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1993 Young People's Convention

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Contents

EDITORIAL
Sports - Craziness - Daniel Kleyn 1
QUESTION & ANSWER AND LETTERS 2
CHRISTIAN LIVING
Personal Evangelism - Rev. A. Den Hartog 4
The Order of Salvation - Allen Brummel 6
Convention Highlights - Beth Ericks 7
DEVOTIONAL - Watching Daily At My Gates - Skip Hunter 9
An Outside Impression - Rodney Kleyn 13
CHRISTIAN LIVING
Learned Passivity - Thadd Lubbers 14
Preaching in the Past and Now - Rev. C. Hanko 17
Northern Ireland - Jennifer Hanko 18
KNOWING WHOM I HAVE BELIEVED
A Holy Church? - Rev. A Spriensma 19
Spiritual Work-out: ERCS Family Camp 1993 20

EDITORIAL NOTES CHANGES

Changes have been made to the BEACON LIGHTS. First, the staff has changed. Recently Lisa Groenendyk (De Young), Kristin Engelsma, and Joan Hanko have resigned from the BEACON LIGHTS after serving for several years. We thank them for the work they have done for the BEACON LIGHTS. A special thanks to Joan Hanko who for the past several years has been in charge of subscriptions. The many hours of billing and collecting are greatly appreciated. Thanks. Second, we have had several people volunteer to help which is every encouraging to the rest of the staff. We welcome to our staff Sheri Brummel and Tom Bergman. Tom Bergman will now be in charge of subscriptions. Third, the BEACON LIGHTS will now be a monthly magazine. We will now be publishing 12 issues a year instead 10.The Beacon Lights staff felt that we could better serve you this way with more convention news, monthly devotional, and more up-to-date information. Fourth, maybe the bad news for you is that along with this boost in output comes a boost in subscription price to $10 a year. Thank you for your support. - Editor.

Sports - Craziness

by Daniel Kleyn

Sport pervades and dominates our society. Every newspaper and every news broadcast devotes great amounts of space and time to what is happening in the latest basketball, football, and baseball games, as well as to what is going on in the numerous other sports both here in the U.S. and around the world. Sport is no longer simply a recreational activity, an activity which provides relaxation and fitness. Instead, sport has become a god. The non-Christian world lives for and worships sport - it is "sports crazy".

But is the Christian world any different? Have you ever asked yourself whether you, as a believer in Christ, are just as wrapped up in the sport of this day and age as is the "sports crazy" world? Do you, when reading the press, turn first to the sports section? Do you find that you can't do without watching sports events either daily or weekly on television? Do you spend too much time in actual participation? Do you find that a great part of your conversations with family, friends, and work mates revolves around certain games which you either played, saw, heard about, or read about the night before?

If you, through honestly answering these questions, find that you said "Yes" to one or more of them, then you will recognize that a definite problem exists in relation to sport. Maybe you will even have to consider the possibility that you also are "sports crazy".

The problem that we confront is that too much emphasis is placed on sport, and sad to say, even by many who profess to be God's children. Too much time, money, and effort is expended in the pursuit of sport.

For many of us, the fact that we consume too much time and effort in sport does not arise from our being ignorant of the proper place and emphasis that sport should have. We know that sport should be kept in the proper perspective. We know that we mustn't get all wrapped up in it. We know that sport should not even be at all important in our lives, for "Man's chief end is to glorify God and to enjoy Him forever" (Westminster Confession, Shorter Catechism 1).

Yet many of us still seem to find sport essential and are unwilling to admit that we make it important in our lives.

What each of us needs to do, therefore, is to ask ourself, "How significant do I make sport in my life?" We need to take a serious look at how much time, money, and effort we devote to it. We need to do so because of God's command to live antithetically - we must not be like and become a part of the "sports crazy" world in which we live.

Young people, is sport so prominent in your life that you are more keen to know player and game information than you are to know your catechism or Bible memory work? Is this also true of some not so young people - of some adults? And parents, do you allow your children to devote too much time and attention to sport? Are you and your family as eager to spend time reading and studying the Bible as you are to watch a game on TV? Are you able to speak easily and frequently concerning sport activities but not concerning spiritual things?

Are we as keen to go to church activities, such as worship services, societies, and lectures, as we are to travel many miles in order to go to a sports event? Why was it that attendance at a basketball final in Detroit a few months ago was in the "thousands" whereas attendance at a conference on Christian Witnessing was only in the "hundreds"? And why is it that sometimes church activities are either postponed or canceled because of certain sports activities?

When we evaluate our involvement according to time, it is not simply the case that as long as we spend more time involved in spiritual things than in sport then all is okay. The whole purpose of our life is not the enjoyment of the things of this world. God has given us life so that we seek and serve Him in all that we do and busy ourselves in His work. Our life in this world is a pilgrimage in order to prepare us for our eternal home in glory. Our greatest concern must therefore be our spiritual welfare. If we keep this in mind, then, and then only, will we be able to realize that sport should not be an important part of our life on this earth.

Now I am not saying that sport is bad in itself, for it can have a place in a Christian's life. In a Christian atmosphere, sport can be useful, worthwhile, and advantageous. In such a setting, there is opportunity

for Christian fellowship, for relaxation, and for caring for our God-given body.

But I believe it is wrong to say that sport is a vital part of a Christian's life. And it is wrong to make sport so important in our life that God's kingdom suffers because of it.

Another problem with sport is that it can be very expensive. Not only is it often costly to participate in sport, but it can also be very costly to travel to games and to buy tickets for them. Because of this, involvement in sport can draw on funds which could be better used for more profitable causes. Perhaps if less emphasis were placed on sport and on the need for modern equipment, the financial burden of running our schools would be lightened.

Finally, we should also realize that when we follow and attend the sports of this world, we are associating ourselves with the "sports crazy" world and not living an antithetical and godly life - a life of separation from this world. Many of us even make the greedy, worldly ballplayers our heroes. Clearly this is wrong, for many of these "heroes" lead immoral lives, a fact of which we are all aware when we hear about men such as Magic Johnson and Mike Tyson. And all of them desecrate God's holy sabbath day, for they play their sports on Sunday. Shouldn't we be afraid to allow ourselves and our children to idolize such ungodly people?

We would do well to learn, remember, and use as our guide the words of Christ in Luke 16:15b; "for that which is highly esteemed among men is abomination in the sight of God." Examine your devotion to sport, and ask yourself whether or not you are seeking and following after something which is hateful and detestable to God!

QUESTION & ANSWER AND LETTERS

Dear Editor,

Let me express my appreciation for your efforts as editor-in-chief of the Beacon Lights magazine. I am used to seeing fine Christian reading and scholarship within its pages. However, 1 am somewhat dismayed with the editorial you printed in the August/September 1993 issue (White Men Can't Jump). I am convinced that it was out of place in this magazine. And, of course, I would like to show you why.

