apostle specifies what some of those works are. Beginning in verse 3 he speaks of those works mentioning fornication and all kinds of sexual uncleanness. Now, you understand, young people, there is nothing wrong with sex within its God-ordained sphere. We read in Hebrews 13:4: "Marriage is honourable in all, and the bed undefiled: **but** whoremongers and adulterers God will judge." Belonging to the works of darkness is covetousness, the greed for material things which also grips the sinful lusts of believers, money-madness, making gods of cars and clothes, food and drink, men and women and all kinds of material things. Paul refers to filthiness or being obscene in activity or speech; he mentions foolish talking and joking, the kind of talk that is filled with innuendo about sexual activity or drunkenness or individual persons, the kind of joking that makes a mockery of God's law forbidding adultery and fornication and drunkenness and gluttony and so on. In verse 18, he speaks of drunkenness and the party life as belonging to the unfruitful works of darkness. You and I are not to have fellowship with such works. That is our calling to an antithetical life as children of the covenant.

To have fellowship with the unfruitful works of darkness is to have an attitude toward those works that says, "I don't care," or "I enjoy them." It is to make use of those works in such a way that you have some fun and enjoyment in them. You see, the apostle says something stronger here than if he had said, "Don't **commit**

those works." It is possible that you do not commit the act of fornication, but you get your kicks out of hearing about those who do. It is possible that you wouldn't think of getting drunk at a party, but sure have fun watching so and so make a fool out of himself in his drunken squalor. In that terrible passage which speaks of God's judgment of the wicked, Romans 1, Paul writes that long list of sins unto which God gives the wicked. And at the very end of that list comes this : "Who knowing the judgment of God, that they which commit such things are worthy of death, not only do the same, but **have pleasure in them that do them**." In the love of Christ, I **urge** you, young men and young women, have no fellowship with the unfruitful works of darkness.

It stands to reason, therefore, that to **deny** yourself fellowship with the unfruitful works of darkness, you must refuse to be guided by the **world's** standard of right and wrong. "Everybody does it; everybody will be there!" Do you think that argument means much to the Holy God? To go along with the crowd, to say "amen" to the common opinions of unbelieving men and women, to follow wholeheartedly the fashions and customs of this world, is to walk the broad way that leads to hell. And I will be very specific with examples. I will bring up some things now that affected me as a young person, when I was not yet in the sphere of our P.R. churches, but that still affect many of you. Let's consider some of those things.

When I was in my mid-to-late teens, I faced the same struggles you face today with such things as movie attendance, dancing, party life with drinking and drug use, the sexual aspect of adolescence. And I freely confess to you that I did not then see the necessity of self-denial with respect to some of those things that I now see clearly today. I would only hope that you would see now in the light of the truth of the covenant what I did not see when I was your age. For example, I know that the video craze has hit you. Just like some people think that the preacher can't see them snoozing and messing around when they sit in the back of chruch, some of you think your pastors and elders live in the dark when it comes to the activities and temptations that affect you. We know far more than you think. We deal with the consequences. What must we say about movie attendance and these video-parties that have become the craze? What must we say about dancing to country or rock music? Are those harmless little activities to which this word of Paul does not apply? Well, you think about these things now.

Most of you young men, I presume, would never go for walking up to somebody on the street and blowing them away with a .38 magnum. Most of you would not go to bed with a Hollywood whore or a whoremonger. And yet, some of you think nothing of sitting down night after night and enjoying yourself in watching such violence on television, or watching the video on which these whores and whoremongers practice their ungodly whoredoms, making a mockery of the sanctity of God-ordained marriage. Did you leave your Friend behind?! You would not think your**self** of using God's name the way it is used in television programs today. But it has become so commonplace that you let it go in one ear and out the other. You know that the Bible teaches a whole other kind of

good life; but you sit and listen to ungodly men act out a life of hedonism, showing you that the good life belongs to those who party and those who achieve the rewards of pursuing the things of this world. And is your Friend with you?! I too enjoy watching a baseball game or a basketball game from time to time. But even the advertising tells us that the night belongs to Michelob, and that the sexy women belong to those men who use such and such a shaving cream. And do we have pleasure in these works of darkness?!

Most of you young women could not question the truth that fornication and adultery are works of darkness which bring all kinds of physical and psychological consequences to those who commit them. You are surrounded with the evidences of that. And yet how many of you will spend your night at home reading a so-called romantic novel, so that the last scene in the camera of your mind before you go to bed is that woman going to bed with her man after some very descriptive sexual innuendo? Or how many of you think nothing of sneaking off to a dance, where the movements of your body to the suggestive lyrics of much of today's music will bring the temptation of fornication to a young man?

