BEACON LIGHTS

"Young people should be interested and knowledgeable in mission work. They should find out from ministers and elders what they can do. Older young men should search their hearts to see if maybe their life's calling can be found here."

-Be sure to read
The Devotional Guide this month

VOLUME LII NUMBER 5 MAY 1993

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

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Subscription Price $7.00

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Second Class Postage paid at Jenison, MI

EDITORIAL POLICY
The articles of **Beacon Lights** do not necessarily indicate the viewpoint of the Editorial Staff. Every author is solely responsible for the contents of his own article.
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War

You would think that we would not have much in common with soldiers sitting in a foreign country fighting a war some fifty years ago. We get up in the morning, go to work and return again in the usual way day after day. Our lives for the most part are rather stable. But we are at war. And we must always wear the battle gear (Eph. 6:11). After reading a small pamphlet called MEDITATIONS written by our ministers for our men in the service, it made me more appreciative of what Christian military men went through in World War II. I was surprised that many things that they were concerned about and had to confront, are things with which we battle with today. We can certainly learn from these meditations and apply them to our lives today. Please read, learn and enjoy!

So let us be found in Him.

-Editor

FOREWARD

To you, our beloved boys in uniform, we dedicate this booklet.

It was the consideration of your spiritual needs that prompted the Churches of Classis West of the Protestant Reformed Churches to bring this volume into being. We hope that these brief meditations may be of real help to you. They have been written with a view to your needs and moods, to comfort and cheer and strengthen you in your present calling.

You will notice an index in the front of the book which may assist you in locating a meditation to fit your particular circumstances, whether it be lonesomeness or the time prior to battle.

Realizing that you men would appreciate amongst these meditations a message from your own pastor, all our ministers were asked to contribute one meditation.

We send this forth with the prayer that God may richly bless you by these our humble efforts.

Classis West of the Protestant Reformed Churches,

Committee:

Rev. S. T. Cammenga
Rev. H. C. Hoeksema
Rev. J. W. Van Weelden

WHERE TO FIND IT - WHEN

Fearful - Matt. 14:22-33; Joh. 14; Rom. 8:31-39

Attracted by worldly pleasure-II Cor. 6:14-18; Phil. 4:8, 8; I John 2:15-17

Grateful-Psalm 103; Psalm 116

Persecuted - Matt. 5:10; I Peter 4:12-19; Rev. 7:13-17; Luke 6:22, 23

Grief-stricken, sick, or dying-Psalm 22, 23, 73; Job 1:20-22; Matt. 10:29-31; John 11:1-27

WATCH!

"Be sober, be vigilant; because your adversary the devil, as a roaring lion, walketh about, seeking whom he may devour." - I Peter 5:8

The Church is like an army encamped in the enemy's country.

Or, if you please, she is to be compared to a walled city, surrounded by bitter foes. The citizens of that city are the living members of the body of Christ. They have been called out of darkness into the marvelous light of God. They are a royal priesthood, an elect race, a peculiar possession unto God, and their calling is to shew forth the praises of Him that called them.

The foe is the devil and his host, all the powers of darkness. That enemy is ever on the alert to make an attack upon the city at a point that is not sufficiently guarded, that is left unprotected and defenseless for a moment, in order that he may enter the city and destroy its citizens.

Hence, the citizens must watch.

They must constantly stand guard at the individual gates of their own hearts, lest the enemy launch a surprise attack and enter the city. Hence, the admonition in the words above this meditation: be sober, be vigilant!

The foe is always active. His power and cunning are never to be underestimated. His hatred of the Church, and of the individual believers, is deadly and deeply rooted. Powerful is he.

He is the devil, Satan, and adversary of God in the world. Nor is he ever alone. For, first, he commands a

veritable host of evil spirits. They fight on his side. They obey his command. They enhance his power. Besides, he is called the Prince of this world. In a spiritual-ethical sense of the word, the devil rules in the hearts of wicked men. And through the world the adversary has many means at his command. The pleasures and treasures of the world, the wisdom and power of men, worldly honor and fame and glory, are means he can and does employ. Besides, he is able to use force. Through that world he threatens to deprive you of your job, of liberty and life.

And he has a strong ally within the gates, in the motions of sin that are still in your members. The flesh of the citizens of the Kingdom of God hankers after the things of the world. It loves the world's favor and fears its displeasure. It would follow after the world's pleasures and avoid its suffering. It is easily lulled to sleep and persuaded to open the gates of the city to the enemy.

How necessary, then, to heed this admonition: be sober, be vigilant!

The devil is a roaring lion!

He would devour you! Not, you understand, physically. He is not interested in killing your body primarily. He wants to devour you spiritually. He would, if it were possible, shake your faith, destroy it, make you faithless. He would deprive you of the inheritance of the saints.

Nor are his methods always those of a roaring lion, even though as a roaring lion he would surely devour you. He does not always reveal himself in his true character. He knows how to come as an angel of light, as a wolf in sheep's clothing. He can appear as a lamb, speak as a lamb, act like a lamb. He can speak very religiously: of righteousness, of truth, of peace, of making the world better. . . .

Always, therefore, you must be sober and vigilant. And especially when you are called, as you are in the Armed Forces of our country, to live in close contact with the world, far from home and church.

O, indeed, God preserves you, in His power!

But in that power, we must and do resist the enemy, fighting the good fight, that no one take our crown!

Hence, be sober, be vigilant!

Watch!

Rev. H. Hoeksema

THOU DIDST IT!

"I will not open my mouth; because Thou didst it"- Psalm 39:9

My Christian Friends:

You are in the service! Just that, and no more, is already a serious matter. You are in some Army Camp, some Naval Training Station, some Air Field in this country or across the sea. You are away from home, your parents, wife, loved ones. You are separated from your friends, the social life you once enjoyed, the favorite sport in which you were wont to engage. Worst of all, you are away from your church, your fellow Christians, from what you are convinced is the purest preaching of the Word of God. And, you are in the midst of the world, cursing and swearing, filth and immorality, the like of which you never knew existed in this world. You are being trained for greater things to come. Perhaps, as you read these lines, you are no longer in "The States". You are in Korea, in Europe, or some battlewagon. That makes the matter more serious still. Yes, you are in the service!

During the day you are busy - working, training. In the evening and at night you rest - tired, lonely. You think - think about home, the folks, brothers and sisters, "The boys," church, many other things. You wonder about many things. You ask yourself questions, among others that question that is always being asked, at all times, in all circumstances: Why? Why am I in the service? What brought me here? Boys, it's good to ask yourself that question. It's good, too, most essential, that you come to the right solution. On the answer to this question depends your peace of heart and mind; your obedience to God.

Answers could be given to this question, that seek the reason for your present situation in the things of this earth. You are in the service, because you were drafted. That is true, of course. You had no choice in the matter. However, that is not the ultimate reason. You are in the service, perhaps in actual combat, because of the greed and evil lusts, the suspicions and distrust, of a wicked world. Countless lives have been and will continue to be sacrificed on the altar of human avarice, mutual hatred and distrust, territorial expansion. However, this too is not the ultimate reason. We must go deeper than that. If you don't, you will never have peace. You will be filled with confusion, disgust, bitterness, rebellion. Must I give my life for such things as that?! You are in the service to help preserve the American way of living. Well and good! That still does not rise above this earth.

Boys, you are in the service, because "Thou didst it." There is the answer that will give you peace; the rock on which you may find rest. However dark may be your way, or rugged the road! God did it!

Whatever I might be able to say about this Word of God is not nearly as important as the text itself. The meaning is clear. Meditate on it! Say it! Just the way David did: "Thou didst it!" Make your own sermon. You can do it. "Thou" here refers to God, the Creator of the ends of the earth, and therefore the sole Ruler and Doer of all that is or ever can be. That God is your Father, full of justice and truth, mercy and love. He made you His children. He loves you as no earthly father can love his child. And He cares for you always. Your heavenly Father did it! He planned it, just this way, from all eternity. He plans all things, does He not? He plans all things with infinite wisdom, so that all things must work together without fail for His glory, the perfecting of

His kingdom, the salvation of His people. He planned your way too. And He actually did it! You believe that, do you not, even though you may not understand? He uses human means, even evil means, - but He does all things. And you believe, do you not, that He does it in infinite goodness, perfect wisdom, eternal love?