First, I found it very difficult to tell whether or not the author was really sorry for seeing the movies and TV shows that he lists. He seemed to glory somewhat in what he had seen: "It was hilarious." "one of my favorites -saw it three times," "I thrilled at the sight of a beautiful woman's half-naked body. . . ." I was reminded of a Pentecostal man giving his testimony of what great evils he had fallen into before he truly accepted Christ. As he recalled his tremendous sins, it seemed as if he was ready to sigh and say, "I had so much fun back then." Now, perhaps this is a misunderstanding, but the author should have been more clear and consistent in his approach.

Second, the article gave the tone of so much ranting and raving. Perhaps recalling to mind late night arguments with parents over some issue or other. There was no logical, clear approach to this issue of movies. There was no development or direction. Instead it seemed to be a shouting match between the spiritual side of the author and his carnal side, a match which is well nigh impossible to communicate, although Augustine was highly successful in his Confessions.

Third, there was a glaring contradiction whose thread was woven throughout the entire article. The author urges us to "throw it out on the street for the garbage man to pick up," while "I still have a TV in the house." All this turning made me a little dizzy, to say the least.

Fourth, I believe the author missed the root of the issue. It is not so much a matter of watching movies or television, the act as such. It is more a matter of what motivates the activity. Those who truly believe the antithesis between good and evil exists will walk according to that antithesis. They should be able to see clearly that the material portrayed through this media today belongs on the other side. And, having seen clearly, they should act accordingly. This is why I see such harping on movie attendance. etc. is not attacking the root of the issue. It would be better to ask why we do not see the truth and then put it into practice. I'm afraid, however, that we have come to expect this sort of behavior from teens (and adults not a few) and hope that "it's just a phase."

In conclusion, let me reassure you that the reason this article stands out so clearly as being out of place is that it is among so many other magnificent articles. Keep up the fine work!

Sincerely,
Martin L. VanderWal

I would like to thank you for your response. Replies to printed articles are not frequent, and the Beacon Lights certainly would like to see more responses come in. This particular letter gives me the opportunity to clarify my opinions and bring out the focus of the article in question.

In case you are wondering how I could write things like that, let's review what was in the August/September 1993 Beacon Lights article. In it, I began by stating that it had been well over a year since I had seen a movie. In that time, I gained strong feelings concerning the evils present in television, movies, and the like. I even listed some of the horrendous things I had witnessed. Then, to leave no doubt in the reader's mind, I wrote, "These easy-to-get-to movies and programs are horribly wrong in their anti-Christian nature."

But, watching over us in His fatherly care, the Lord gives us instructions to live by. We, young people especially, sometimes tend to go against this instruction and end up consumed with the lusts of the flesh. Then, after finding fault with nearly everything found on the screen, I pointed out, "Movie attendance makes a sinful, harmonious link between the two tables (of the law). We covet these movies and TV's (10th commandment violation) and pledge our time and money to these for our enjoyment (1st) instead of `Seek ye first. . . .' " So, "if they hinder you from the work of God's kingdom you are denying Christ, not yourself and your earthly pleasures."

The four points listed in your letter above indicate that you feel such article has no place in the Beacon Lights. That is the question I will be dealing with here: "Does the article belong?"

Your first idea deals with sorrow for these sins. Throughout the piece, I was careful to use the past tense for every mention of my ungodly behavior. This indicates that it was in the past, and although the scar remains, I do not care to be associated with such anymore. It is a shame that the sarcasm was lost ('one of my favorites', etc.). I do apologize for being a bit unclear in that respect. Yet, you see, the reality shines through: I am NOT glorying in those sins, but rather, humbled to cry before God in publican-like form, `0 God, be merciful to me! Look what I have done; look what I have loved!'

The second line of thought addresses the "tone of so much ranting and raving" within the text. The article in a nutshell is this:

1) These are the evils in movies, on television.

2) There is no denying it, I was there and I'm now sorry for it.

3) Scripture, as our only rule for faith and life, has valuable instruction for us.

4) But if we ignore the instruction and are hindered from a holy walk, it is a denial of Christ.

This approach might have slipped a little in its interchangeable use of words for movies and television. To me, these are one and the same.

Also mentioned was a "shouting match". The harsh words and severe tone were not out of place. Movies and television cause severe problems, and the young people readership must realize this by means of Scripture. It is urgent! After all, "it does indeed make a difference where a man finds his joy" (Augustine, Confessions).

Third question: Contradiction. So you found it! It is true that I still have a TV in the house. When I am married, D.V., I will not have one in my house. But for now, I live at home where it is my father's decision to own one.

Fourthly: As you correctly point out, the root of the issue is the antithesis. Since it is clear that the material shown along these media are of the baser sort, loving them is 'of the world'. By God-ordained antithesis, His people are in the world, but not of the world (see Christ's prayer for His own in John 17). In life's walk, by grace and strength, His pilgrims and strangers can attain the proper motivation to avoid the temptations before them. Movie/TV attendance, or rather, giving oneself over to the lusts of the flesh, is not properly motivated and must be attacked as an antithetically worldly activity.

Finally, you touch on coming to expect this behavior "from teens (and adults not a few)." The article, "White Men Can't Jump", was on more of a personal level. Although I implied it, I never cited a big problem among the young people. Without accusing our young people, the tone was meant to make each one in the intended audience of young people/young adults do the rest of the thinking for themselves.

I wish I could spare you from hearing this, but most of our young people attend or rent movies, turn on the television with friends or parents as perfectly fine activity, and it worries me sick to see such a prevailing work of the devil within the church. That is why the article was so strong, so eye-catching, so graphically portrayed, and so upsetting. The young readers of the Beacon Lights need to hear again and again that movies and television alike are ungodly entertainment, moreover, the "house of the wicked." For that matter, I do think that the article had a valid place among other Beacon Lights material.

I hope I have satisfied the question to some extent. Thank you again for the reply. As I said before, response was limited, and the Beacon Lights is hoping to hear still more about this.

Personal Evangelism

by Rev. A. Den Hartog

Recently in our congregation in Redlands we had a series of three meetings to focus on the above named subject. News of this somehow came to one of the members of the Beacon Lights staff and he asked me to reproduce the messages used in these meetings for the Beacon Lights. I humbly submit these messages with some modification in three installments. We pray that they will be used of the Lord to remind us of our calling and responsibility as Christians. In this article we will try to convince you that personal evangelism is indeed the calling of every Christian, of every faithful member of the church of Jesus Christ. In the second installment we will address the question of what exactly we are called to do in "personal evangelism" and in our final article we will focus on some of the practical aspects of how we are to fulfill our calling.

