BEACON LIGHTS

BY PROTESTANT REFORMED YOUTH

"As much as the Word of God admonishes us against friendship with the children of this world, it calls us to friendship with God's people. The alternative to friendship with the world is not no friends at all. But the alternative is friendship with the children of God."

Living the Antithesis In Our Personal Relationships, from a speech given by Rev. Ron Cammenga at the Young Adults Spring retreat.

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EDITOR'S NOTES MAY 1992

by David Harbach

I hope to be able to introduce our new editor-in-chief in the next issue. The staff is carefully considering those who desire to be editor.

I knew this would happen. Since we had an overwhelming response to the writing contest in the 3rd - 4th grade level, those grades will have separate winners. And also, you will have to wait until the June/July issue to know who won in each level of the writing contest. The winners will be notified in May. Look for the winning articles in future issues.

Prof. Hanko gives us another excellent article in his series on the Janssen Controversy, "Chapter V - The Relation Between Common Grace and Janssen's Views" (4). I want to thank Prof. Hanko for giving us a clear picture of some of the erroneous views of revelation. In addition, he mentions Prof. Homer Hoeksema's book, The Doctrine of Scripture. You can obtain this book for $6.95 plus $1.75 for postage by sending your request to the Reformed Free Publishing Association, P.O. Box 2006, Grand Rapids, MI 49501. The Doctrine of Scripture, a supplement to Reformed Dogmatics, sets forth the truth that Scripture is God's inerrant Word, coming to us with its own absolute authority and demanding of us an unconditional faith. Contemporary and clearly written, it is a valuable addition to a Reformed reader's library. A textual index is included.

Rev. John Heys brings us a two part series on "Drifting With The Wind." As usual, Rev. Heys captures the meaning of Hebrews 2:1 with vivid pictures from life and presents them to us for our benefit. He covers such subjects as drifting away from the entrance into the Kingdom of Heaven, Satan's blowing winds of false doctrine, and the lie of Arminianism. In the next installment, Rev. Heys will continue to look at the awful tragedy of drifting away from the truth.

Revs. Ron Cammenga and Russ Dykstra spoke at the Young Adults Spring Retreat. Rev. Cammenga's speech, "Living The Antithesis In Our Personal Relationships", is found in this issue. He writes, "The relationships of the young people ought to be matter of concern to the church because God Himself is concerned about the friendships of Christian young people. This belongs to the antithetical life to which God calls every young person." With this we wholeheartedly agree. Rev. Cammenga divides his speech into four parts: The Warning Against Friendship With The World, The Reasons Why Friendship With Unbelievers Is Forbidden, The Positive Calling, and Friendship At What Cost? Thank you, Rev. Cammenga, for sending your encouraging spring retreat speech to us.

Mrs. Brands, in Letter #18, studies Ecclesiastes 5:1-7, Introduction, "Manipulating God?!!" A surprising title! Solomon looks at ". . . people who realize that there is a God but who fail to love God and His righteousness and therefore who fail to give Him due reverence and feel they can manipulate Him to serve their purposes." But as Mrs. Brands points out, the question for us is "Do we also in any ways ever try to do this?"

Lori Ellerbroek supplies us with the latest in church news. Keep sending her your church bulletins. Her new address is: 14320 Pine Creek Drive, Holland, MI 49424. I thank Lori for her faithfulness in being our Church News editor.

The series on the ten commandments continues with The Second Commandment by Mr. Don Lotterman from our Hope (GR) PRC. You will probably be surprised by some of the ways in which Mr. Lotterman shows us how we make images of God in our mind. Thank you, Don, for giving us a deeper understanding of the second commandment.

THE JANSSEN CASE
Chapter V - The Relation Between Common Grace and Janssen's Views (4)

by Prof. Herman Hanko

(In the last article we discussed one area in which Janssen connected his views of Scripture with common grace. This was in the area of general and special revelation. Because the general revelation of common grace enabled the heathen with whom Israel had contact to discover many elements of truth, Israel borrowed extensively from heathen thought in its own religious beliefs. We turn in this article to other areas in which Janssen connected his views of common grace with his views of Scripture.)

If Dr. Janssen held erroneous views of revelation, it is not surprising that he also denied the truth concerning the inspiration of Scripture. And if he connected his views of revelation with common grace, it is not surprising that he would connect his views on inspiration with common grace. He did this, however, in a roundabout way.

Janssen, first of all, made a distinction between mechanical and organic inspiration. In fact he took the position that these were really the only two possible ideas of inspiration: one either believed in organic inspiration or one believed in mechanical inspiration.

The difficulty was that he defined organic inspiration as "thought inspiration," i.e., when God inspired the Scriptures, He only gave some thoughts to the secondary authors, and they put these thoughts into their own words. Thus, Janssen did not believe in <u>verbal</u> inspiration.

And, rather cleverly, he said: If one does not believe in organic inspiration, then the only option open is to accept mechanical inspiration. And mechanical inspiration teaches that the Bible just fell from heaven. Janssen actually used that expression when talking about the creation narrative in Scripture: "The narrative, as it were, fell out of heaven."

He did not mean to deny, of course, that God used men to write the Scriptures; but the way in which God used them was to make of them stenographers to whom God dictated word for word what He wanted them to write, so that they wrote down what God said, sometimes without even being conscious of what they were writing.