Then, boys, you will also be able to say: "I will not open my mouth." No, that does not mean that we will say nothing, either good or bad. How wicked and ungrateful that would be in the light of His infinite goodness and Fatherly love. It means, that we will not rebel, open our mouth to curse, criticize, question. We will not say that the Lord's ways are not good. However, we will open our mouths. We will confess our sins in complete unworthiness. We will thank Him for all His blessings. We will petition Him for all our needs, temporal, and eternal. In all our ways we will praise the God of our salvation. Yes, we will open our mouths, and this will we say:

God moves in a mysterious way
His wonders to perform:
He plants His footsteps in the sea,
And rides upon the storm.

Deep in unfathomable mines
Of never-failing skill,
He treasures up His bright designs,
And works His sovereign will.

Ye fearful saints, fresh courage take:
The clouds ye so much dread,
Are big with mercy, and will break
In blessings on your head.

Rev. R. Veldman

COMING AFTER OUR COMMANDER

"If any man will come after Me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow Me." - Matt. 16:24

What a parable the army and its life presents of the Kingdom of Heaven! Evident throughout Scripture is the fact also here that the Kingdom of Heaven comes to pass through parables. Likenesses may be drawn from the point of view of weapons: breastplate, helmet, shield and sword; of the idea of war and enmity between the opposing forces of light and darkness; and even of the detail of personnel: soldiers with their chief general or commander-in-chief, our Lord Jesus Christ. It is to the last named likeness that I would call your attention, and that from the point of view of Matthew 6:4. Coming after Jesus! A serious matter, even though oft heard in our time. Also little understood because of its superficial application. For what does it mean? Surely first of all we must know WHO this Jesus is. He is not just a wonderful example worthy to be copied. He is God of God. The Son of God come in the flesh for our sin. To so evaluate Him is the same as confessing our sin and corruption. Besides Him there is no salvation. Only through His suffering for us can the debt of our guilt be erased. To be His disciple means to take His Word as sole rule of life.

The only way in which that is realized is following the three-fold injunction of the text: first: "Let him deny himself"; second: "Let him take up his cross"; and third: "Follow Me." What a strange set of requirements. Discipleship in regard to worldly movements offer fame, freedom from care, honor, riches and glory. They are deemed fitting lures and incentives to exert oneself to the utmost. Not so with Jesus! In fact with Him there is no enticement by riches and fame but the very opposite. All that is dear to us must go!

Oh, yes, the demands of Christ are absolute. Notice that in the first place He does not demand that we shall forego some pleasanttries of this life. Do not interpret the command so: deny thyself some things in life. Even that were possible to perform and by many of the world is done for their own safety, health and personal advancement. No, the Word here is, in all its terrible emphasis: "Deny thyself." That is the exact opposite of self-maintenance. Before God it is tantamount to confessing that we have no merit, no righteousness and so no basis for salvation and that the eternal glory of the saints can only be ours through divine, free and sovereign grace. Before our fellowmen self-denial is the willingness to be the least. Never to maintain self for self's sake. An absolute Word! No coming after Jesus is possible without it.

Further, "Let him take up his cross." This does not only mean that we bear burdens in this life. All men must do this, willing or not. But this must be a willing, desirous suffering of the same thing Christ suffered. Our crosses must be slivers of His. Never, of course, as though our suffering has merit or atoning power. So the Cross of Jesus stands all alone. But His Cross was also a manifestation of suffering at the hands of those that hated God, and Christ because He revealed God. Those that will come after Jesus, having His Word as guiding principle, will incur the same hatred of the party of darkness. The injunction is: be willing to bear that reproach without rebellion. The servant is no more than the Master; the soldier no greater than the Commander-in-chief.

And lastly, so "Follow Me," says Jesus. Literally, imitate, walk after Him. Spiritually this signifies the desire to listen without the slightest rebellion, to be instructed in the way of sanctification whatever the consequences may be, in every condition and place of our calling here below, to remain true to the colors of the banner of Christ, singing: Where'er He lead, I'll follow.

To that end He calls, strengthens, equips and lead to glory. Deny thyself . . . take up thy cross . . . follow Jesus. It is the way to His victory given of grace as a crown to all the faithful, which He will give to all that look for His glorious appearance.

Rev. H. H. Kuiper

Bears = Polar Bears

by Joshua F.

I like the polar bear because he is one of the biggest and most feared creatures on the face of the earth. The polar bear is tall and white and is as much as 1,600 pounds and can stand 9 feet tall. The polar bear is so strong and so fierce that the Eskimos have fallen many times to the polar bear.

We learn from the polar bear not to be afraid in times of trouble and persecution. God put this animal in our creation to see the beauty and dignity of this animal. He also put this animal in our creation for things like meat, hides for clothing and shelter. Eskimos also use their bones to make weapons and utensils.

God created His creatures to survive and equipped them in their environment. For example, God made the polar bear's sharp nose for sensing danger and detecting their prey so they can survive. Also God gave the female polar bear instincts to sense when to hibernate. God gave the Polar Bears a place to live which is in the Artic or the North Pole. The white polar bear is an excellent swimmer and is called the champion swimmer of the family. The polar bear is one of the most majestic creatures in God's creation.

History of the Beacon Lights

by Steve Lotterman

Many of you have received the Beacon Lights for a long time. However, some of you are new subscribers. Here is a bit of the history of the Beacon Lights for those who didn't know.

In the late 1930's, an organization was started in the Chicago area by young people of the Protestant Reformed Churches. This organization was called the Federation of Protestant Reformed Young People's Societies. The purpose was to unite and provide spiritual edification for the members and to promote and maintain the doctrinal standards of the PRC. One of the means proposed to fulfill their objectives was the publication of a paper targeted towards the young people. In 1941, the first issue of the Beacon Lights was published. This was followed by four more, and was met with so great a response that Rev. C. Hanko, the first editor-in-chief, proclaimed, "The Beacon Lights is here to stay!"

Through World War II, the Beacon Lights was a source of comfort for 400 or more servicemen and remained in our churches through the trials in 1953. The magazine has seen many changes and yet is still very much the same. Many revisions in technology have taken place, yet the magazine is printed on a 40 year old printing press. We have had 16 different editors, from ministers to teachers to lay people. Our current issues contain many of the same topics and articles as were found in the first issue - editorials, current events, Bible outlines, and book reviews. Other topics no longer apply, such as Military Mailbag. Our subscriptions total about 930 copies, and the magazine is sent to young people in at least 7 different countries.

Currently, we are in our 52nd volume. A new editor, and a few new staff members, as well as dedicated work from "old" members, has brought about a new format, new ideas and a renewed zeal to carry on the Lord's work. We feel that the Beacon Lights has, and the Lord willing will continue to spread the Word of God and strengthen Reformed believers in the midst of the world.

Thou Shalt Not Covet

by Dan Van Dyke

"For where your treasure is, there will your heart be also"

Of all the commandments God gave us. I believe the 10th is the one we most easily rationalize our way around. If you're admiring a certain sleek looking automobile or beautiful house for example, and someone says, "You mustn't covet." What's the first thing we say; "I don't want his car, I just want one like it." If your idea of covetousness is restricted to wanting to get, by whatever means necessary, something that someone else owns, then there are probably very few of us who have ever coveted, much less every day. However if we look at the Biblical definition of covetousness, we will soon see that we easily commit this sin and often. I looked in a secular dictionary and their definition of covet was "to want greedily something belonging to another." This is a very comfortable definition for most of us. However, my Bible dictionary defined covetousness simply as a "Desire to have something." That hits a little closer to home. "Men shall be lovers of their own selves, covetous". (II Timothy 3:2) This obviously states that coveting is the same as wanting any material thing for yourself. Hebrews 13:5 also makes this clear by saying, "Let your conversation be without covetousness; and be content with such things as ye have." So covetousness is the opposite of contentedness, and if your conversation is covetous then your heart must also be for Matthew 15:18 says "But those things which proceed out of the mouth come forth from the heart, and they defile the man."

Did you note that? "They defile the man." The sin of covetousness is all consuming. I am assuming that this will be read by mostly confirmed Christians, people that go to church regularly. Listen to what Jesus says in the parable of the sower and his seeds about the covetous churchgoer; "He also that received seed among the thorns is he that heareth the word; and the care of this world, and the deceitfulness of riches, choke the word, and he become unfruitful." (Mark 4:19) If you need to be told what God does to those that are unfruitful, read Luke 13:6-7 and John 15:1-8.