We know that the subject of personal evangelism has of late been addressed on numerous occasions both in evangelism meetings and in articles written in our church papers. We have noted this with joy and thankfulness. Nevertheless we believe that this subject is one that we need to be constantly reminded of. There are few subjects for discussion that more easily make us feel our short-comings and failings than this subject. It is so easy to become complacent and careless in this very important area of daily Christian living. We need always again to be stirred up from our lethargy to greater faithfulness and renewed zeal.

We have often as Protestant Reformed Churches been criticized for lacking interest and zeal for evangelism. While sometimes this criticism has been unjust, rather than merely dismissing this criticism we ought to examine ourselves and consider whether the Lord Himself is not by such criticism calling attention to some real weaknesses and failings on our part. Is it true, young people, that Christians from other churches sometimes are more free and zealous to speak about their faith and love for the Lord than we are? We need to be convinced that being open about our faith and speaking about it zealously to others should be characteristic of all of us. We may not excuse ourselves for being reserved and reticent about our faith as though this is just simply due to our Dutch Reformed background and character. Being zealous about our faith in the Lord and openly speaking about it is not an Arminian character trait. This is a character trait that we as Reformed Christians must possess and manifest in the world. Furthermore we need to be convinced that there is no faith as glorious and as wonderful as the Reformed Faith which God has in His mercy preserved in our churches. This is a faith worth talking about. It is unique in the apostate church world today. This faith is thoroughly and consistently biblical. It is a faith that exalts God alone and not men. It is a faith that declares that all the hope of man's salvation rests alone on the Sovereign Gracious Almighty God in Whom we believe and Whose name we confess. It is a faith that declares the perfect love of God and His mighty and glorious power to save His people from all their sins as well declaring His righteous judgment upon impenitent ungodly sinners.

The Lord has not in His great mercy given His truth to us to keep for ourselves. We are called to publish it to others, and that means also others outside of our own churches. We may not as a denomination be self-centered and self-satisfied. We do not exist for ourselves in the world.

Evangelism is the central calling of the church. God has given the evangel to His church. The evangel is the glorious gospel of salvation. It is the good news that God saves His people by sovereign almighty and free grace for the glory of His own name. It is the good news of the coming of the eternal and glorious Son of God into our flesh for the salvation of His people. It is the good news of His perfect sacrifice on the cross and the everlasting righteousness it merited. It is the good news of His victorious resurrection and ascension. It is the good news that Jesus is Lord of all. It is the good news of His glorious coming again at the end of the age for the judgment of the world and the final salvation of His church. It is the good news of the hope of the new heavens and earth and of eternal life and glory promised to those who love the Lord.

The church performs the calling of evangelism as the official minister of God. She does this through her ordained office bearers. The church does the work of evangelism when and wherever she preaches the Word of God and maintains the glorious truth of Christ Jesus. Evangelism in its true broadest scope is done by the whole ministry of the church to the members who are already in the church. The church preaches the gospel each Lord's Day for covenant families, believers and their children. The church does evange-

lism in catechism classes, societies, and Bible studies among her members. We as Christians must all be living and active members of the true church, faithfully supporting the whole ministry of the church with our daily prayers, our faithful attendance at worship services, our active involvement in the life of the communion of the saints and our love for one another. No one can be truly involved in personal evangelism unless they are faithful and active members of the true church of Jesus Christ.

The church must also preach the gospel outside of her own walls. She is called to do this according to the Lord's great commission to all nations wherever the Lord gives an open door and sends forth His servants to preach. This calling begins in the community and environment in which the Lord has raised and established the local congregation. Our calling to do personal evangelism is connected especially with this aspect of the life and existence of the church.

By personal evangelism we mean the calling of each member of the church to give a personal testimony of the truth of the gospel in his daily life as a Christian to whomsoever the Lord places on the pathway of his life. Personal evangelism is not so much occasionally being involved in some organized program in the church or serving on the evangelism committee of the church. Personal evangelism is the calling of every member of the church to speak freely and zealously to his relatives, friends and neighbors, about the truth of the gospel he has learned in church. Personal evangelism must be carried out in the every day course of our life as Christians.

There are always two aspects to the witness of the Christian in the world. These two aspects are inseparably related. They are of course the confession of the Christian's mouth and the testimony of his daily life. There are often those who want to maintain the one without the other. There are those who say that we need not say anything because our daily walk shows that we are Christians and everyone will know from our walk that we belong to the Lord. Well this is in the first place quite an astounding statement to make. We had better be sure that our walk is distinctively Christian enough that the world can know without any doubt that we are Christians. But it must also be said that there is no such thing as a silent witness. The reason for the distinctive Christian way that we live must be given through the testimony of our mouth. This is what I Peter 3:15 says. We must also speak about what we believe about God and the faith and hope that we have in Christ Jesus alone. We must do this in a lively zealous sincere and personal way. Our hearts must overflow with this testimony out of love for God and His truth. On the other hand if our life is not consistent with the testimony of our mouth we will show ourselves to be hypocrites and we will only bring shame to the name of the Lord.

The greatest motive for doing personal evangelism is the glory of God. As Reformed Christians we confess that the glory of God is central to all things. It is absolutely primary above all things. God will glorify Himself in all things. He is not dependent on us in any way. He will glorify Himself centrally through saving the people He has chosen through His Son Jesus Christ. He has saved us for the glory of His own name. It is nevertheless also His will that we consciously and faithfully live for His glory. That is not a mere pious platitude. We show forth the glory of the Lord by walking in His way and speaking of His truth. If we are truly Reformed Christians we will earnestly desire that the name of God be glorified in and through us. Personal evangelism is a very important way in which this is done.

We must be engaged in personal evangelism out of zealous love for the truth of the gospel. The gospel itself is exceedingly glorious. We will never be faithful in personal evangelism unless we are thoroughly convinced of that. We have something to talk about that is far more glorious, far more significant, and far more wonderful than anything else in the whole world. We have something far more glorious to talk about than merely the day's weather, the score of our golf game, the latest good restaurant in town or the triumphs of our favorite sports team. Why are we often heard talking so much about these latter things and so little about the glorious gospel of God?

We must be engaged in personal evangelism out of love for our fellow man. Men are by nature hell-bound sinners. Many of the people we live and work with every day are bound for eternal destruction in hell. We may not have a callous attitude towards that awful fact. This is a dreadful thing beyond all imagination. There is a fearful aspect of personal evangelism in which we are called to warn concerning the judgment of God that will come upon ungodly and impenitent sinners. God will use the testimony of Christians in their daily life to warn sinners of the coming judgment. But we also have a more positive purpose in speaking of the gospel. We desire the salvation of God's people. We do not know for certain who they are. Therefore we must bear a testimony before all men. We must have an earnest personal desire for the salvation of our fellow man. Our desire is not a mere "gospel hucksterism" according to which we caulk up converts that we can boast in "having brought to the Lord." We must have a sincere and personal desire for the highest good and salvation of our fellow man, especially those whom we go to school with and work with and meet every day. This is Christian love in the highest sense of the Word.