All who did not accept "thought inspiration" had to believe this idea of mechanical inspiration.

The Reformed believer has always refused to be put on the horns of that false dilemma. He believes in organic inspiration to be sure, but he does not find that organic inspiration makes verbal inspiration impossible.

However this may be, Janssen was intent on emphasizing the <u>human</u> <u>element</u> in Scripture. In fact, he emphasized the human element so much that in all his writings and notes there is not so much as a single reference to the divine element.

But it was in the human element that Janssen once again found room for common grace. He rails at his accusers who teach that the creation narrative came from God in this way: "The considerations and reflections concerning God, the world as called into existence by God, the unity of the creation, - considerations which God has given to man, to all men, and which He by virtue of His common grace, has preserved from destruction, must (by my accusers) be ignored."

What is meant here is very clear. Because of common grace, God gave knowledge of His work of creation to all men. This knowledge has been preserved by common grace among all men.

What the nation of Israel believed concerning creation, therefore, came from her contacts with the heathen. And the inspiration of Scripture, because it is the writings of human men, reflects what these human men learned from the heathen.

So the human element in Scripture, in Janssen's view, included the elements of truth which were found in the heathen world by virtue of common grace and which were incorporated into Scripture.

It ought not to surprise us that Janssen's view of inspiration is exactly the view which is held almost everywhere throughout the Reformed church world. In the years when I was attending college, this was the view that was taught. If one does not want to believe in mechanical inspiration, then one must necessarily be committed to the thought inspiration of organic inspiration. But then also there are obviously errors in Scripture, for God only gave to men certain thoughts and allowed them to express these thought in their own way. As they expressed these thoughts in their own way, they did so under the influence of the heathen around them by whom they were influenced. But all this was not bad because the heathen also possessed the truth by virtue of God's common grace. So ideas of the heathen are incorporated into Scripture as well as ideas of God.

One may not find Janssen's line of argumentation very persuasive, especially when he tries to get the whole doctrine of common grace to support his views of Scripture. But the fact that he did so is significant. The Christian Reformed Church condemned his views of Scripture, but adopted common grace. It is, therefore, not surprising that the same views of Scripture which Janssen taught have appeared again in the Christian Reformed Church.

It ought not to surprise us that Rev. Hoeksema, a fierce opponent of Ralph Janssen, also, many years after the controversy, turned his attention to the whole subject of the inspiration of Scripture. When Hoeksema saw that Janssen supported his heresies by means of common grace, and when Hoeksema repudiated the whole idea of common grace, he took another long and hard look at the doctrine of inspiration in order to develop it from the distinctive viewpoint of sovereign and particular grace. In doing so, Rev. Hoeksema made a major contribution to the whole doctrine which has been indeed a great help to all those who wish to hold firmly to the infallible inspiration of Scripture. We wish to talk about this a bit more in a later article, but for now, if one wants to know what Rev. Hoeksema actually developed, he may find it in Prof. Homer Hoeksema's book, The Doctrine of Scripture. Prof. Homer Hoeksema himself acknowledges that much of the material in this book is gleaned from his father's writings.

ECCLESIASTES 5:1-7

LETTER # 18
INTRODUCTION
MANIPULATING GOD?!!

by Mrs. H. Brands

ECCLESIASTES 5:1-7 forms a section all by itself within this book and this section of the book. It is the only place in which Solomon looks at the vanity of false religion. Here he is looking at people who realize that there is a God but who fail to love God and His righteousness and therefore who fail to give Him due reverence and feel they can manipulate Him to serve their purposes.

It doesn't take a great deal of historical knowledge to realize that men have tried throughout the ages to manipulate God. The

Greeks and Romans invented gods who were actually just glorified men and who needed flattery and gifts to be put on the sides of men. Just about any - if not all - false religions could be put in here for examples of vain religion.

But the sad part is when even those who should know better try to manipulate God! Even those in the sphere of the Church, who know many truths of the true God, try also to use their knowledge in order to get God to do what they want Him to do.

Solomon's instruction in these seven verses shows the heinousness and presumptuousness of such attempts to manipulate God. "God is in heaven," he instructs us. "Let your speech be carefully considered and let your speech before Him be with few words. FEAR HIM!"

Although this section has only seven verses, and although one main idea pervades all seven verses, the thoughts are abundant and there are ideas which take thought to be made clear. So we will take three days to go through this section. Today we will look at the overall idea and next we will take two days to go verse by verse and then again draw it all to a conclusion.

Today, then, the overall idea of verses 1-7.

ECCLESIASTES 5:1-7
"The Futility of Trying to Manipulate God"

Solomon has one main point to make here and he has one main illustration which he uses in order to make this point.

Solomon's main point, as we've already said, is that we must fear and reverence God in truth and never dare to try any subversive way of getting Him to do what we wish. HE IS SOVEREIGN AND WE ARE MERELY MEN! Who are we to presume to dare to make this God bend His Almighty will to serve us? God is God and He is not to be manipulated!

Solomon's overall illustration to make this point is an example which was common in Israel of his day. He lived in the days of shadows and types when God had instituted various sacrifices and temple-worship, all designed with one purpose: to teach and to point to Christ, Who would be their fulfillment.