Further, to those who say, "Yes, but it's so nice to be rich", you needn't be concerned about this any longer. The Bible says again and again that riches don't give happiness, not even in this life. Can you believe that? The whole world, including God's church, is working and slaving every single day to "get ahead", to make just a little more so we can get one more little thing, and the Bible, the book that we hold so dear, has been telling us for thousands of years that we're not going to find the happiness that we're looking for. Ecclesiastes 5:10 says "He that loveth silver shall not be satisfied with silver; nor he that loveth abundance with increase;" Haggai 1:6 states very plainly "Ye have sown much, and bring in little; ye eat, but ye have not enough; ye drink, but ye are not filled with drink; ye clothe you, but there is none warm; and he that earneth wages, earneth wages to put it into a bag with holes." In other words, "Give it up!!" If you want to be truly happy, quit the overtime and the second job and the hours spent worrying about how the next big bill will get paid and spend that time in getting to know your God! "Labour not for the meat that perisheth, but for that meat which endureth unto everlasting life, which the Son of man shall give unto you." (John 6:27)

This brings me to the final point which the Bible makes so emphatically. Not only are riches worthless in this life, they are even more worthless in the life to come, which will last an eternity instead of 80 years or so. "What is a man profited, if he shall gain the whole world, and lose his own soul?" You have all heard the saying, "You can't take it with you, you know." Did you know that that is exactly what the Bible says in I Timothy 6:6-8. "But godliness is great gain. For we brought nothing into this world, and it is certain we can carry nothing out. And having food and raiment let us be therewith content."Isn't that beautiful, and a little scary too? That's God's definition of our needs, food and raiment.

This isn't just good advice either. This is the holy commandment of God with the penalty of eternal death, let's not forget that. "No man can serve two masters: for either he will hate the one, and love the other: or else he will hold to the one and despise the other. Ye cannot serve God and mammon. (What does

this mean for our everyday lives?) Therefore I say unto you, Take no thought for your life, what ye shall eat, or what ye shall drink; nor yet for your body, what ye shall put on. Is not the life more than meat, and the body more than raiment. . . your Father knoweth that ye have need of all these things. (Now listen; here's the key) But seek ye first the kingdom of God and his righteousness; and all these things shall be added unto you." (Matthew 6:24, 25, 32, 33) That is a promise. Riches are never a promise. They are always illusive, never enduring. "Labour not to be rich; Wilt thou set thine eye upon that which is not? For riches certainly make themselves wings; they fly away as an eagle toward heaven." (Proverbs 23:4, 5) Let me assure you, God will never fly away as an eagle toward heaven.

So let us make Proverbs 30:8 our prayer; "Give me neither poverty or riches; feed me with food convenient for me; Lest I be full, and deny thee, and say Who is the Lord?" But let us then live by that prayer. Don't cling to your riches if God has thus blessed you. "Charge them that are rich in this world, that they be not high minded, nor trust in uncertain riches, but in the living God, who giveth us richly all things to enjoy." Really hasn't God blessed us all with more than we need. How many of us don't have "common" luxuries such as a radio, or even running water because we couldn't afford it? ". . . be content with such things as ye have."

WRITING CONTEST

Jerusalem

by Kristin E. Brands

"About Mount Zion go,
Her tow'rs and ramparts tell;
That ye her strength may know,
Mark her defenses well.
Her royal palaces behold,
That ye her glories may unfold."

-PSALTER 133:1

Jerusalem was, is, and most likely shall for years to come be an important city. In Bible times Jerusalem was God's "Holy City". It was in Jerusalem that God's holy temple stood in all its splendor, symbolizing God's presence with His people.

The city was first called "Salem" and was ruled by the priest-king Melchizedek at the time of Abraham. Melchizedek was an early type of Christ to whom men gave tithes, so already then the city had spiritual significance.

Later David, through his captain Joash, captured the city. Beginning with David, the royal line continued in Jerusalem, sitting on the king's throne, until finally Christ came to fulfill the kingly line. Christ rode into Jerusalem as the final King. David's royal line continued in Jerusalem until 587 B.C. when the king of Babylon took over Jerusalem, destroying the Temple and leaving this beautiful city nothing but debris. In 538 B.C., forty-nine years later, King Cyrus of Persia allowed Jews to return to Jerusalem. They once again took up the task of building the walls and repairing the city. Years later they had the city back on its feet.

By 400 B.C., it was no longer kings who ruled Jerusalem but the temple priests. It was near this time that the Greeks tried to rule Jerusalem. The Jews fought Greece and won complete independence. Although they had fought off Greece, in 63 B.C. Romans took over. They had power over Jerusalem all the way up to, through, and even after Jesus' time.

Later the Muslims and the British took over. It was not until early 1967 that Jerusalem was made fully independent.

Today Jerusalem is a large, important capital with many industries. There is a wide variety of clothing there and many more modern things. The wailing wall and other ancient places in modern Jerusalem cannot ever compare with the beauty of Jerusalem in Solomon's day, when Jerusalem with Mt. Zion as its center represented the Church. Even the Jerusalem of Solomon's day cannot begin to be compared to the beauty of the heavenly Jerusalem which is coming. The earthly Jerusalem was only a type of that glorious Jerusalem in heaven, where God dwells perfectly with His people.

"Zion on the holy hills,
God Thy Maker loves Thee well;
All thy courts His Presence fills,
He delights in thee to dwell.
Wondrous shall thy glory be,
City blest of God the Lo.
Nations shall be born in thee,
Unto life from death restored."
-PSALTER #239

Watching Daily At My Gates

by Skip Hunter

May 1 — **Psalm 121** Young people, do you have cares that weigh heavily on your soul? Are you burdened by circumstances in life? Do you feel that answers are not coming fast enough? Stop and read Psalm 121. Reread verse two. "My help cometh from Jehovah, which made heaven and earth." The creator of the whole world cares about us and will give to us help! Then read verse seven. Do those cares seem so impossible now? Jehovah preserves us from all evil and He brings salvation to our soul! Thanks be to God for such comfort! Sing or read Psalter 344.

May 2 — **Jude 17-25** We take the name of Jesus on our lips frequently. Do we stop and think about his power? Jude 24 and 25 tells us about Him. He is able to keep us from falling into sin. More than that He presents us before the most holy God as if we have no sin. He also does that with joy even as He knows that the way of our salvation was through His suffering on the cross. We must take the name of Jesus on our lips and give Him glory, majesty, dominion, and power now and forever! What else can we do? Sing or read Psalter 352 especially stanza 4.

May 3 — **Zephaniah 3:14-20** In this short prophecy Judah's captivity along with its return is foretold. For us we can see this as a picture of the church today waiting the return of Christ. Are we singing as we wait? Are the songs of Jehovah in our hearts, in our minds, and on our lips? Are we happy about the goodness of Jehovah? Do we show our happiness by bursting forth with His praise in song? We will not find this type of singing on a majority of radio stations today. We will not even find it in many churches. Singing which is God-glorifying must give God all the glory. There may be nothing given to man. Are we singing? Are we giving God the glory? Sing or read Psalter 424 especially stanzas 1 and 2.

May 4 — **John 3:25-36** "He must increase, but I must decrease." Is this our desire? John the Baptist had many followers in a short period of time. Some of them had the wrong idea. They were following the man, not the message. John however realized that he must fade away so that the glory of Christ would shine forth. Are we like this? If not, we better do some hard thinking. Are we putting our glory in the way of Christ's kingdom? If we are, we must stop and learn the lesson shown in these verses. Sing or read Psalter 366.

May 5 — **Haggai 1** Are we making sure the work of Christ's kingdom is being carried out? Is the gospel being spread throughout many lands by us? Are our churches lacking? Are the poor in our churches hungry? Are our Christian schools in need of finances for their operation? God brought Israel back from captivity. They did not build the temple immediately. God had to bring the judgments of verses 9-11 on them. We, too, have the command to do His work. Are we doing it wholeheartedly? Sing or read Psalter 348 especially stanzas I and 6.