We must be engaged in personal evangelism in the conviction that the Lord in His mercy and according to His sovereign purpose will use our witness for the glory of His own name and to bring His own unto Himself. There is great joy and honor and blessing in being so used of the Lord.

The Order of Salvation

by Allen Brummel

God has granted us the blessings of salvation in an orderly and experiential manner. The distinct order in which the blessings are applied to God's people is based on three important truths. First of all, this plan of salvation is based on the sovereignty of God. God is sovereign over all things, specifically the salvation of man. God exercises His perfect will and sovereignty in this area according to Ephesians 1:11: "in whom (Christ) we have obtained an inheritance, being predestinated according to the purpose of him who worketh all things after the counsel of his own will."

The second truth, upon which the order of salvation depends, is the truth of man's total depravity. Due to the total unworthiness of man to atone for his own sins, man is dead in sin, totally unable to do any type of good. The fact that man is saved, therefore, is totally of grace.

The third truth is that salvation is a wonderful gift which has been given to us by God through His Son. The scriptures teach that salvation is entirely of grace: "For by grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves, it is the gift of God."(Ephesians 2:8) The wonder of this gift is that God does not give it to us in an automatic nor mechanical manner, but has chosen to work it out experientially in our lives by the Holy Spirit. Throughout our lives as children of God we experience more and more the blessings of salvation as we grow in our Christian life. In order to better understand and experience the joy of our salvation, it is important that we know and understand the steps of our salvation. These steps are: regeneration, calling, faith, conversion, justification, sanctification, preservation, and glorification.

There are a few things which we must understand concerning the order in which we experience this gift. First, the experience of our salvation is a life-long process. Many of the steps of salvation are repeated throughout the life of the child of God, as again and again he experiences the joys of conversion, faith, and sanctification.

Secondly, although there are definite steps in this process, the steps do not occur in a purely temporal manner. The order of salvation is better described as experiential. The believer experiences a logical progression from one benefit to another so that the steps overlap and occur simultaneously at times.

Thirdly, the order in which the Spirit leads us to experience the joys of our salvation is a logical order, based on the teaching of Romans 8:29, 30:

> For whom he did foreknow, he also did predestinate to be conformed to the image of his Son, that he might be the firstborn among many brethren. Moreover whom he did predestinate, them he also called: and whom he called, them he also justified: and whom he justified, them he also glorified.

Election is the source of every good gift, including the gift of salvation. As a result of being elected, the child of God is born again, or regenerated. The order which I have given, of regeneration preceding calling, has often been challenged in the Reformed tradition. The calling has been understood to come before regeneration. Most attempts to switch these two steps can be traced to different emphases and definitions. As the steps of salvation are defined in the coming months we will be given an insight into this controversy.

More important than the order, however, are the steps themselves as they display the great love of God for His people. Every step in the plan of salvation has been merited by the blood of Christ, and has been made our own by means of the Spirit's saving work in our hearts. As we discuss and define the various steps, thank God for these wonderful gifts which we are privileged to experience even now already in this life!

*Allen is a third year student at the Prot. Ref. Seminary.

Convention Highlights

by Beth Ericks

My first Protestant Reformed Convention took place from August 2-6 at Dordt College in Sioux Center, Iowa. It was sponsored by the churches of Doon, Hull and Edgerton.

I have to admit I was scared at first, but everyone seemed to make each other welcome. the ice breaker for me was the Singspiration at Hull Church on Sunday, August 1. There was a count of about 700 people.

Registration was held on Monday morning at Hull Church. The week of activities and speeches had finally begun.

Our first speech was given by Rev. A. Spriensma. He was so anxious to give his speech that he ran all the way down the aisle. His speech was "Spiritual Youth in a Carnal World: In Entertainment." He said that we shouldn't use the world's entertainment, but our own that is right in God's eyes.

On Tuesday morning the convention picture was held. After that we had our first discussion group. We tried to answer the questions, "Why are we P. R. and not in some other denomination?"

The juniors and seniors then split for a cold day. The juniors went to Wild Water West, while the seniors went to Boji Bay.

Our second discussion group came on Wednesday morning. We talked about witnessing to others in different denominations.

An "Old Fashioned Picnic" was held next. Games including chasing chickens, catching greased pigs, apple bobbing, tug of war gave us people from out of state an idea of what people in Iowa do for fun.

Rev. Koole, the middle aged speaker, so a little slower, gave us a speech on "Spiritual Youth in a Carnal World: At Work."

Two debates were held on Thursday morning, one on protesting abortions and the other on dating outside our denomination.

The banquet was held Thursday night. After eating we watched 4 billion people do the hokey-pokey and slides of the week.

The oldest of the three speakers, Rev. Van Overloop, hobbled up the stairs with his cane to give the final speech. It was on "Spiritual Youth in a Carnal World: In Dating."

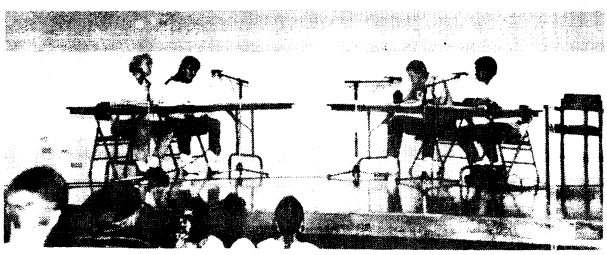
A lock-in was set up for late Thursday night and Friday morning. People could play basketball or volleyball or they could just sit around for as long as they wanted to.

For this being my first convention I was very impressed. The speeches I thought were on things I could relate to very easily. It was great to meet so many people from my own denomination and become good friends with them. Thanks for all the work everyone put into the convention.

*Beth is a member of Peace PRC and will be a sophomore at Illiana Christian High this fall.

Dail-A-Chap

Still smiling with energy during the first of the 10 trips to carry their luggage to their room



Convention Debates

Jeff and Brad help Rev. Spriensma decide to take a bath

Discussion Group

Board Delegate Meeting with Tom Bergman and Mike Feenstra

Watching Daily At My Gates

by Skip Hunter

October 1

Daniel 4:20-37 The sin of pride brings down more people, churches, and other institutions than any other. We quite often get off on the right foot, and then we fall Into Nebuchadnezzar's sin. We begin to think that this church or school or whatever is the work of our hands. We must stop and remember and bless Jehovah who made heaven and earth.Churches and schools are necessary but we must never erect them for our own pride.God humbled the great Nebuchadnezzar; He will humble us if we need it. Sing or read Psalter 304 especially stanzas 1-3 and 6.