But many in Israel failed to see Christ in the Temple worship and in sacrifices. Instead, they thought of God as a god who would be flattered and impressed through the giving of sacrifices. And - the special point of this lesson - they failed to see His sovereign omnipotence which knew every thought and intent of their hearts, instead thinking that they could get Him to do what they wanted Him to do by making promises they never intended to keep.

What presumption! Really, now! Do men dare to speak to God Almighty and promise things they never even intend in their hearts to do? And do they really think He is so stupid as to give them things just because of their idle promises?

Yes, men really do think they can play around with God that way. Men really do think they are superior to God. And not only do they sometimes do this, but any man who knows God's truth without loving it will try in some way to manipulate God. Men are just that brash and faithless.

The man in this illustration is a man who lives for the things of this earth. On this earth he has certain material aspirations and desires.

But he has been taught that God rules and that God gives as He pleases. Men do not gain things only through their own initiative.

So the man figures that He must get God on his side. If he can get God to be impressed with him, then, he thinks, God will give him what he wants.

What it seems to this man that God wants are the things of this earth. God wants sacrifices of various sorts. He is pleased with animals and with thanks-offerings, all the things instituted in Old Testament Israel.

Now, the man loves his things far too much actually to part with them. So he instead schemes this way: "I will go to God and make known what I desire. Then I will promise to give Him wonderful sacrifices and tithes and offerings if He gives me these things. But, after He does what I want, then I will pretend it was all a mistake and I should not have made those wonderful promises. In that way He will forgive me but I will still gain what I want."

That's the idea all the way through this section. We see here a man who vows to the priest that he will give sacrifices and gifts to God in return for God's favor but who speaks it all dishonestly. And in this context, with this example, Solomon warns us to come to God with all the reverence due to His majesty, to fear before Him, never to give rash vows, never to play the fool before Him. "Fear thou God!"

P. S. Always, the purpose of our study is to apply the study to ourselves. It is easy to condemn the pagans and the Old Testament Israelites for their attitude of manipulating God. But the question for us is, "Do we also in any ways ever try to do this? How does this apply especially to us?"

Try thinking about this between now and next week and see if you can yourself find ways in which we need this lesson. And then see whether you think I apply it correctly in next week's lessons. No one has all the answers or makes all the valid points and so we all have to keep on studying and learning. Never will we know it all! (Not even in heaven! Then we will know perfectly whatever we will know but we will still keep on learning forever. God is too great for finite man ever to know completely.)

Letter #18. Theme: Ecclesiastes 5:1-7:
Introduction: "Manipulating God?!!"

1. Give some historical examples of men trying to manipulate God to do their wills.
2. Give some examples in the Church world of ways in which "Christians" try to get God to do their wills instead of His.
3. How does the man in 5:1-7 try to manipulate God?

BOOKS

Published by the Federation of Protestant Reformed Young People's Societies

Reformed Education by Prof. David Engelsma - 86pp. - **$2.50**
Originally published in 1977 by the Federation of Protestant Reformed School Societies, this excellent book was reprinted by the Federation of Protestant Reformed Young People's Societies in 1981. An excellent series of speeches on:
The Covenant Basis of Christian Education
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Jesus' Beauty Shining In You by Rev. C. Haak and Rev. R. Van Overloop, Don Doezema and Marybeth Lubbers - 187 pp. - **$6.50**
The three main authors of this book took each fruit of the Spirit as given in Galatians 5:22-26 and wrote from a particular point of view. Don Doezema wrote on the fruit shown in the life of Christ; Marybeth Lubbers wrote about the fruit shown in the life of a biblical character; and Rev. Van Overloop wrote on the fruit of the Spirit shown in the life of Reformed youth today. A superb study of the fruit of the Spirit in the life of Christ and in the lives of God's people.

Orders for books should be sent to:
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THE SECOND COMMANDMENT

by Don Lotterman

Question 96 of the Heidelberg Catechism asks, "What doth God require in the second commandment?" Answer "That we in no wise represent God by images, nor worship him in any other way than he has commanded in his word".

How we are to serve him is the instruction we find here. Now don't say right off, "Oh, but I don't transgress that commandment; maybe the 3rd, 5th or some of the others, but not the 2nd. I don't have any images which I serve in the place of God." Let's look at the 2nd commandment and its implications and see if we violate it in our actions and thoughts. "Thou shalt not make unto thyself any graven image, nor the likeness of anything that is in heaven above, or in the earth beneath, or in the water under the earth. Thou shalt not bow down thyself to them nor serve them; for I, the Lord thy God, am a jealous God, visiting the iniquity of the fathers upon the children, unto the third and fourth generation of them that hate me, and showing mercy unto thousands of them that love me, and keep my commandments." A graven image is an object of worship. This is not to be confused with a bust of a person, as maybe you have seen at the entrance of a park, or of President Lincoln in the Lincoln Memorial in Washington D. C. There is no harm in these images of man. But when the image is to be used for the worship of God, it becomes a heinous sin, for we cannot make a likeness of God. John 4:24, "God is a Spirit: and they that worship him must worship him in spirit and in truth." How can we possibly make an image of a spirit? Well, we do that in our imagination, for one. We imagine what God would look like and then we worship that thought. Or, perhaps you have seen a "religious" calendar with pictures of some of the Saints, of Moses as he descended from Mount Sinai, or other, of the Babe in Bethlehem. These are nothing more than the imagination of men to be used as images. We are taught to worship God through the lively preaching of His Word.