The point is this, young men and young women: If your fellowship is with the unfruitful works of darkness, there is a bond in your life between you and **hell**! We must have no **fellowship** with the works of darkness! We must walk antithetically, in opposition to them. And the examples mentioned are just a **few**. If we love God and our own souls, we must have nothing to do with activities and amusements which are bound up with sin.

Now, maybe for some of you, this talk has been a bit heavy to this point. Maybe what I have brought you from the Word of God is like a great burden of law to you, which you think you cannot keep. If so, then you have a wrong spiritual perspective. And this is where we must consider together:

II. The effect of the covenant.

A few minutes ago I said that it is not unbelief of doctrine that is the greatest danger to us today, but the attack of the world of darkness upon our souls. And yet, when we consider the effect of the truth of the covenant upon the antithetical life you and I are called to live, then the fact must become clear: It **is** doctrine that affects life and practice. That is why it is impossible for you to live the antithetical life of the Christian **properly**, without an experiential understanding of the truth of the covenant.

You could easily take all that I have said thus far, and you could say, I do not do those things. I don't go to movies, I don't dance, I don't party, I have stayed clean from fornication. There is an old saying that I heard in my teenage years: "I don't smoke and I don't chew, and I don't go with girls that do; I'm a Christian." Well, let me tell you something, guys and girls. There are many young people of the world who have enough smarts not to do those things. Apart from the fact that the Christians's body is the temple of the Holy Spirit—and what a thought that is!—there are all kinds of unregenerated young people who have enough respect and love for their own bodies that they don't smoke or fornicate or do drugs or become drunken. But God would not have the carcase of obedience without truth in the inward parts! Do you want to know

what really sets you apart from the world? It is God saying to you through His Word and by His Spirit, "You are my son, my daughter, my friend." That is why I emphasize to you that it is impossible for you to live the antithetical life of the Christian **properly**, without an experiential understanding of the truth of the covenant. We have to understand that the antithetical life of the Christian is **not** a life of legalism. Your life as Christians, young people, is not a matter of what you **do**, primarily; it is a matter of what you **are**. It is not a matter of what you **earn**; it is a matter of who you **are**. That is why the truth of the covenant has to be your **life**. When you live in the consciousness that you are a son and not a swine, that you are a friend-servant of the Triune God and not a hog, then you don't roll around in the filth either.

When you experience that wonder of being taken into the covenant life of our God, then your whole outlook upon the world is affected. If you are going to heed the admonition not to have fellowship with the unfruitful works of darkness, you must be convinced of two things: In the first place, that the works of unbelieving men are indeed works of **darkness**; and secondly, that **your** life is in the **light**.

The inspired apostle says, "Have no fellowship with the unfruitful works of darkness, but rather **reprove** them." That word "reprove" means that by conviction you bring to light the value of those works. They are **worthless**! To use an illustration: A few weeks ago, I had a new vehicle rustproofed. The man who took care of the job was explaining to me that after they spray their product into the inner recesses of the vehicle, they examine all those areas with a black light. That black light exposes what is not seen by the natural eye. It shows whether there are any places that were missed. Well, to reprove these works is to shine a black light upon them, to show them for what they really are—unfruitful works of darkness, works by which Satan would attempt to overthrow us and put out our light.

But in order to reprove those works for what they are, you must know yourself that **you** are in the **light**. So we read in Ephesians 5:8, "For ye were sometimes darkness, but now are ye light in the Lord: walk as children of light." We **were** darkness. That is not merely the way we walked. That is what we **were**. You see, again, Christianity is not merely what you do; it is what you **are**. We **were** darkness. But now we are **light**. We became light, when we were taken into the covenant life of God. He Who lives in the perfect light of His own Being, was pleased sovereignly to take a people into His life. No, we can't fathom that; we believe. And when we were taken into His life, experiencing the power of His irresistible grace, we were united with the divine fountain of goodness and set on fire, as it were, by the light of the living God. Is that your experience? Do you **know**, young man, young woman, that you are light in the Lord?

Perhaps you ask, "How do I know that I am light in the Lord?" I know because that antithesis of life and death, sin and holiness, now cuts right through my own life. That God **declares** me His friend and **makes** me His friend **causes** a spiritual antithesis in my own life. Do you know why your life is so turbulent sometimes, when you hate sin and yet there is something in you that longs for that fellowship with the

unfruitful works of darkness? Because God has taken you into His own perfect life, though you still live in your sinful flesh and in this world of darkness. He creates an antithesis **within** you.

That is what we see of the life of the Apostle Paul in Romans 7. "I delight in the law of God after the inward man: But I see another law in my members, warring against the law of my mind, and bringing me into captivity to the law of sin which is in my members. O wretched man that I am! who shall deliver me from the body of this death? I thank God through Jesus Christ our Lord." There is the antithesis wrought by God within my own soul.