October 2

Ephesians 3:14-21 Paul gives us the positive outlook on the characteristic of humility. In this chapter Paul recounts that by the grace of God he became a minister so that he could preach to the Ephesians. But he takes none of the glory for himself. In this chapter and in many others Paul is always careful to give the glory to the most high God. We, too, must make that our goal. As members of His church, we must remember that it is His church. The world today thinks little of someone who does not take all the glory he can receive. But we are not of the world, we are of Christ. Sing or read Psalter 306.

October 3

Ecclesiastes 3:1-14 Solomon saw that God had set up an orderly creation including time. God gave to us certain times to do certain things. Today is the Sabbath. God in Genesis 1 gave us the Sabbath as a day of rest from our earthly work.In the fourth commandment he give guidelines on how to glorify Him on the Sabbath. Are we using the Sabbath as a day to remember and keep holy? Are we giving God His due on His day? The world wants nothing to do with God's Sabbath. But we are not of the world, we are a chosen people elect according to the good pleasure of God. Let's put aside all things that belong to man and take up the things of God. Sing or read Psalter 349.

October 4

Galatians 6:1-10 Reread verse seven. Do you, young people and older people, think you can hide your works from God? Do we think that our justifications (excuses) fool our heavenly Father? We hide nothing from God. We must always realize that fact in our lives. We are called to glorify God alone and no one else. If we do that, we will have nothing to hide from our heavenly Father. Sing or read Psalter 302.

October 5

Esther 4 Wicked Haman and Ahasuerus had just given the order that Jews could be killed throughout all of the kingdom. When Esther hears the words, she is directed by Mordecai to go to the king and plead for deliverance. Esther agrees with her uncle and goes to the king. But Esther does not go with the confidence of God's sure promises. She goes with the attitude - "What have I got to lose?" We have seen that Esther and Mordecai have never used the ways of Jehovah before and they don't this time either. This may never be our way. Hard times are coming to the child of God. We must face them with the confidence that all things work for good to them that love God. Sing or read Psalter 106 especially stanzas 1, 2, 5, and 6.

October 6

Hebrews 4:9-16 Verse 16 provides a contrast to the attitude found in yesterday's passage. Here we find that the child of God because of Christ need not fear to ask his heavenly Father for help in time of need. Because of Christ we can come boldly to God's throne in prayer. Christ suffered all the same experiences we do including temptation to sin. He knows our frailties and cares, and when we go to the Father through Him He will be our advocate. If a hard situation confronts us, we need not fear. We can lay our burdens on Jesus our brother. We can do this in the confidence that our Father will hear and answer us. Sing or read Psalter 278.

October 7

Exodus 3:13-17 One of our most precious possessions is that of the covenant - that promise that God will be our God and we will be His people. As a pledge to that covenant, He has given us His name I AM. We can rest assured that if I AM speaks it will surely come to pass. Moses felt he needed strong proof to show that God sent Him. God gave the strongest proof there is - His name. For us, too, the name which signifies the covenant is the proof of our salvation. Let us give thanks unto God for this gift!

Sing or read Psalter 423 especially stanzas 6 and 7.

October 8

I Corinthians 10:19-26 The Christians in Corinth lived in a most wicked city. They were tempted on every side and in every place by the devil. Paul had to remind them that they could not do the things of Satan and the things of God. We, too, live in a most wicked place. Satan tempts us constantly. It is Friday night. Satan loves to see covenant young people go away on Friday night. By getting them into his playgrounds, he can tempt them to drink his cup. People of God stay away from the devil's playground. Walk the walk of faith tonight "for the earth is the Lord's and the fullness thereof." Sing or read Psalter 23 especially stanzas 1, 3, 5 and 6.

October 9

Ezekiel 5:5-13 When we read these words of doom which God pronounces upon His church that has gone astray, often we have two thoughts. We either are inclined to think that these words are for the old dispensation and have no meaning for us, or we feel there is no hope for us. Both of these thoughts are wrong. When we read about the Old Testament church, we must realize that we are one with them and every word written for them is written for us. When we feel a lack of hope, we must remember that Christ has delivered us from all of our sins. We have the hope of the last part of this book which is heaven. Sing or read Psalter 216 especially stanzas 1 and 3.

October 10

I John 2:5-11 Young people do you love your brothers and sisters in the Lord? I don't mean some of them. I mean all of them. Do you seek them out so that they know that you love them? Can they tell your love for them just by the way you see them in passing? If you don't love them, you hate them. If you hate them, you hate God! There is no other way to understand the words of our passage today. Part of the effect of God's covenant is that there is friendship not only between God and His people but also between every one of His people. Sing or read Psalter 113 especially stanzas 1-4.

October 11

Ezra 5:1-5 Israel had returned from captivity. The building of the temple was going slowly. After being scolded by Haggai and Zechariah, the leaders began the work again. Once again Satan tried to stop them by using several evil men. But, as we read in verse five, God's eye was on the elders and they persisted with their work. We must remember this even as we do the work of the kingdom. Whether it be mission work, building a church or school, or whatever God calls us to do, His eye is upon us. We have no need to falter in doing the work of the kingdom with the eye of God upon us. Sing or read Psalter 421 especially stanzas 2 and 3.

October 12

I Peter 2:13-24 Once in a while we need to be reminded about our duty toward those in authority over us. I speak of the earthly rulers under whom God has placed us. Sometimes we get caught up in the world's way of making fun of them, and we forget that they are the servants of God. They can and will make laws which are in disobedience to God's law. Yet this passage instructs us to submit and to honor the authority. We must obey God's law even though it may bring earthly punishment. The passage gives us Christ as an example. This is a powerful example because through His obedience to God comes our salvation. Sing or Read Psalter 392 especially stanzas 1, 4, and 6.

October 13

Genesis 22:1-14 Abraham's thoughts were how could he do such a thing to his beloved son. Then he was startled out of his thoughts by Isaac asking, "Where is the lamb?" Abraham answered with the beautiful answer of faith, "God will provide himself a lamb." Do we take this answer on our lips enough? As we seek for a mate, job, house, or whatever; do we have faith to say that God will provide for us? As young people you have many questions about the future. Leave the future in the hands of God and say with Abraham, "God will provide." Sing or read Psalter 396 especially stanzas 1-4.

October 14

I Thessalonians 4:1-12 In this chapter Paul gives the church many exhortations about a right Christian walk. The first section is in the negative as he tells how to please God by abstaining from various sins. Then in verses eleven and twelve he tells us what we must be doing. First he commends study which can only be the study of the word of God. Then he tells us to work with our hands. One of the fruits of such study and work is the care of the poor. God places the poor among us for our care. Are we caring for them diligently? Look around you, young people, is there someone in your church or school you can help? Sing or read Psalter 48 especially stanzas 1, 3 and 8.