There is another way in which we make an image of God. This is through the corruption of His Word. We may not make a physical image of Him, but when we distort the Scriptures, we make an image and worship something other than God. God wants all men to be saved? God is merciful to all? God created all things over a period of time? Or, worse yet, He permitted all things to evolve? And God is not our Father, as scripture abundantly states, but He is an IT? These are all images which man worships to his destruction. I don't believe it can be said better than by quoting Rev. H. Hoeksema in Triple Knowledge, Lord's Day XXXV, Chapter 2, Image Worship, "Nor must we imagine that this sin is committed only by pagans, and that it is inconceivable in the civilized, Christian world. Fact is that this sin is deeply ingrained in our sinful nature. By nature, we are all image worshippers. We are always inclined to lie about God, and to deprive Him of His glorious attributes. No, indeed, we do not carve or chisel a representation of God in wood or stone, in gold or silver, as do the heathen. But we do make images of Him in our mind, in our false conceptions of Him. Many are the images of the living God formed by modern theology and philosophy. Whenever we form a conception of God that is not according to his own revelation in the Holy Scriptures, we lie about God and make an image of Him. When we conceive of God as a Being that is so filled with love that He condones sin, we deny His righteousness and make an image of Him. When we imagine a God that is so merciful that He cannot possibly cast the sinner into eternal desolation as punishment for his sin, we deprive Him of the glory of His immutable justice, and form an image of Him in our mind. When, in our prayers

we attempt to approach God without seeking forgiveness in the blood of Christ Jesus our Lord, we are worshiping an image just as really as the Israelites at Horeb worshiped the golden calf. When we conceive of God as a sort of a Santa Claus, that exists to bestow all kinds of good things upon us, to fight our wars and give us our victories, as a God that must solve the problems we create in our sinful world, as One to whom we cry when we are in trouble, but for the rest forget Him, Whom we do not care to glorify and in Whose way we do not care to walk, we simply worship an image of our own making. When we deny the Scriptural truth of election and reprobation, deny that He is merciful to whom He will be merciful and whom He will He hardens; when we represent God as, in saving the sinner, being dependent on the will of man, so that the latter must open the door of his heart before God can enter; or when we conceive of Him as being gracious, in the preaching of the gospel, to all that hear, head for head, and soul for soul, we deny His absolute sovereignty, and fashion an image of God just as really as the pagans carve one in wood or chisel one in stone. If we entertain the dualistic notion that God is the Lord of all good but not of evil; that He sends us health, but not sickness, prosperity but not adversity, peace but not war, plenty of work but not times of depression, life but not death; we deny that God is the Lord of all the earth, and we worship our own lie."

Our calling, very clearly, is to serve God through His Spirit in Jesus Christ our Lord, Who died on the cross to also remove our sins of image worship. let us, also as young people, serve God with the whole law, "Thou shalt not make unto thyself any graven image . . . Thou shalt not bow down thyself to them, nor serve them, for I, the Lord thy God, am a jealous God . . . ."

LIVING THE ANTITHESIS IN OUR PERSONAL RELATIONSHIPS

by Rev. Ron Cammenga

The relationships of the young people ought to be a great concern to the church. Certainly Christian parents ought to be deeply concerned with whom their young people associate. This ought also to be a matter of concern to the office-bearers of the church. And it ought to be a matter of concern to the young people themselves.

The relationships of the young people ought to be a matter of concern to the church because God Himself is concerned about the friendships of Christian young people. This belongs to the antithetical life to which God calls every young person.

Again and again the Bible warns against relationships with unbelievers and admonishes the believing young person not to make friends with the young people of this world. James writes in James 4:4 that "the friendship of the world is enmity with God; whosoever therefore will be a friend of the world is the enemy of God." In II Cor. 6:14, 15 the Apostle Paul exhorts believers, "Be ye not unequally yoked together with unbelievers: for what fellowship hath righteousness with unrighteousness? And what communion hath light with darkness? And what concord (that is, 'friendship') hath Christ with Belial? Or what part hath he that believeth with an infidel?"

In the Book of Proverbs, Solomon gives various warnings against friendship with unbelievers. In Prov. 13:20 he warns that". . . a companion of fools shall be destroyed." And in Prov. 28:7 he says that ". . . he that is a companion of riotous men shameth his father." One very strong warning on this subject is found in Proverbs 1:10-19. I would suggest that you take the time to read this passage. This is a significant passage because it stands at the head of

the whole rest of the Book of Proverbs. That indicates certainly the importance of this matter of the relationships of the young people. This is the first thing the wise father discusses with his son. But this also indicates the connection between the friendships of the young people and every other aspect of the holy, obedient life to which they are called. From a certain point of view, everything else that the father will teach his son depends on his first of all heeding the warning not to be friends with the world. All the good instruction of a faithful father will fall to the ground if his son (daughter) becomes a companion of the fools of this world.

THE WARNING AGAINST FRIENDSHIP WITH THE WORLD

Proverbs 1:10-19 deals with friendship. In verses 10, 11 we read, "My son, if sinners entice thee, consent thou not. If they say, Come with us . . . . In verse 14 these sinners say, "Cast in thy lot among us: let us all have one purse." And in verse 15 the wise father warns, "My son, walk not thou in the way with them; refrain thy foot from their path." Going with sinners, walking with them in the way is being friends with them.