May 6 — **Acts 19:13-20** This passage comes from a larger section which describes Paul's work in Ephesus. When we hear the preaching of the Word, are we moved with zeal to remove the means of sin from our lives even as the Ephesians did? Do we destroy those things which are not God-glorifying even if it means financial loss? Or do we justify them and add more and more of such things to our lives. You know what I am talking about. What kind of tapes or CD's are in our cars? For what are our televisions and VCR's used? God's word grew because of such actions in Ephesus. Will it in our lives? Sing or read Psalter 146 especially stanzas 1 and 2.

May 7 — **Joel 2:14-23** Two days ago I asked you to consider our work In Christ's kingdom. After thinking about that are you eager but do not know how it can be accomplished? The answer to that fear is in verse twenty-one. The Lord will do great things. Jehovah has done great things for His church throughout history. Ask Noah, Abraham, Sarah, Moses, Rahab, John Calvin, John Wycliffe, Herman Hoeksema, and saints living today. Ask them, "Has God done great things for you?" The answer will undoubtedly be YES! What should be our response for these great things? Look at verse twenty-three. Be glad and rejoice in the Lord your God. Sing or read Psalter 357.

May 8

II Corinthians 9:6-15 Tomorrow we again go unto God's house. We prepare today. Are you preparing your offerings to God? Now this does not mean are you just making sure your have you checks ready or the correct cash available. Are we preparing our hearts to give to the cause of Christ's kingdom? Reread verse six. Do we understand that God blesses those who give with a good heart? If we are not sure then reread verse seven. God loves a cheerful giver. Why? God loves a cheerful giver because a cheerful giver is thankful for his salvation. Sing or read Psalter 175 especially stanzas 1-3.

May 9

Malachi 3:1-10 "For I am the Lord, I change not." What a comfort! When we fall into sin, we do not have to fear that God will consume us in His righteous anger. God in His holiness could do that, but He does not because He has promised to bring His people to eternal glory. Israel of old deserved punishment because of its misuse of God's commands and gifts. God did chastise them with captivity. The church of today stands under the same commands. If we did not have a changeless God, we, too, would deserve the severe punishment of hell. Aren't we glad that we have the comfort that Jehovah changes not. Was our worship today an expression of thanksgiving to the changeless God we have? Sing or read Psalter 281 especially stanzas 3 and 4.

May 10

Galatians 5:16-26 Some of us are enjoying the fruits of our labors as we pick from our gardens those firstfruits of spring. There are fruits in our lives as well. What kind are we enjoying? Are we enjoying the fruit of wild oats sown in sin? We see some of those spoken of in verses nineteen through twenty-one. Or are we enjoying the fruit of the Spirit as listed in verses twenty-two and twenty-three. Both kinds of fruit are evidence of the lives we live. Both kinds of fruit will be shown before God. May He give us the grace to present fruit of the Spirit. Sing or read Psalter 406.

May 11

John 15:11-19 The first fruit of the Spirit is love. Young people, do you know what that is? Are you caught up with an emotional type of love for someone or something? Do you really know what it means to love someone? We all need to be reminded what true love is. True love is the love Christ had for His church when He died for them. All other loves must be based on that idea. If you love someone even so much that you are contemplating marriage, do you share the love of Christ with that person? If you are wrapped up in some idea, is Christ's love wrapped up with you and that idea? Because Christ loved you, do you love all those in His church? Love is powerful; read I Corinthians 13 if you do not believe that. Love is beautiful; read Revelations 22 if you do not believe that. Sing or read Psalter 74.

May 12

Psalm 51:1-13 Joy is a nice word. Joy brings to mind smiles, happiness, and contentment. David did not always have that feeling. Sometimes we do not have that feeling. This is because there is sin in our lives. Sometimes it is very grievous sin. God brought David to his knees, and David finally had to ask God to restore him to the joy of his salvation. We must do the same if we are to experience true joy. Joy is only for the child of God because joy only comes from the way of salvation. There is a response to having joy. The response is found in verse thirteen. Is it our response? Sing or read Psalter 400 especially stanzas 1, 3. and 7.

May 13

Isaiah 26:1-9 Is there any doubt that these things should not be called fruit of the spirit? Perfect peace is a condition sought after by people throughout history. Different religions try all different means to achieve this state. What a blessing it is that we can confess that perfect peace only comes from Jehovah. How can it be achieved? The only way is through a complete trust in the everlasting strong Jehovah. We need that peace in this tumultuous world. Pray for this peace for yourself and for all of God's people. Sing or read Psalter 232.

May 14

Ephesians 4:1-7 The term longsuffering is often used to refer to God's being longsuffering with His people even while they wallow in their sins. This should be a great comfort to us. If God was not longsuffering towards us, we would surely be consumed in His wrath. But we, too, must be longsuffering. It is also a fruit of the Spirit. We must be patient in adversity according to the Heidelberg Catechism as we await the unfolding of God's plan for us. We must also be longsuffering towards those whom we think are doing us wrong. I am afraid that longsuffering is not an attribute which characterizes many of us. We must pray that this fruit of the spirit is evident in our lives. Sing or read Psalter 284 especially stanzas 3 and 4.

May 15

James 3:13-18 To examine the idea of gentleness we can look at the shepherd. A shepherd in Israel had to care for his sheep in places and times of adversity. But he had to be gentle with those sheep because of a sheep's nature. God is our shepherd and is gentle with us. David says that God's gentleness made him great. We must be gentle with those around us. This can be very hard. It goes against our nature. Even when we have someone s good in mind, we can be very harsh. Pray that all of us can be gentle and pour forth this fruit of the spirit. Sing or read Psalter 35 especially stanzas 1 and 6.

May 16

Jeremiah 31:10-17 There is much in the lives of the Old Testament church that we can apply to our lives today. This chapter is no exception. In these verses we see that even though captivity is near there was hope for God's people. This is to be found In the goodness of the Lord. The phrase 'God is good' should not be an idle idea in our lives. God IS good. We must reflect this goodness In our lives. It is one of the fruits of those who walk by the Spirit. Goodness must permeate all of our being. Does it? Are we good to others? Sing or read Psalter 81 especially stanzas 1 and 4.

May 17

Daniel 1:8-17 We all know the story of Daniel. We can easily speak of his feats and enjoy them. Do we realize that Daniel in chapter 1 may have been as young as 15-17? Do we understand that it was by faith that Daniel and his three friends accomplished what they did? Faith is a beautiful idea. Faith is a gift from God. How are we using this gift? Does our faith shine so that all around us see its effects? Are we willing to confess our faith unto all who are around us? Do we take our faith seriously, or is it a matter of convenience? Do we live the faith of Hebrews 11? We must, because it is God's command. Sing or read Psalter 20.

May 18

James 1:12-22 When we looked at the beatitudes of Christ, we looked at the idea of meekness. There we saw that Moses was meek as he led the children of Israel. We must be meek as we receive God's word. The opposite of receiving God's word with meekness is to rebel against it. Sometimes we are unhappy with what God says to us. We do not want to hear it, and we rebel against it. James says we must receive that word with meekness. We must see that this is also a fruit of the Spirit. Let us pray to our heavenly Father that we can receive His word with meekness and then do His word. Sing or read Psalter 330 especially stanzas I and 2.

May 19

I Corinthians 9:24-27 We come to the last expression of the fruit of the Spirit. Simply put, temperance is the ability to exercise self-control over all aspects of your lives. Temperance is living a life that is always God-glorifying. Temperance does not let us do things because they "feel good" to us. Temperance does not let us use the reason "because I felt like it" for any situation. When we glorify God in all walks of life, we will show temperance. The final result of temperance is the crown of glory that fades not away. Be temperate young people, and exhibit all the fruit of the Spirit all of the time. Sing or read Psalter 172.

May 20

Luke 24:45-53 "He ascended into heaven." With those words of the Apostles Creed, we confess that Christ is in heaven waiting the day that He will return to "judge the living and the dead." Christ is not idle in heaven; He is our constant advocate with the Father. He is a sign that we will also go to heaven either in our deaths or when He returns. Because He is in heaven, we can seek heavenly things knowing that those things which are good for us He will give us. On this Ascension Day let us give thanks for the ascended Christ who sits on the right hand of the Father. Sing or read Psalter 183 especially stanzas 1 and 2.