October 15

Habakkuk 1 In this first chapter the prophet is depressed over the state of the church. He feels that God has forgotten them, and that the wicked can do what they want. But yet he speaks some words of hope as well. First of all he shows that God is all powerful. It is God who will bring the Chaldeans to afflict Israel. Then in verse twelve he speaks of the everlastingness of God. He knows that God will not cause the church to perish. We must not look at hopeless situations with despair. We must

trust in our Lord and He will deliver us even from the depths of our sin. Sing or read Psalter 22.

October 16 — **I Timothy 4:12-16** Young people, you have a calling to witness unto others the things of God. Paul wrote unto this young minister not to be afraid because he was young. You too must live pure lives with that truth ringing in your ears. Each of you has a specific gift of the spirit. Use that gift vigorously and to God's honor and glory. Don't be afraid to speak out about the faith that you have. There is a great reward in doing this. We see from verse 16 that salvation is involved - both yours and those around you. Sing or read Psalter 132 especially stanzas 1, 2, 4, and 5.

October 17 — **Haggai 2:14-19** Israel had failed in building the temple. They had failed because they thought their own comfort and pleasure was more important. Evidently there had been a famine and drought in the land. Israel failed to see God's hand of judgment in the famine. This past summer has been one of floods, storms, and drought. Have we recognized the hand of God? Did we see not only signs of the times, but also God's hand of judgment on His people for not carrying out the work of the kingdom? Sing or read Psalter 144.

October 18 — **II Corinthians 4:13-18** Are you weary of the troubles of the world? Has God brought upon you some great calamity? Do you feel that you are without hope? Read verse seventeen again. These afflictions are light! Light, you say? How can they be light when I don't know where to turn. They are light precisely because you do have somewhere to turn. We have Christ, and through Him our heavenly Father. Don't concentrate so much on things of this life. Look above and see the glory that awaits us. Our afflictions are light compared with the weight of glory that is ours in heaven. Sing or read Psalter 31 especially stanzas 1, 4, and 7.

October 19 — **Hosea 14** Hosea was called to preach during wicked times in Israel and Judah. Reading through this short book will show you the wickedness of the day. But God sent him to bring the Word to the elect. He preached to them repentance and the necessity of repentance. In this last chapter he shows the blessings of repentance. The elect sinner who repents will confess that the ways of the Lord are right and must be followed. In contrast the reprobate will fall in those ways. In the way of repentance, we will taste the goodness of Jehovah. Sing or read Psalter 144.

October 20 — **II John** The first part of this short epistle admonishes us to walk in love. The second part warns us that if we do not walk in love we will be in danger of falling into false doctrines. Many times we hear people speak of love, but then say that true doctrine is not important. This short book contradicts that evil position. As children of God we must know the doctrines that He has set forth in His word. Then we must shun those who do not follow such doctrines. And then we can be assured of the Father's love and be able to walk in love ourselves. Sing or read Psalter 328.

October 21 — **I Chronicles 14:8-17** Do you wish that God would tell you what steps to take next in your life? Do you think David had it easy because God told him which way to turn, and then David's fame grew? We, however, have more than David. First of all we have Christ; David only ever had pictures. Secondly, we have the whole Word of God. True, the Bible will not tell you exactly what to do, but by knowing the Scriptures you can seek out God's will for you. After searching the Bible and praying Christ will send His Spirit and help you with your cares of this life. Search the Scriptures and you will be rewarded. Sing or read Psalter 339.

October 22 — **II Peter 3:13-18** The first part of this chapter warns us to be watching for the return of Christ. In the second part it gives some guidelines on how to watch. In verse sixteen Peter warns against those that take Scripture and interpret for their own end. Haven't we seen much of that in the world today? In the next two verses Peter tells us to watch out and not fall into this error, but rather grow in grace. Growth in grace can only come about when the Bible is used correctly, for that is all the Holy Spirit will bless with grace. Study the Scriptures, young people, and do not be deceived by those who twist it. Sing or read Psalter 338.

October 23 — **I Kings 3:5-14** God came to Solomon in a dream and give him a choice of anything he wanted. What would you pick? Would it be some material item? Would it be a good education? Would you ask for a wife or husband? Solomon's choice was wisdom. The type of wisdom was that which he speaks of throughout the book of Proverbs. The wisdom he wanted had to do with the fear of Jehovah. God was pleased with Solomon's choice. He blessed him with many earthly blessings. What about us? Do we care enough about the fear of Jehovah to seek it as eagerly as we do some material item? Sing or read Psalter 428 especially stanzas 2 and 3.

October 24

II Thessalonians 3:6-18 What do you do with your spare time? What do you do when you are not legitimately occupied with school, work, or other things of the kingdom. This passage portrays two possible behaviors. First of all there is a disorderly walk which some follow. Then there is the much desired being busy in well doing. Paul exhorts us to not be weary in well doing. We can always find something to do which can be characterized under this term. This can be recreation as well. There is recreation which is blessed by God. So, people of God, use your time well and be not weary in well doing. Sing or read Psalter 301.

October 25

II Kings 6:8-17 Do you feel, young people, that around you are nothing but evil people trying to make you do wrong? Do you feel that if you try to profess your faith among these wicked, that you will be persecuted? The prophet Elisha must have felt that quite often. First of all he had to work in Israel that had gone astray. Then he had to face the wicked like the king of Syria. Elisha's faith was such that he could say, "They that be with us are more than they that be with them." Elisha realized that the hosts of God were on his side. By faith we, too, can have the same confidence, and we can go out into the world and profess our faith. Pray for the confidence of faith. Sing or read Psalter 306.

October 26

II Timothy 2:1-14 Paul gives the young preacher Timothy good advice about how to go about his work. That advice is applicable to us today as well if we are to live lives acceptable to God. In verse four Paul tells Timothy not to become entangled with the affairs of this life. We can apply this to our lives as well. The world has taken days and made holidays out of them. They have done that to church holy days and others. One of the most blasphemous is coming up. Are you going to partake in evil Halloween? We must flee such days. It is not just a night of innocent fun. Stand fast, people of God, and please God who has chosen you to fight. Sing or read Psalter 217.

October 27

II Chronicles 19:4-11 When Jehoshaphat became king in Judah, he brought about a revival in the land. One of the acts he did was to establish rulers of various types throughout the land. As he established them he reminded them that God had placed them in authority and that they had to answer to God. We need to look at this passage in two ways. First we need to see that because God establishes authority we are bound to obey it. Secondly when we are put in a place of authority we must act according to the commandments of God. We all fall into one or both of these categories; let us ask God for help in carrying out our station in life. Sing or read Psalter 223.