The passage is a warning against friendship with unbelievers. In the passage these unbelievers are described as murderers and robbers. They lay wait for blood, vs. 11. They fill their houses with spoil that they have violently taken, vs. 13. They are greedy for gain, vs. 19.

We ought not to misunderstand the application of the passage. We ought not to suppose that this believing father is ONLY forbidding friendship on the part of his son with out-and-out murderers and thieves. This passage, in fact, applies to ALL friendship with unbelievers, unbelievers of every stripe and description. For when it comes down to it, every unbeliever is a thief and a murderer. The lust that drives the thief and the murderer is essentially the same lust that burns in the heart of every wicked man. It is the lust that puts self and self's interests at the center of one's life. It is the lust that is ready to destroy anyone and anything that get in the way of self. It is the lust for the pleasures and treasures of this life that gratify self. It is the lust for the glorification of self, and a refusal to live for the glory of God.

With unbelievers, now, ALL unbelievers fellowship is forbidden: "My son, walk not thou in the way with them; refrain thy foot from their path," vs. 15.

This is a timely warning. For the danger is real that young people do this. This is always a temptation to the young people. This danger arises from the unavoidable contact that the young people of the church have with the young people of this world. The unbeliever may be a close relative. Or he may be a neighbor. Or he may be a fellow-worker.

There is a danger here for the young people who go off to college. There is not only the danger of imbibing bad instruction, but there is also the danger of the influence of bad acquaintances. For this reason the young people who go to college ought to go to a college located in the vicinity of one of our churches.

There is a danger of friendships with unbelievers to those young people who leave home to live in some apartment by themselves or with other young people. In many instances this leads to the establishment of undesirable relationships and to the influence of evil friends. Outside of the parental home and away from the parental influence, they fall victim to the influence of the children of this world.

Included in the warning against friendship with unbelievers is the warning that the young people stay clear of the places where the young people of this world 'hang out': the bars, the pool halls, the dance floors, the movie theaters, the wild parties.

Certainly included in this warning - so obvious it ought not even be needed to be stated - is the prohibition of dating the young people of this world. Dating is friendship, and the young people of the church may not be friends with the world. Dating is also preliminary to marriage, and no Christian young person may marry an unbeliever.

THE REASONS WHY FRIENDSHIP WITH UNBELIEVERS IS FORBIDDEN

There are good, solid reasons why the young people of the church are to be warned against friendship with unbelievers. There are reasons why every Christian young person ought to be concerned about his personal relationships. What are these reasons?

First, the consequences of friendship with unbelievers are disastrous for the Christian young person, disastrous in nearly every instance. Inevitably there is a corrupting of the believer, the influence over him of the bad example of the unbeliever. The believer doesn't influence the unbeliever, but the unbeliever invariably influences the believer. By the unbeliever he is led away from the Word of God, the commandments of God, and the church of God. This is the goal of the unbeliever. This is certainly the goal

of the Devil who stands behind the unbeliever.

History and experience bear out the truth of this. Think of the consequences for the children of Israel on account of their making friendships with the ungodly Canaanites. Think of the result in the life of a believer like Samson of his establishing friendship with an ungodly Philistine woman. Think of the result for Solomon of his marrying heathen wives: they led him away from the true worship of God.

Secondly, the young people of the church are warned against friendships with unbelievers because such friendship expose them to the judgment of God. God forbids friendship with unbelievers, and God punishes those who establish friendship with unbelievers. It is not just your parents, your pastor, and the church who forbid such friendships. But it is God Himself Who forbids friendship with unbelievers.

Those who make friends with unbelievers expose themselves to the same judgment as those unbelievers with whom they make friends. Solomon says in Prov. 1:18, "And they lay wait for their own blood; they lurk privily for their own lives." James says in James 4:4 that whoever makes himself a friend of the world by that very fact shows himself to be an enemy of God. Woe to that man who is God's enemy!

Thirdly, the believer is warned against friendship with unbelievers because when he does this he compromises his witness to the unbeliever. That the believer is not to make friends with the unbeliever does not mean that he has no calling with respect to the unbeliever. He does. That calling is to witness to him, which witness God may use to bring the unbeliever to repentance and faith.

But by making friends with the unbeliever, the child of God compromises his witness. How can he witness against murder when he is a companion of murderers? How can he witness against worldliness when he is a companion of thieves? How can he witness against drunkenness when he is a companion of drunkards? How can he witness against fornication when he is a companion of fornicators?

THE POSITIVE CALLING

In this warning against friendship with unbelievers there is an implied calling. If the young people are to avoid friendship with unbelievers, the calling is implied: "Be friends and make friends with fellow believers!"

As much as the Word of God admonishes us against friendship with the children of this world, it calls us to friendship with God's people. The alternative to friendship with the world is not no friends at all. But the alternative is friendship with the children of God.