May 21

Acts 1:1-11 What are you doing since Christ has ascended into heaven? According to our passage Christ Himself promises that He will return from heaven. But He does not tell us to be idle. In this passage and others He gives the command that the gospel be preached in all lands. Are we doing that? Are we making sure that all in our immediate area know the truths of God's word? Are we spreading the gospel to the uttermost parts of the earth? Is there anything a young person can be doing in this area? Young people should be interested and knowledgeable in mission work. They should find out from ministers and elders what they can do. Older young men should search their hearts to see if maybe their life's calling can be found here. We can all pray sincerely for this work. Sing or read Psalter 195 especially stanzas 1 and 2.

May 22

Psalm 19:7-14 Young people do you keep your feet from sin? David wrote of this topic often. If you search the Psalms, you will find this topic repeated many times. Solomon also addressed this idea in the book of Proverbs. Last month we addressed this idea from the aspect of the Christian soldier. Today I want us to see that this is done by comparing our lives to God's law. In this Psalm David makes many statements about the beauty of God's law. In the last verses he prays that God will keep him from all kinds of sins. That must be our way as well. We must search the Scriptures and pray for God's care in this matter. Sing or read Psalter 1.

May 23

Luke 13:16-24 Jesus often taught His people by means of parables. In this one He warns us about the error of taking the kingdom of heaven lightly. Are we ready for Christ to return, or are there many things that we would rather do on this earth? If Christ would ask us if we want Him to come today, what would be our answer? Sometimes I fear we would rather Christ wait awhile until we are ready. This parable leaves no room for this feeling. We must be ready, we must be watching, and we must make His return our earnest desire. Sing or read Psalter 263.

May 24

Genesis 1:1-10 "And God said . . . ." "And God saw that it was good." Do you believe in creation as recorded in Genesis 1? Most of you, if not all of you, would quickly answer of course. Do you know exactly what that means? Again most of you would answer yes, but maybe the second answer would come a little more slowly. Are you ready to give an answer to all who oppose your belief in creation? We must be ready at all times to answer these questions. The reason is not just because we believe creation is better than evolution. The reason is not just because God has given us faith to believe His word. The reason is because our salvation depends on creation. If God is not the creator of heaven and earth, then Christ is not our Saviour. Young and old must make it their business to know these things. Sing or read Psalter 404 especially stanzas 2, 3 and 5.

May 25

Philippians 1:21-30 Paul was ready to die because he knew the glories in heaven were greater than anything in earth. Are you ready to die? Have you given this idea much thought lately? Death always brings to mind sadness. It shouldn't, because death is the passage into heaven. Even young people should consider this thought. Even though they may think that God has much for them to do on this earth, their work may be finished. Are we living so that dying is glorious? Sing or read Psalter 313.

May 26

II Timothy 1:1-7 Have you talked to your parents and grandparents lately, young people? No, I do not mean about the daily cares of life, or the weather, or any other such mundane things. Have you talked to them about the cares of the kingdom of heaven? Timothy must have had a good spiritual relationship with his mother and grandmother. Paul mentions it more than once. How is yours? Do you cultivate it? What about you, parents and grandparents? Do you make yourself someone to talk to about these things? Sing or read Psalter 278.

May 27

II Chronicles 24:1-2;15-27 Grandparents and parents sometimes chastise in the way of the Lord. What is our reaction? Do we listen to their chastisement outwardly, and when their backs are turned do what we want? That was Joash's great sin. As long as Jehoiada was alive, Joash did that which was right. When Jehoiada died, Joash went his own way even to killing the son of the man that saved his life! God judged Joash and God will judge us if we do not listen to godly instruction all the days of lives. Sing or read Psalter 244 especially stanzas 1, 2 and 5.

May 28

Proverbs 1:1-9 School Is almost over for many of us. I would like you to stop and think about school and instruction. Verse eight is the statement of every God-fearing father. Have you listened to your father's instruction and your mother's law? Are you proud to have their ornament of grace around your neck? Now go back to verse seven. Have you realized that the purpose of covenant instruction was to teach you the fear of Jehovah? Please do not be verse seven's fool, covenant children and young people. The fool's path is toward hell. Be wise and love your father's instruction. Sing or read Psalter 213 especially stanzas 3 and 4.

May 29

Proverbs 2:1-9 Let's continue our thoughts about school and covenant instruction. In this passage Solomon starts off with many 'if' statements. The meaning of those statements is that we must seek after wisdom and do it diligently. Verse nine gives the results of such seeking. We will know righteousness, judgment, and equity. We also will know every good path. Seniors, have you had trouble finding your life's path? The answer for you and really for all covenant people is to seek the wisdom of Jehovah and He will make the path known unto you. Sing or read Psalter 60 especially stanzas 1, 3, and 4.

May 30

I Thessalonians 5:16-28 Today Is Pentecost. About two thousand years ago the Holy Spirit was poured out upon the Church of Christ. Do we recognize the Spirit's work in our lives? Do we listen to the Spirit? Do we pray that God will send His Spirit to enlighten us as we read the Bible? We may not see the same effects of the Spirit as the New Testament Church saw on Pentecost, but the Spirit works today. We must pray that we are not guilty of quenching the Spirit. We must also live lives that show we are not guilty of quenching the Spirit. Sing or read Psalter 389 especially stanzas 5 and 6.

May 31

Proverbs 4:20-27 Summer is right around the corner. School will be letting out. Catechism is over. Most societies have recessed. What are you going to do this summer about your study of the Word of God? We do not read anywhere in the Bible of a three month vacation from this important calling. Parents, you still have the calling to "train up a child." Children and young people, you still have the calling to seek after wisdom. We still need to take the time and study God's word daily. Satan will not take a vacation; we must not either. Sing or read Psalter 420 especially verses 7 and 8.

Transcendental Meditation

by Megan Jankovic

Transcendental Meditation (TM) is a form of meditating developed by Maharishi Mahesh Yogi. Transcend means "to go beyond". Maharishi studied under an unidentified "divine teacher" in India for thirteen years. He went into seclusion, later emerging with the Transcendental Meditation method he'd created. He began his teachings in the early 1950's but it wasn't until the 1970's that the TM movement started gaining widespread popularity.

TM is easy to do. It is practiced twice a day, in the morning and before the evening begins, about twenty minutes each session. Meditators find a quiet spot, sit comfortably, and close their eyes. The idea is to keep the mind active but not distracted. They repeat a mantra, a word or sound which has been given to them by an instructor. Every mantra given is kept secret. In order to practice TM correctly you must be trained by an instructor. Most people begin TM for the benefit of relaxation. Because of the popularity of TM there is a great need for instructors. Many centers for TM have been established all over the world.

Maharishi has created a plan which he calls the World Plan outlining the purposes and goals of the TM movement. The TM movement wants to improve the achievements of the government, have the best education possible (with TM in all curriculums), and have everyone use the environment intelligently. The movement wants to develop each man's individual potential, making each man as happy, smart, and rich as possible. Their most interesting goal is, "To solve all crime and behavior which brings unhappiness to man". Maharishi believes if just one percent of the entire population of the world practices TM, happiness and a better society will result. Wow! Can TM do all that? TM is becoming more than the relaxation technique described at first.

So why is TM able to do all this? In order to understand, the way meditators think while meditating must be understood. The purpose for meditation and life is self fulfillment. In order to be truly content and happy a man must reach his full potential, says the teaching of Maharishi. To fulfill his potential man must reach the unlimited resources of energy and intelligence which are supposed to be within every man. He finds this "knowledge" of himself only through TM. Maharishi teaches there are levels of consciousness. When a man is conscious he's awake and aware of himself. If a man goes through more progressive levels of consciousness, then he becomes more "aware" of himself. A man may become more and more "aware" until he's "purely aware". He then can reach into his "inner knowledge" and use it.

So how does this man go through these levels? Well, Maharishi teaches that while meditating the mind is concentrated and cleared, able to transcend normal thought and consciousness. Maharishi describes the transcending of thought and consciousness as bubbles rising from the bottom of the sea. Like the bubbles released from a skin diver's tank, the bubbles start small, but grow larger as they reach the surface. A man's normal thoughts only stay on the surface floating. While meditating the mind is imagined to sink under the surface to deeper thought. How does it actually sink? Nowhere in any of the TM literature I've read is the process into the lower levels described, or what happens in the mind. Supposedly once stress is released this just happens, Maharishi states this as fact but there is no proof.