October 28

James 3:1-12 The book of James is full of practical instruction. The Holy Spirit through James has given us much on how to direct our lives. In this passage we find instruction needed by all. God has given to all of us the gift of language. Satan loves to take this gift and twist it to his benefit. We must learn the admonitions found here and apply them to our lives. Our tongues can do great things; our tongues can cause the most dastardly evils. We must pray that our tongues only speak that which is in harmony with God's will. Sing or read Psalter 105.

October 29

Isaiah 51:9-16 God is great. It is He that hath created the world. He has caused all manner of miracles to come to pass for His people. What is our response? We find it in verse eleven. God's people will approach Him with singing. We will come unto Him singing the songs He has given us. Our great God deserves nothing else. Let us enter into His courts with praise. Sing or read Psalter 39.

October 30

John 1:1-14 Jesus has been from the beginning. He came into Israel and Israel rejected Him. This is the testimony of John 1. Do you believe this, people of God? Do you believe that Jesus was at creation? Do you believe that He is the Light of the world? If you do, then you must receive Him. How is this possible? Only by faith. Only by that faith which is the bond that unites us to Christ. What a wonder that we have been chosen out of all the people of the world! Let us bow before the Word made flesh and behold His glory. Sing or read Psalter 4 especially stanzas 3 and 5.

October 31

Galatians 3:1-1 After the first few hundred years of the new dispensation an important truth was lost to the church as a whole. It was not until 1521 that the Holy Spirit led Martin Luther to rediscover the truth, "The just shall live by faith." This led to the great Reformation which we celebrate today. Is that our life? Do we live by faith? Is the faith of our fathers evident in our lives? Take this day and every day to ponder this truth. But don't stop there! Live in that faith today and every day. Sing or read Psalter 364.

An Outside Impression

by Rodney Kleyn

The topic of the 1993 Protestant Reformed Young Peoples Convention was 'Spiritual Youth in a Carnal World'. Rev. A. Spriensma spoke on Spiritual Youth in Entertainment. He brought across to us that our life as young Christians is not governed by a bunch of rules, but that we are in entertainment, in work and in all areas of life to do all things to the Glory of God. The second speech by Rev. K. Koole was on Spiritual Youth in the Workplace. This is where we are to show that we must live the antithesis. This is where people must see that we are different from the world around us. The third and final speech by Rev. R. Van Overloop was on Spiritual Youth in Sex and in Dating. He spoke very powerfully on how we as young Christians should conduct ourselves in these areas and also applied it well to things that had been and were happening at the convention that week.

The speeches were what made the convention, for me, something which I will always remember. God has given you young people in the PRC something which not many in this world have. He has given you the choice of the Laborers in His Vineyard. He has given you an abundant treasure of sound doctrinal preaching and a place in a Church which bears the marks of the truth of God's Word. Always remember this and don't ever take it for granted.

I must also commend the steering committee for all the hard work that they put into organizing this convention. Also the chaperons and all the people from the Hull and Doon congregations that helped in organizing all the activities for the week, it was great.

The convention is over, the work has been done by the Ministers in bringing God's word to us in the speeches. We now must not think that we can go away from this convention week and forget about these speeches and just remember all the fun we had and all the new friends we made. No, it is our duty now as Spiritual Youth to apply this word of God which we have heard to our own lives. We, as Spiritual youth, are to live the antithesis, not only at home but at work, with our friends, and also in the Church.

We, in our witness, are to stand apart in everything and in all areas of life. Standing apart is being separate and not doing everything everyone else is doing because it's cool or because it's the normal thing to do. The first thing that people see of us is the way we dress. We should bear a witness then to the world in the way we dress. I think that amongst Protestant Reformed Young People there is room for a lot of improvement in this area. Should young Christians go around wearing T-shirts bearing logos of their favorite sports teams? Should young Christian girls wear skimpy two-piece swim suits that barely cover anything, that almost may as well not be worn. People see things like this and immediately associate you with the world and not as being separate from it. I am sure that if Christ were living today we would not find him approving of or dressing as a lot of our Christian youth do.

The way in which we dress also affects our life in a lot of different areas. It attracts to us friends and relationships which really we should not have. A young girl dressing in a way that advertises her body attracts to herself a young man who is not putting God first in his life but is after a girl that will look the part next to him. I am sure that many relationships were started at this convention not around the discussion of the convention topic but around the fun we were having and the attractiveness of that other person and the competition amongst peers. This is not the Love of God or of Christ and His Church but is a sick love of the world.

Our life also bears witness to others in the language we use and the people we mix with. It was disappointing for me at the Convention to see a big group of young people standing at the far end of the college campus, behind the end dormitories, smoking continuously and indulging in conversation and using words which Rev. Koole pointed out to us in his speech should never be heard amongst us. Do you do these things because you want to or is it just to be cool and to fit in with the rest of the crowd? If it is, then stop it. Live separately and mix with the right kind of people. There is that group of young people in your Church

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also that cares, who have concerns for the future of the church - mix with them.

Now as I close let us take a look at the Scriptures. Proverbs 31:30. "Favour is deceitful, and beauty is vain: but a woman that feareth Jehovah, she shall be praised." Remember the Lord has given us an attractiveness to one another, and that is good, but without the fear of Jehovah all this is deceitful and vain. Christ also speaks of living a separate life and gives us His blessing for doing so. Luke 6:22. "Blessed are ye when men shall hate you, and when they shall separate you from their company, and shall reproach you, and cast out your name as evil, for the Son of man's sake." Also read verses 20-26 in II Corinthians 6 the Apostle Paul points out our duty to live separately. Read this, particularly verses 17 and 18 and remember always to read the Word of God.

CHRISTIAN LIVING

Learned Passivity

by Thadd Lubbers

"The way to love anything (anyone tml) is to realize that it might be lost." Tremendous Trifles, Gilbert Chesteron, p.56 1917.

Teachers despise it, parents fear it, and ministers exhort about it; yet, its destroying effect relentlessly pounds at the Church's foundations and debilitates the fibre of the Church, as the Church shuts her eyes and closes her ears. It is summed up in the expressions: "I don't care"; "No time"; "Don't worry about it"; "it doesn't affect me"; and, "So what." It is apathy, a malicious destroyer in the life of a Christian. For those who fear this malady, this article is a scary indictment of our actions or better lack of action. For those who do not care, do not waste your time. Find something else to read.

In a recent sermon I heard a minister passionately plead with the young people of the congregation to become involved in the spiritual life of the Church. The longer he preached the clearer it became that this appeal originated from his deep, heart-felt conviction that the young people were not spiritually as strong as they should be, that they were not as spiritually strong as the "altere Generation" the older generation, and that they were spiritually immature and spiritually apathetic.