The Scriptures lay this calling before us both by example and express commandment. Think of the friendship between David and Jonathan. In one place David describes his love for his friend Jonathan as a love surpassing even the love of a woman. Think of the friendship between Daniel and his three friends, Hananiah, Mishael, and Azariah. To what an extent did God use that friendship to sustain these young men in the midst of the temptations of Babylon. Solomon writes in Prov. 18:24, there is a friend that sticketh closer than a brother." The Psalmist writes in Ps. 119:63, "I am a companion of all them that fear thee, and of them that keep Thy precepts."

This is a practical calling for the young people of the church. The young people of the church must seek one another's friendship. They ought to establish and cultivate mutual friendship. A retreat such as this is an excellent opportunity to do that, as well as the annual Young People's Conventions.

FRIENDSHIP AT WHAT COST?

Although friendship is good and even necessary, it may come to it that for God's sake the believer must forego friendship, or even experience rejection at the hands of his friends. This was David's experience. He laments in Ps. 38:11, "My lovers and my friends stand aloof from my sore; and my kinsmen stand afar off." In Ps. 88:10 he writes, "Lover and friend hath Thou put far from me, and mine acquaintance into darkness." Think of Job's rejection at the hands of his friends. Or think of our Lord's treatment at the hands of His friends: one betrayed Him, another denied Him, and the rest forsook Him and fled.

It may come to it that for the sake of the kingdom of God, you are required to give up certain friendships. Then, for the sake of friendship with God, which is dearer than life itself, you must let go the friendship of men.

The believing child of God heeds this warning against friendship with unbelievers. Solomon writes in Prov. 1:17, "Surely in vain the net is spread in the sight of any bird." Even in an animal the sight of danger leads to the avoiding of it. Instinct directs the bird to avoid the net that has been spread in her sight. The Christian young person ought to be as ready to avoid the dangers of friendship with unbelievers.

There is a saying that goes like this: "Tell me who your friends are, and I'll tell you who you

are." That is a true saying. The prophet asks the rhetorical question in Amos 3:3, "Can two walk together, except they be agreed? That is what friends do, friends walk together. We could paraphrase the word of the prophet, "Can two people be friends, if they are not agreed?" The obvious answer is: "No!"

The foundation on which true friendship is built is the foundation of agreement, agreement in belief of God, agreement in obedience to God, agreement in the worship of God. May this be the foundation of the friendships of our young people!

FROM THE PASTOR'S STUDY

DRIFTING WITH THE WIND (1)

by Rev. John A. Heys

There is a word, Young People, which the author of the epistle to the Hebrews used very often. That word is the adjective "better", which he uses nine times in this epistle. He speaks of Christ being better than the angels, of a better hope, a better testament, a better covenant, of better sacrifices, a better blessing, a better substance, a better promise and a better resurrection. For he is showing the believing Israelites how much better the New Testament revelation of our salvation is than it is in the Old Testament. And plainly what he means is that, now that Christ has come into our flesh, and exalted Himself to God's right hand, what we have heard and been taught is better in the sense of being richer than what was heard in the Old Testament dispensation.

Now a better translation of Hebrews 2:1 is "Therefore we ought to give more earnest heed to the things which we have heard, lest at any time we should drift." Our King James version is correct, in the sense that it presents the truth to us, when it has "lest at any time we should let them slip." The awesome fact however is that the Greek word, here translated as slip, appears nowhere else in the New Testament. It appears only in this epistle to the Hebrews and does have a different meaning, namely, to flow past, glide by, or be carried past. Now slipping can be falling back, and becoming farther away from the point you are striving to reach. But to drift means to go away from, and to miss the place where you enter into what you are blessed with when you enter. It means failing to reach the blessedness you have in mind, because you have gone beyond the point where you can enter it.

What we have in mind here in this verse is the idea of drifting past the channel which brings us into the harbor where our journey will be over, and we reach the joy we have in mind, and have the contact with loved ones which we are seeking. The author has here in mind drifting away from God.

In this verse the author is speaking about drifting away from the entrance into the Kingdom of Heaven, where the child of God will have sweet communion with God through Christ, and be with all the members of the body of Christ. And in this verse then we have an awesome truth. We are always in this life on the move. We are like ships on "The Sea of Life." And when we let go of the truth in God's Word, we are like ships that drift away from the channel that brings us into The Haven of Rest, the place where we will have sweet communion with God, and have a most blessed and everlasting life of covenant fellowship with our God.

By nature all men are moving from the moment of birth unto the moment of death, and are sliding down to hell! And only by God's grace

in Christ are we walking in the truth of God's Word, and going in the right spiritual direction. Every man, woman and child is by nature in a canoe or row boat that is drifting on a wide river to a place where there is a deep, destructive waterfall, like we have at our Niagara Falls. And unless our God in His grace keeps us on this wide river, and going straight towards that channel which brings us into the harbor of peace, we are moving to that awesome, destructive waterfall and down to hell! Bear in mind, and do not ignore the frightening truth, that Satan got us, with a wind which he blew upon us, to eagerly and willingly drift to destruction and torment in hell! By means of a false doctrine, Satan got Adam and Eve to turn away from God, and seek what they thought was better for them than what God gave them, and wherein He created them.

And today, preaching, teaching and presenting to the minds of church members Satan's lies, which blow men off the course of the truth, are currents which drive them to hell! Some of these waves of false doctrines are more powerful than others; but Satan is working very hard and very cleverly with false doctrines to get us to drift away from the truth that directs us to covenant fellowship with God. Remember to hold before your minds the fact that Satan said to Adam and Eve, "Ye shall not surely die; for God doth know that in the day ye eat thereof, then your eyes shall be opened, and ye shall be as gods, knowing good and evil." Genesis 3:4, 5.