TM followers believe some factors can block the ability to find the "inner knowledge". The most important of these is stress. Maharishi teaches that stress causes unhappiness, hate, anger, aggressiveness, or any deliberate wrong. Stress stops you from being happy, relaxed and doing your personal best.

Another facet of TM is "enlightenment", the highest stage of awareness and consciousness. The enlightened man is perfect and radiates wisdom. He only desires good for everyone.

So what are the benefits of TM? A man who practices TM is supposed to be more creative, able to love, self aware, open to new experiences, objective, and has a clear perception of reality. Each man can have his own set of values, he determines what is right or wrong for himself. It sounds very nice, and Maharishi has painted a very attractive picture to his believers.

Transcendental Meditation is obviously in opposition to the Word of God. It is a total denial of God. Maharishi stresses that TM is not a replacement for

any personal beliefs or religion, including Christianity. He makes a point that it will not interfere, but how can that be? Everyone who practices TM becomes a god unto himself! They believe in themselves, and look to themselves to find the answers to their problems.

TM is another hopeless attempt of man to save himself. Man is making himself into a saviour through "enlightenment". There is no "inner knowledge" or levels of thought. "The Lord knoweth the thoughts of man, that they are vanity." (Psalm 119:97) "How precious also are thy thoughts unto me, 0 God! How great is the sum of them!" (Psalm 139:17). Our thoughts are sinful and selfish. The only inner knowledge man can realize is of his own sin and that only by the grace of God. TM denies man's sin and the sinful nature he's born with, blaming sin on stress. Man isn't responsible for his sin because the cause is stress, and stress is not his fault. God is denied as the judge of sin.

Meditation is good. In fact we are told by God's Word to meditate, we aren't to meditate on ourselves but on God's law. "0 how I love thy law! It is my meditation all the day." (Psalm 119:97) And verse 99 of the same Psalm states "I have more understanding than all my teachers: for thy testimonies are my meditation."

One verse clearly shows us the error of TM. "For by grace are ye saved through faith, and that not of yourselves; it is the gift of God." (Ephesians 2:8)

BOOK REVIEW

by Allen J. Brummel

Repent or Perish, by John H. Gerstner. Ligonier, P.A.: Soli Deo Gloria Publications; 1990. 218 pg. price: $7.50.

Is there really such a place as Hell? Would a loving God punish anyone in this manner? Modern evangelicals are denying eternal punishment in hell by appealing to the goodness of God. They look at the texts of the Bible which speak of Hell, and they explain them away in support of the doctrine of annihilation. Annihilation teaches that man simply ceases to exist after death. Death is the final punishment for sin, and the end of all wicked men. If pressed further, however, many of these individuals would deny that anyone will ever have to be annihilated anyway. They believe that eventually all men will make it to heaven.

In response to this growing trend, John Gerstner writes this sharp, controversial book. Gerstner: a Presbyterian pastor, theologian, and lecturer; is well known for his work with the theology of Johnathan Edwards. Some of Gerstner's other well known works are: Johnathan Edwards on Heaven and Hell; Theology of the Major Sects; and Wrongly Dividing the Word of Truth.

In this book, Gerstner boldly challenges such evangelicals as John Stott, Philip Hughes, and William Fudge regarding their doctrine of annihilation. With his forthright style, Gerstner states that the recent conservative attack on Hell is unbelievable. "Before this book is over I hope to show that when a conservative believer attacks hell, he has ceased to be a conservative believer, if a believer at all.(p. 32)"

From the title, Repent or Perish, the question arises whether Gerstner is trying to scare people into Heaven. He writes that even the terror of Hell can never make a man repent. The only way to repentance is through the sovereign work of God's grace in our hearts. Herein lies the value of this book for us as twentieth century young people. With Gerstner, we need to emphasize God's sovereign grace and love for His people. He spared us from the terror of hell, and a very real terror it is!

We do well to be reminded of the reality of Hell. By nature we were all sons of the Devil. We all deserve eternal punishment in Hell because of our inclination to all evil. By God's sovereign grace we now look forward to Heaven. Not because we deserve it, but because Christ merited it for us.

My one disagreement with Gerstner is the purpose which he gives for preaching Hell. Hell is preached in order "**to get worldly people**. . . seeking the Kingdom of God." (p. 28) He implies that natural man has the ability not only to desire good, but also to actively seek the Kingdom of God. The Bible teaches that natural man has no inclination to turn from his sinful way until God changes his hardened heart into a new heart, which is receptive of the benefits of Christ. (Cf. Romans 2:18ff; 3:10ff)

Read this small book and let it stimulate you to be thankful to your gracious God, and to be faithful in your personal witnessing. God spared you and me from the terrors of Hell. Let us see to it that we share this gospel with our friends and neighbors. "He which converteth the sinner from the error of his way, shall save a soul from death, and shall hide a multitude of sins." (James 5:20)

Q. In connection with the issue of euthanasia, recent studies have shown that at least 80 percent of a person's total health costs are spent on him/her after he/she reaches the age of 80. This means that this money is being spent to prolong the life of an elderly person who normally has only a few years to live anyway. Doesn't this fact provide a justification for euthanasia?

A. What exactly is euthanasia? Euthanasia can be defined as putting a person to death either by withholding or removing what is necessary to prolong life, such as medical care or food, or by administering something which will bring about death, such as a lethal injection.

Financial questions should never determine the legality of euthanasia. God's word is our only standard for deciding whether anything is right or wrong, and God's word tells us plainly that we are not to kill ourselves or others.

Euthanasia is immoral because it denies that God is the only one Who has the right to give and take life. Man wants to decide when to die. And not only does man believe he has the right to determine this for himself, but he also wants to determine this for other people. In both instances man is breaking the sixth commandment.

We may never argue, therefore, that euthanasia is wrong for most people but okay for old people because they do not have long to live and because it often costs so much to keep them alive. The life of an old person is just as precious as that of a young child or a baby or even an unborn child.

There are, however, other questions associated with euthanasia. For example, if someone is being kept alive by artificial means through life support equipment, is it wrong to "pull the plug"? Should this person even be put on this life support equipment in the first place? Another problem is defining when a person is actually dead - is it to be determined by heart activity, or by brain activity, or by both? There is also the question of whether we must, in all cases, use every medical means available to prolong life?

It is impossible to answer all these questions now. However, if anyone is interested in a detailed discussion of these questions and of the whole issue of euthanasia Professor Hanko has written a series of articles on this ethical issue, and they can be found in volume 64 of The Standard Bearer.

Perhaps even some of our readers have ideas concerning these questions and the issue of euthanasia. If this is so we would welcome your contribution to the Beacon Lights

- Daniel Kleyn

SCHOLARSHIPS!!

Anyone interested in applying for a scholarship for the 1993-1994 school year should contact Jay Kalsbeek immediately to receive a topic. All articles must be received or postmarked by June 1, 1993.

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Special Music: Bane or Blessing?

by Martin L. Vander Wal

Since joining the Protestant Reformed Churches, some criticism has been directed towards me, criticism concerning special music. In my old church (Christian Reformed), I often accompanied special music on the piano and sang in the church choir. I also played synthesizers for a group of young people who presented a musical in various Reformed and Christian Reformed churches, this musical even sometimes substituting for the worship service. So, when I changed my membership to the Protestant Reformed Churches, a few eyebrows were raised. Some have even expressed disappointment that I could no longer use my God-given talents.

When I joined our churches, I was not very concerned about the issue of special music. Foremost in my mind was the fact that these Protestant Reformed Churches were preaching the true gospel of Christ, and that my children could grow up in a denomination free from the turmoil and increasing apostasy which is oppressing my former denomination. God, in His mysterious way, through circumstances, was calling me to choose. Special music was not a criteria for judgment.

After I had joined, Christian friends began to ask more questions concerning special music. Why did my new church have to be so strict about what happened in the service? Isn't there a place even for a choir to sing in the service, if that choir were to sing music which would augment the sermon, and reinforce the preaching? Doesn't the Word (a nebulous term used by critics) come to us in different forms? Can't special music edify as much as preaching? With these questions I have dealt, and I am thankful for this opportunity to share the results.

First, I needed to understand positively what the worship service is all about, why we (being Protestant Reformed) make such a distinction between a worship service and, say, a Singspiration. How is it that we can forbid special music in a worship service and yet enjoy it at a Singspiration?