When God takes us into His own covenant life and fellowship, when the truth of the covenant lives in us and in our consciousness, then we begin to see the invisible things as if they were visible.

Let me use another brief illustration. When you were young, your parents taught you to say thank you. The first few times, perhaps, when you did not say thank you, you were admonished. "David, what do you say?" "Thank you." You said thank you, but all you really cared about was that you got what you wanted. The thanks really meant nothing. The hope of your parents was that you would learn that thanksgiving ought to be a natural, spontaneous reaction when we receive that which we do not deserve. But you only saw that which was visible. The **concept** of true thanksgiving was an intangible concept that was someplace out in the air, invisible to you.

Now, it can be that same way in the realm of the antithesis. You can be taught how to perform as a young person in the sphere of the church. And there are those who attend church, who sit still in church, who live according to the standards of their church environment, and who then say to themselves, "I have performed!" But that does not make you a Christian. That does not make the invisible things **visible**, spiritual things **real**. But when God takes you by the new birth and by His irresistible call into His own covenant family as a Triune God, then your eyes are opened. Before your mind as grand realities is your own life, God, judgment, hell, Christ, justification, everlasting life. And you say, "Thanks, Lord;" but you feel totally inadequate because you know that your feeble thanks is not enough for what you have received.

III. To live in the covenant fellowship of the ever-blessed Triune God is the infinite blessedness of the Christian.

To live in intimate, permanent, life-union with the Triune God through Jesus Christ our Lord is **salvation**, young people.

In a sense it is true that our understanding of the covenant is somewhat abstract. We are so weak, we cannot begin to fathom the beauty of our Friend-Sovereign. We see in a glass darkly. But consider the work of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Mediator and Head of the covenant. That blessed Savior "gave Himself for our sins, that He might deliver us from this present evil world, according to the will of God and our Father" (Gal. 1:4). He knows what this world is, for He lived in it for 33 years. He knows what the difficulties of youth are, for He was a man like we are men, tempted in all points like as we are. And now, high in heaven, at the right hand of God, He is able to save to the uttermost all who come to

God by Him. He gives and gives and gives to us. He is a Friend to all who are in Him.

But we do not understand very well the idea of friendships. You say these are your friends. Why? "Well, because they make me feel good and we have a good time together." That is not friendship, certainly not the essence of friendship. Do you think you have many friends? A person is only your friend when you **give** unceasingly, when your concern is the spiritual welfare of that so-called friend, and your spiritual welfare is his or her concern. Friendship in its very essence is **giving**. The fellowship of friendship in God's covenant is **not** to be found in simply coming to Christ to **take** some forgiveness, to **take** some peace, to **take** some pledge of heaven, and then **to go my own way**. To be a friend with someone is not to be saying "I" all the time. But it is seeking the joy of our loved one, our Friend, allowing ourselves to be wholly guided in Him and His Word. And such friendship as God shows us and gives us to experience by taking us into His own life is—as you heard Monday night—established freely and unconditionally with all the elect.

Blessed are you who live out of the consciousness of God's fellowship and by His grace.

I sometimes think about those words of the apostle in II Corinthians 12:15: "And I will very gladly spend and be spent for you; though the more abundantly I love you, the less I be loved." Those words are foolish, those words cannot be understood by those who have not experienced the friendship of God's covenant life. Those who follow after the Christian religion not for the sake of God Himself, but for their own sakes; those who do not know what it is to be truly blessed by God and saved, unless it means to be happy and to do good according to their own imaginations—these do not know what the apostle means here.

To be blessed is to spend and be spent for the sake of Christ and our brothers and sisters in Him. To be blessed is to will the will of God and to glorify Him, and not to seek selfish interests. For that blessedness is the fruit of the experience of God's covenant friendship. To you who truly love God with a love of sons and daughters and true friends, with that friendship that does not arise out of your depraved nature, but only from the Holy Spirit, these words of the Apostle Paul are **most** beautiful, a testimony of a friend of God.

With that consciousness we understand that the life of the antithesis is a life that affects our attitude not only against the unfruitful works of darkness, but also our attitude toward ourselves and all our activities.

The walk of the Christian is a walk that includes every activity of your life. When you live in the fellowship of God, you live in the light. You have a different mind-set, a different set of values. When others are mocking and making fun of the unlovely, you are trying to reach out for him or her. When they are scheming and plotting, you are saying they are wrong. When you hear the garbage that the ungodly spew out as counsel, you are saying, "Blessed is the man that walketh not in the counsel of the ungodly." But one question is of importance to you: How shall I live to the glory of Him Who loves me so much, my Friend-Sovereign? There is so much more that could be said—about the difficulty of walking

as a Christian; about the necessity of seeking to be near our Friend-Sovereign, of hearing His voice through the preaching; of searching the Scriptures and saying, What saith the Lord? But I must quit.