And Satan's blowing winds of false doctrines are very strong today, and so clever that we are made to drift away from God, and from covenant fellowship with Him. Thus is I Timothy 1:3, 4 Paul wrote: "I went into Macedonia, that thou mightest charge some that they teach no other doctrine. Neither give heed to fables and endless genealogies, which minister questions, rather than godly edifying which is in faith." Also in his epistle to Titus Paul wrote in chapter 1:13, 14, "This witness is true. Wherefore rebuke them sharply, that they may be sound in faith; Not giving heed to Jewish fables, and commandments of men, that turn from the truth."

The awesome fact is that every false doctrine is antichristian. And that means that it is against Christ. The word anti means against, like in the word antiaircraft; which means that against aircraft are bullets shot. And we do well to bear in mind that in John 1:14 we read that Christ, Who is the Word become flesh, "dwelt among us." And Satan is constantly and very cleverly striving to get us away from Christ. By means of an host of false doctrines, there is today an host of different kinds of churches. The one, by Satan's cleverness, causes the church to drift away from Christ as He is presented in Scripture; and the other by means of a walk of life in sin that is so very different from the one in which Christ walked. He, in Matthew 4:1-10, told Satan that "Man shall not live by bread alone", shall not "tempt the Lord thy God", and worship God only, "and Him only shalt thou serve." And today Satan has gotten so many false doctrines, and encouraged our walking in sins. Only by heeding Jesus' words; and when we refuse to do what Satan encourages men to do through church leaders and church decisions, we are on the course that leads to the channel through which we enter that Haven of Rest, and live with our God in a more wonderful covenant blessedness than Adam and Eve had before they listened to Satan.

Listen, Young People, God declared - when Satan got Adam and Eve to drift away from the truth, and to aim their lives against God, rather than to keep them serving God in love - that He, God, would put enmity in the hearts of some, and leave others in their enmity against Him. In fact that enmity of Satan, and those in his kingdom, manifested its greatness when they nailed God's Son to the cross. God did not in Genesis 3:15 teach the Arminian lie that is so strongly maintained in many churches. He did not say that He would offer Adam and Eve salvation, and ask whether they would accept it. Nowhere in Scripture does God offer salvation, invite people to come and get it.

God told Satan, in the hearing of Adam and Eve, that HE would put enmity in Adam and Eve, and in some of their descendants. He speaks of her, that is Eve's, seed and Satan's seed. And the undeniable fact is that both Adam and Eve had died spiritually that day. They did not die physically that day; but they tried to flee from God and hide "from the presence of the Lord God among the trees of the garden" Genesis 3:8. This reveals a spiritual death in them. And we insult our holy and sovereign God, when we teach that we can change Him, rather than in thankfulness confess and sing of the truth that HE changes us, and that He performs the entire change. Every part of that change is His work in us, not our work for Him.

He told Adam that the day he ate of that forbidden fruit he would die. Get that truth, and let no one teach you that God was referring to a physical death, and meant that this physical death would start on him the day he sinned. It

did, of course; but there is so much more in Scripture that reveals Adam and Eve died spiritually that day in which they sinned and believed Satan rather than God.

Take hold of that truth which God - not Satan through men - presents to us in Isaiah 43:21, namely, "This people have I formed for Myself; they shall show forth My praise." Hold on tightly also to what He declares through Paul in Romans 9:16. There we read, "So then it is not of him that willeth, nor of him that runneth, but of God that showeth mercy." To maintain that God offers salvation, and that He invites men to accept what He offers, is to present a doctrine that makes one drift from the way of truth, and thus also go away from the channel that brings us into the Haven of Rest. Note the fact that God said to Adam in Genesis 2:17 that the DAY that he would eat of that forbidden fruit he would die. He did not say that death would begin in him, but that he would die. And plainly the idea is that he would that day die spiritually. And having died spiritually, Adam and Eve had no spiritual life to hand down to Cain and Abel, their sons, or to us today. We all come into this life spiritually dead; and therefore cannot and will not want salvation until God has begun it in us by a rebirth. Take note of what we read in Romans 9:16, and hold on to it tightly, namely, "So then it is not of him that willeth, nor of him that runneth, but of God that showeth mercy."

Invitations, offers of salvation to spiritually dead people insult our holy God. They claim - although they do not say that literally - God depends on us, and that we let Him do something He is eager to do. Young People, do you not see that the Arminian doctrine of invitations and of offers of salvation are a presentation of Satan's lie to Eve? God said that the day Adam would eat of the forbidden fruit he would die. Arminianism says that if we accept God's offer, then we will let Him save us. It all depends upon us; and it therefore implies that we still do have a spiritual life that can want salvation before God gives it to us.

Yes, God does command us to believe. Look up Acts 16:31. BUT His command is not a request, a plea revealing that He is waiting to see what we do before He begins salvation in us.

Next time, the Lord willing, we will continue this very important truth, and the awful tragedy of drifting away from the truth and unto destruction by Satan's lies in the church world.