It was essential for me to understand that something very special happens at a worship service. The Holy Spirit makes us thirsty for the living water of the Word and the communion of the saints. God the Father, through His provision, grants us the means to come together for worship. Jesus Christ, our risen and ascended Savior, comes and speaks to us through His ambassador, an ordained and called minister. The Holy Spirit writes that Word, as it is spoken, on the hearts of the elect. Elders are present to ensure that the minister indeed preaches the Scripture and to reinforce that preaching with Christian discipline. Because of this, it is absolutely necessary that every element of the service be directed towards God's Word, with no room for distraction. Now, the question thus comes: Is there any room for special music here? No. The only person qualified to bring the Word, preach the gospel, is the minister who has been called to preach. In a broader sense, he has spent years preparing to preach. In a more narrow sense, he has spent many hours in his study preparing to preach a particular sermon. He is the one whom the Lord, through the congregation, has called to preach. This is a station, an office, which no other may occupy.

Secondly, I had to understand the true value of gospel preaching. When a minister stands before us in a worship service and preaches, it is all too easy for us to see him simply as a man who is relating to us his opinions about what the Bible may say. I think we are all guilty of this sin to some degree. Through faith, however, we see that Jesus Christ, the very Son of God, comes to us <u>through</u> this sinful man, and speaks His very own words to us. What could possibly be more valuable than that? Special music cannot do this. It does not have the same authority, the same power. Consider this analogy. Would you rather take a drink from a pure, cold, bubbling spring or from a mud puddle? Yes, both will keep you from dying of thirst, both qualify as water. One, however, is desirable; the other is obnoxious, and even dangerous.

Thirdly, I needed to consider my past experience of participating in special music and observing it as a pew-sitter. At the risk of sounding too negative, I must say that there have been times when special music has done much harm. I have heard a Reformed sermon preceded by an Arminian song. At times, special music has been so polished and professional that it made the sermon appear a shoddy affair by comparison. At other times it was done so poorly, it was an

embarrassment. (In fact, one minister said to me, "You know, sometimes the best thing you can say about special music is that it's over.") It has also sometimes given the worship service the atmosphere of a carnival or piano bar. I have also seen that, on a purely emotional and carnal level, special music is far more appealing than gospel preaching. Our hearts, yet tainted by sin, are easily captivated more by a glamorous, polished musical performance, than by the preaching of God's Word. It is far easier to be entertained by song than to listen carefully to our Good Shepherd.

In conclusion, let us jealously guard the great gospel preaching in our churches, excluding all that would detract from the message of salvation and hope through Jesus Christ. Only in this way can we continue to expect the same spiritual blessings of God upon our churches, which have been ours in the past.

THE BINDING POWER OF THE WORD

An Introduction

by Rev. R. Dykstra

What would you decide in these situations?

1. Your minister is preaching. In the course of the sermon he admonishes the congregation to imitate a particular lifestyle. Although he claims the text requires this obedience, you are not at all convinced that the text teaches it. Must you go along with what he preached, or may you ignore it?

2. An elder in your church calls you. He and another elder wish to talk to you as soon as possible. Must you meet with them, or may you refuse, or put it off indefinitely because you are too busy?

3. You open your bulletin one Sunday and read in the announcements the actions taken at the last meeting of Classis. You disagree emphatically with one of the decisions. What affect does that decision have on you? Is it binding, or may you simply reject and ignore it?

These three examples serve to illustrate real questions we believers face continually about authority in the Church of Jesus Christ. A wide range of attitudes can be found on such matters. Some tend toward total and unquestioning acceptance of the teaching and admonitions of the preaching and the elders. At the other extreme are those whose attitude seems to be - we have the right to reject anything with which we disagree. In between these extremes are such attitudes as - we will accept anything that we believe agrees with the Bible, or, if we agree with his (their) interpretation of the Bible, we will follow his (their) admonition. Perhaps you have never really faced these issues, but do reflect on this for a moment. What is your view of the authority of the preaching over you? MUST you believe and obey it? MUST you receive the elders and support the decisions of a classis and synod?

No small matter is this. At bottom is the question of the authority of the Word of God over us. It is the purpose of this rubric (The Binding Power of the Word) to examine these matters in order better to understand what authority the Word has over us - our beliefs and activities. In this series we plan to discuss such matters as the authority of the preaching itself; the scope of that authority; possible disagreements with the preaching; the authority of the special offices (elder, deacon, and minister); and the authority of such ecclesiastical bodies as the consistory or classis. The common link among all these is that they all have authority in the Church of Jesus Christ, which authority is the right (from Christ) to speak the Word of God. From this is derived the title of the rubric - The Binding Power of the Word.

If you have questions along this line, or if questions arise from the material, do feel free to send in questions. But do keep the questions as general as possible. I do not intend to pass judgment on specific

ons or on specific decisions of consistories or ses, etc.

The first "power of the Word" to be examined will be the preaching. And to understand the authority of the preaching, we must first know the authority, or right, of the preacher to speak the Word of God. But that will have to wait until next time.

"If God Doesn't Give Us Children. . ." Adoption: Right or Wrong

by Rev. R. Flikkema

As the above title indicates, I have been asked to write an article for the Beacon Lights on the subject of what ought a Christian couple to do if God does not give them children of their own, with specific focus on the question of whether or not adoption is proper.

I want to begin by stating that every godly couple and every Christian young man or woman contemplating marriage ought to be concerned about children and the calling to bring forth the children of God's covenant. With regard to the latter, young men and young women in the Church ought to desire not only that God will bless their lives with a godly spouse, but that He will also bless their lives with the covenant seed. With regard to the former, husbands and wives in the Church must have as their prayer that God will give them children. I fear that in some cases young men and young women do not desire marriage and children, and that if married, the subject of children is placed on the back burner, so to speak, until such time as careers and possessions are obtained.

But what of the couple who is married; what of the couple who does desire children, who make this desire for children a matter of constant prayer to God like Isaac and Rebekah of old (Genesis 25:21)? As the title of this article indicates, what if, unlike Isaac and Rebekah, God does not give them children? This is a very painful situation. A godly husband and wife grieve over it, not because some so-called natural instinct has not been fulfilled, but because such understand that the Word of God speaks of children as being the heritage of the Lord. (Psalm 127:3). They understand the importance of God's covenant, and the fact that God is pleased to save His Church in the line of covenant generations.

The question is what is God's will for them? Is it such that they must simply view it as their calling to be submissive to God and be content in God's way for them to go childless? Or ought they to view the matter of adoption as a proper way for them to go? In this article I am going to limit myself to the subject of adoption. There are, you understand, in this day and age of modern medicine, science and technology and other things with which the Christian is confronted. Are the things modern medicine and science develop viable things for the Christian couple to use? For reading on these things I refer you to a series of articles by Prof. H. Hanko entitled, "Moral Aspects of Medical Technology", Volumes 62 and 63 of The Standard Bearer.

Adoption. For the answer to the question of whether or not adoption is right or wrong, we must look to the Scriptures, which are the basis for all of faith and life. But when we look to the Scriptures, it must be acknowledged that nowhere do the Scriptures state, either adoption is right, or adoption is wrong. Nowhere do the Scriptures enjoin us to adopt, or forbid us to adopt. And this, it seems to me places the matter of adoption where the Church has always left it, in the sphere of one's Christian liberty. And the Church has left it there. Our Churches have never taken the position that adoption is as such either right or wrong. Far from saying it is wrong, our Churches have granted the baptism of adopted children. There is a decision relative to the baptism of adopted children under Article 56 of the Church Order. It reads as follows, "Adopted children shall be baptized only when their legal adoption shall have been made final." (Adopted by the Synod of 1960, Article 24.) It is my conviction therefore, that this is a matter that each couple must bring to God in prayer, and that each couple must answer to God.

If a couple believes after much prayer and soul-searching that God's will for them is to be content; content in simply having no children of their own, my counsel to them is: rest in that. Be content in God's way for you. I believe that a Christian couple can find much contentment in that way. They have each other. They also have in harmony with the Scriptures organic conception of the covenant the knowledge that though they have no children in their home, that nevertheless, all the children of God's covenant are theirs, a truth that ought not be forgotten, No one then ought to say to them, you should adopt, and certainly no one ought to say, It is wrong for you not to. Rest in your decision. The purpose of God in not giving you children may not be so easy to determine. God's ways are higher than our ways, the Scriptures tell us. But concerning this question of God's purpose I believe that what

Prof. Hanko writes on page 78 of Volume 63 of The Standard Bearer ought to be considered. "Couples to whom God does not give children ought seriously to ask themselves the question whether God does not have some special work and calling for them in His kingdom and covenant to which they can devote their time and energies. It may be that God purposely refrains from giving them children in order to use them in some other great and noble task in the Church."