Remember your relationship within God's covenant and all that He has done for you. Faithful is our Covenant God! And though we transgress that covenant, and violate that covenant every day, that does not break the relationship of God's friendship. God has promised: "If they break my statutes, and keep not my commandments; Then will I visit their transgression with the rod,"—and sometimes the rod is extremely painful—"and their iniquities with stripes"—and sometimes those stripes leave scars that last a lifetime.—"Nevertheless my lovingkindness will I not utterly take from him, nor suffer my faithfulness to fail. My covenant will I not break, nor alter the thing that is gone out of my lips" (Ps 89:31-34). And that covenant of friendship will be realized presently in all its fulness in the eternal glory when the tabernacle of God shall be with man forever. In that tabernacle we shall know Him, love Him, see Him face to face in the revelation of Jesus Christ our Lord, and glorify Him forevermore. May that be your hope, your motivation also for living now to His glory.

THANKSGIVING

by Beth Van Meeteren

So often when we think of Thanksgiving we immediately think of turkey, stuffing, pumpkin pie and two days off work or school. Our main worries are usually "will mom make enough stuffing this year," or "do I have enough room in my kitchen for all the company," or even "I hope we have dinner on time this year." And so on.

We are all guilty of these things, but what we ought to be thinking about is how we might best thank God on this **blessed** Thanksgiving Day.

We should give thanks to God in many different ways. One way we can thank God is by praying. Lords Day 45, Q. & A. 116 reads, "Why is prayer necessary for Christians? A. Because it is the chief part of thankfulness which God requires of us." God also tells us in I Thess. 5:17 & 18 "Pray without ceasing. In everything give thanks for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus concerning you." Prayer is something very important in every Christian's life - because God is very important.

Another way we can thank God is by singing His most glorious praises. For God tells us in Psalm 92:1 "It is a good thing to give thanks unto the Lord, and to sing praises unto thy name, O Most High." God has many beautiful Psalms in which we can thank

Him. When we sing these Psalms, we must sing them out of gratitude to God.

We can also give thanks to God in our daily walk by letting our light shine forth. By this I mean everyday talking with a good tongue, getting along with our family and friends, teaching the gospel to others, and so forth. The Bible tells us in Matt. 5:16 "Let your light so shine before men that thay may see your good works and glorify your father which is in heaven."

When should we give thanks to God? We should give thanks unto God every minute of every day, because every moment God gives us something to be thankful for. Psalm 136:1 "O give thanks unto the Lord; for he is good: for his mercy endureth forever." Just like God's mercy endureth forever, so should our thankfulness endure forever.

Even in times of sorrow and trouble we should thank God for the Scriptures read in Psalm 34:1 "I will bless the Lord at all times: his praise shall continually be in my mouth."

God has given us so many things to be thankful for. He has given us God-fearing homes, churches, and schools where we may be instructed to hear God's Word and be taught about things concerning our lives. Another important thing God has given us is our Christian friends. The friends we choose in our life can be very important to our future. If we make our friends with the worldly we too may turn away from God as Solomon did by marrying heathen wives.

Last of all, the most important thing God has given us is the love of Christ Jesus, who was crucified on the cross, to make atonement for all our many sins. God tells us in Eph. 5:2 "And walk in love, as Christ also hath loved us, and hath given himself for us in offering and sacrifice to God for a sweetsmelling savour."

WHO'S DELINQUENT?

Don F. Price

We read in the paper,
We hear on the air
Of killing and stealing
And crime everywhere.
We sigh and we say
As we notice the trend
"This young generation,
Where will it all end?"

But can we be sure
That it's their fault alone?
That maybe a part of it
Isn't our own?
Too much money to spend;
Too much idle time;
Too many movies
Of passion and crime,
Too many books
Not fit to be read;
Too much evil in
What they hear said;
Too many children
Encouraged to roam
By too many parents
Who won't stay at home.

Kids don't make the movies,
They don't write the books
That paint a gay picture
Of gangsters and crooks
They don't make the liquor,
They don't run the bars
They don't make the laws,
And they don't buy the cars.
They don't make the drugs
That addle the brain;
It's all done by older folks
Greedy for gain,
And in how many cases
We find that it's true
The label "Delinquent"
Fits older folk, too.

SINGSPIRATION SCHEDULE

November 20	Faith (Thanksgiving)
December 18	Hudsonville (Christmas)
February 19	First
March 19	Southwest (Easter)
May 21	Hope
August	Pre-Convention
September 17	Southeast
November 19	Faith (Thanksgiving)
December 17	Hudsonville (Christmas)

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