CHURCH NEWS

by Lora Bouwkamp

BETHEL, (Illinois)

The sacrament of baptism was administered February 9 to Jessica Elisabeth, daughter of David and Debra Benson, and to Natalie Elise, daughter of Nathan and Lisa Lubbers.

The membership papers of Mrs. Robert Ensink have been accepted from the South Holland PRC.

FIRST, (Grand Rapids)

The congregation extends her sympathy to the Jean Pastoor family in her death February 1.

We extend congratulations to Mrs. Minn Pastoor who celebrated her 88th birthday February 14.

We extend birthday congratulations to Mr. John Faber who celebrated his 90th birthday February 16.

SOUTHWEST, (Grand Rapids)

Congratulations to Mr. and Mrs. Stephen Hoving on the birth of Sharlena Rose. Baptism was administered on March 1.

We extend sympathy to Mr. and Mrs. Arie Griffioen in the death of Mr. Walter Griffioen.

The sacrament of baptism was administered

to Katie Jo, daughter of Mr. and Mrs. Richard Kuiper on March 1.

Congratulations to Mr. and Mrs. John Ophoff in the birth of a daughter, Monica Ann.

Mr. Michael Feenstra made public confession of his faith March 1.

REDLANDS, (California)

Mrs. Jennie Jabaay celebrated her 84th birthday on January 26. Mr. and Mrs. Jabaay also celebrated their 62nd anniversary that same week.

SOUTHEAST, (Grand Rapids)

Don and Betty Hauck were blessed with the birth of Donald Christopher on February 2.

We extend sympathy to Gerald and Helene De Vries in the passing of her father, Mr. John Hager.

SOUTH HOLLAND, (Illinois)

The consistory has transferred the membership of Thad Lubbers to Grandville PRC at his request.

Lou and Cheryl Regnerus were blessed with the birth of Glen Phillip. Glen was baptized on February 23.

Lynn Vanderbilt and Jeremy Lubbers were married February 1.

The sacrament of baptism was administered February 9 to Jacob Troy, son of Troy and Becky Maatman.

GRANDVILLE, (Michigan)

Kevin and Bonnie Van Engen were blessed with the birth of a son.

The consistory welcomes new members, Melanie Moore from Hull PRC and Kim Van Dyke from Lee St. CRC.

LOVELAND, (Colorado)

We extend sympathy to Mr. and Mrs. Ray Ezinga and family in the death of Jean's father, Mr. John Hager.

HULL, (Iowa)

The infant daughter, Kolette Vaughn, of Mr. and Mrs. Veryl Keynen received the sacrament of baptism January 12.

The membership of Miss Rachel Buteyne has been received from Randolph PRC.

Shantelle Marie Gritters, daughter of Mr. and Mrs. Brian Gritters, received the sacrament of baptism February 2.

Mrs. Frank Vogel's brother passed away and we extend sympathy to her family.

Mr. and Mrs. Duane Netten were blessed with the birth of Nicholas Marinus.

Mr. and Mrs. Daryl Van Maanen were blessed with the birth of Alyssa Nicole.

Mr. and Mrs. Jeff Andringa were blessed with the birth of Marcus Jacob.

Mr. Steven Kooima and Miss Rachel Buteyn were united in marriage February 21.

The membership papers of Mr. and Mrs. Joel Moore have been transferred to Bethel PRC at their request.

FAITH, (Jenison)

Tim and Jan Talsma were blessed with the birth of Nicholas Jay. The sacrament of baptism was administered February 2.

The membership papers of Rhonda Gritters and Marlys Van Maanen have been received from Hull and Grandville PRC.

At his request, the membership of Dean Bekkering, as a baptized member, has been transferred to Pella PRC.

EDMONTON, (Canada)

Mr. and Mrs. H. Nieuwenkamp celebrated their 40th wedding anniversary on January 30.

We rejoice with Mr. and Mrs. K. Van Oostenbrugge in the birth of Joel Alan.

The membership papers of Elizabeth De Vries were received from Randolph PRC.

HUDSONVILLE, (Michigan)

Mr. and Mrs. Doug Start rejoice in the birth of Zachary Douglas, January 28.

Mr. Kelly Ellerbroek and Miss Lori Bouwkamp were united in marriage February 7.

Mr. and Mrs. Henry Jay Kuiper rejoice in the birth of Rebecca Sue, February 1.

Mrs. Harry Zwak celebrated her 86th birthday February 10.

We extend sympathy to Mrs. Jean Holstege in the sudden death of her sister.

Dave Kamps made public confession of his faith February 23.

Mr. and Mrs. Jeff Lubbers give thanks to God for the birth of Chase Jeffrey February 22.

The sacrament of baptism was administered to Travis Jay, infant son of Mr. and Mrs. Tom Ver Strate on February 23.

Mr. and Mrs. Craig Glashower rejoice in the birth of Parker Jay February 25.

Mr. and Mrs. Rich Hoekstra give thanks to God for the birth of Chelsea Rose February 29.

What is a CHRISTIAN?

A SAINT
Rev. James Slopsema
speaker

A SOLDIER
Rev. Steven Key
Addressing Sr. Group
Rev. Richard Flikkema
Addressing Jr. Group

An Athlete
Rev. Ron Cammenga
speaker

Come
Join us
at the 1992
Protestant
Reformed
Young
People's
Convention

July 27 thru 31