But by the same token, if a couple believes after much prayer and soul searching that they ought to adopt, my counsel to them is: do so, and rest in that decision. Even as no one may say to a childless couple, it is wrong for you not to adopt, so also no one may say to a childless couple who feel adoption is right for them, You may not, but must be content. Speaking of contentment, contentment does not only apply to a couple who decide not to adopt, but also to a couple who decide to adopt. They must be content in the fact that even if they do adopt, though they can make that child legally their own, they can never make such their own flesh and blood. Contentment applies to both cases.

However, if a couple is considering adoption or believes that adoption is right for them, there are certain serious considerations that must be taken into account. In the first place, I believe that they must be clear as to their motive. The question of motive is a very important one. Why does a couple want to adopt? Is it because they simply want children, and are in the final analysis bitter towards God Who has not given them children of their own, so that adoption becomes really an act of selfish defiance against God? Or is it that they are not bitter at all, but that they view adoption as the means God has given them, not just to have a child or provide a child with a home, but to provide a child with a good Christian home and covenantal training? What is the motive?

Secondly, a couple who takes a decision to adopt ought to consider the fact that not a few adopted children do not grow up to walk in the ways of God's covenant. This is simply a fact that anyone who has adopted children, who have not walked in the ways of God's covenant, knows. This does not deny that some do walk in God's ways, and parents of adopted children, together with the whole Church rejoice in that. Nor does this deny the fact that not all children born to covenant parents walk in God's ways. There are those who do not. There are Esaus born to believing parents. Just because one is born of believing parents does not in itself guarantee faith and salvation. Yet the fact remains as stated above.

Which brings me to the third and final consideration in this matter. A couple ought to take into serious consideration that they adopt a child from a Christian adoption agency and most importantly, a child of covenant lineage, of the sphere of God's covenant in its generations. Of course you understand, as stated above, that this in itself is no guarantee of the child's salvation. But it is nevertheless important in this matter, and ought to be prayerfully considered. Are we not allowed to adopt children of heathen ancestry? The Churches have never so said. But it is worthy of note that with regard to the question of the baptism of adopted children born of heathen parents, the Synod of Dort took a decision. Van Dellen and Monsma in their commentary on the Church Order refer to it on pages 232 and 233. They write with reference to that decision, "The Synod judged that these children should not be baptized until they in due season should make profession of faith."

The matter of whether or not to adopt is by no means easy. It requires much prayer and soul-searching before the face of God. I give God thanks that He has seen fit to give my wife and myself four children in our marriage. My heart and prayers go out tc those who do not have children of their own. May God give them wisdom.

Dear Readers,

The staff at the Beacon Lights would like to continue to provide its readers with the Church News. We have received many comments that most of you have missed it in the past few months. At this time we are currently looking at a new format that would rely on individual participation over against bulletin clerks providing the information. At this time it would be up to you the reader to mail us the information. This way the news printed would be as up to date as possible, based on the information you have supplied to us.

We at the Beacon Lights look forward to your eager participation and prompt response so that a long anticipated rubric will quickly reappear.

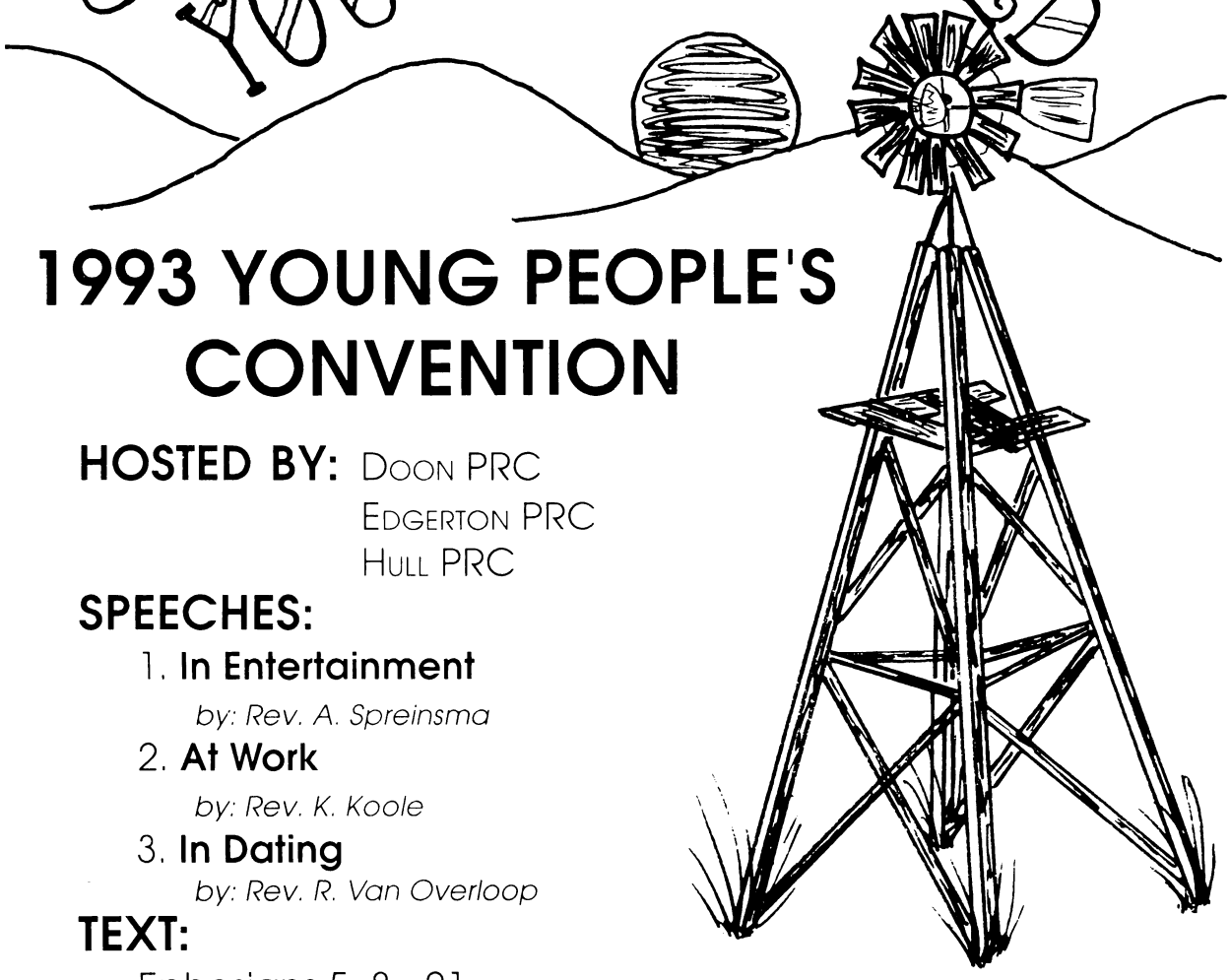
For example:

Birth:
Name of child
Parents names
Birthdate
Appropriate Scripture text (optional)
Siblings names (optional)
Grandparents names (optional)

Engagement:
Bride's name
Groom's name
Parents names
Wedding date/site
Newlywed's future address

Mail all information within 1 month to:
Lori Ellerbroek
14320 Pine Creek Drive
Holland, MI 49424

SPIRITUAL YOUTH in a CARNAL WORLD



1993 YOUNG PEOPLE'S CONVENTION

HOSTED BY: DOON PRC
EDGERTON PRC
HULL PRC

SPEECHES:

1. **In Entertainment**
   by: Rev. A. Spreinsma
2. **At Work**
   by: Rev. K. Koole
3. **In Dating**
   by: Rev. R. Van Overloop

TEXT:

Ephesians 5: 8 - 21

2-in-1 Convention

Separate Lodging & Some Separate Activities For Older And Younger Age Groups

Dordt College, Sioux Center, Iowa
AUGUST 2 - 6, 1993

PLAN TO ATTEND!