I consider myself a member of this younger generation and it pains my soul that there is significant truth in this minister's and other ministers' admonitions. Possibly the young people of the Church are not as interested in the spiritual life of the Church as they once were. Perhaps even they are not as spiritually strong as this older generation, although this assertion would be difficult to prove if one checked the waning attendance in this "older generation's" Bible discussion societies, Church involvement, and willingness to serve in positions in the church or Christian school. But to categorize the young people's spiritual life as apathetic is an insult. I care, I always have cared, and I always will care. The minister precipitously challenged and cast the gauntlet, and I have agreed to respond. And I have no doubt that many of the young people are spiritual enough that they care and resent such implications.

The lack of interest in the activities of the Church is a problem that afflicts every age group within the Church. It is not a problem that belongs solely to the young people. When ministers, elders, parents, and teachers argue that the problem of spiritual apathy belongs only to the young people or that spiritual apathy is more common in the younger generation, they commit a serious error. For those familiar with formal logic, the errors committed are the fallacies of converse accident and false cause. The first fallacy flies in the face of proper thinking. Just because a person observes a cardinal that has lost his tail feather, does not make it possible to conclude that all cardinals or most cardinals have no tail feathers. It is impossible and unjustified to conclude that every cardinal has no tail feather. This would be a cardinal mistake. Thus, to conclude that spiritual apathy is present only in the youth of the church or to conclude that all the youth is spiritually apathetic is presumptuous at best and ignorant at worst. This spiritual apathy afflicts every age group within the Church today. No one group

should ever be characterized as spiritually apathetic. A statement about the heart or soul of an individual or group of individuals is an impossible judgment for a mere mortal to make. Let's reserve that judgment for the great Judge himself.

However, the charge that the visible outward acts of the young people seem to indicate a spiritual apathy does have merit. But the minister commits, a second fallacy, the fallacy of converse accident when he simply blames this lack of spiritual interest on the sinfulness of the youth and the influence of the world. Attendance in the societies and Bible discussions is waning. The amount of time spent in recreational endeavors is increasing. Young people do not always support the Christian schools and Church as well as they should or could. Young people are not as willing to volunteer their time to help and visit the needy, the sick, and the poor. All these appear to be true. As a young person within the visible Church I ask myself, why are the young people and why am I not as involved in the Church as I could be?

There are plenty of reasons that one could give for the young person's lack of interest. We live in an extremely fast paced society. We always seem to be on the move. If the income from a job is not sufficient, we take a second and maybe a third job. Time spent with family and as a family continues to decrease. Young people not only attend school but also work part-time jobs. Others are involved in sports, band, and other activities. Our schedules are packed. When was the last time, parents, that all your children were in attendance for a family meal? How many of us sit down as a family for breakfast? We are usually far too busy to find time to spend together as a family in activities whether it be praying or eating together. Although these contribute to the decline of spiritual involvement in the Church, these are not the chief causes of the young person's lack of zeal in the activities of the Church. Certainly, a portion of the spiritual demise must rest on the shoulders of the young people.

The problem is not spiritual apathy, but learned passivity. Let me explain what I mean. It is not that the young person is spiritually apathetic, but that he or she has learned quite well the lessons taught by the Church. The Church explicitly and implicitly has taught the young person to take a passive role rather than an active, participative role in the life of the Church. When ministers bang the pulpit and point their finger at the congregation, they would do well to remember that as a representative of the Church the majority of the fingers are pointing at the Church herself.

Examine the instruction of the young person in the Church and what does one find? First of all, one finds a young person who regularly attends catechetical instruction. There is no doubt that this catechetical instruction is a necessary and vital activity in the young Christian's life. Make no mistake about the importance of catechetical instruction; it has a place, especially for those of a younger age. But when these young people reach an age of spiritual maturity, how does the structured question and answer format of this instruction make a young Christian an active participant in the process of serving the Lord? It doesn't. What does result is a memorization and regurgitation of the correct answer to the questions. How many of us if asked to answer Question 60 of the Heidelberg Catechism could from memory recite the correct response? Few, if any. How many of the young people a week, two weeks, or a month later after supposedly learning this question and answer, could answer it? The catechetical instruction of the Church follows the passive model of minister lectures and young person listens. It is not the correct response to a doctrinal question that is of primary importance, but the correct act of presenting, confessing Christ, fighting the battle against the Devil, and eventually living the example of Christ that is of primary importance. Life does not consist of having or knowing all the right answers; it does, however, consist of making the right choices, and putting raw knowledge into real practice.

Secondly, the instruction of the Church concentrates primarily upon head knowledge. What other reason could there be for catechism? It is there to pound the doctrines of the Church upon the young Christian. Societies often follow the prescribed path of the leader of minister. Topics are not discussed and participation of the young people is limited. The assumption is that the young person does not know enough yet about the text or passage to properly respond. By this time the lessons of catechism are so firmly impressed upon this young Christian that he or she would not dare object or disagree with the leader or pastor on any matter. The passive role of the young adult is once again reinforced and strengthened.

Thirdly, the youth of the Church is often ignored. When young adults study at a college or university, how often does the Church stay in correspondence with these members? When financial drives for the Christian schools, needy families, and causes of the poor occur, are the young people solicited? With the busy schedules of so many people within the Church, do we ask the young people to help by giving of their time and energy? Or are the young people second class citizens within the Church?

Finally, the first real and active role or part for a young person occurs when a male Christian is asked to serve as an elder or deacon or when a young Christian is asked to lead a society or discussion group. By then the young adult has learned the perfect, passive role. The Roman Catholic Church understands the importance of the first seven years of a person's life. After thirty or so years of a passive role in our Church the young adult is asked to serve in the Church. Is it therefore any wonder that so many are not willing to serve? After thirty years of learned passivity, why

should one suddenly instantaneous, feel a compelling conviction to actively participate in the life of the Church? If we do not expect an active role of the young person for the first thirty years of his or her life, then what makes us think that the young person after these thirty years have transpired will be truly interested in serving in the important affairs of the Church. We are fooling ourselves.

The Church must begin to realize that the young people are not spiritually apathetic; rather, they have learned what they have been taught. They have been taught passivity. Does the Church want young people who are actively involved in the Church? If the Church wants to prepare the young person for an active role, then it must be willing to throw aside some of its long held practices and initiate practices that foster an active role for the young person in the Church. Are the elders and ministers of our churches willing to accept this responsibility?

Numerous possibilities exist in which the Church could teach an active role. It must continue to emphasize the instruction of the doctrines of the Bible and begin to teach the young person the practical application of this doctrine in his or her life. Do we teach the young person Christ's command in Matthew 25 to feed the hungry, to give drink to the thirsty, to invite the stranger to visit, to comfort the sick and imprisoned, and to clothe the naked? Why doesn't the Lord ask for a recitation of the catechism lesson in this part of his ministry? Is it because the application of his doctrine is more important than raw head knowledge?

Just as important for the church as the teaching of Christ's lesson in Matthew 25 is the providing of opportunities where the young adult can put his knowledge of the Truth into a real meaningful act of service in the kingdom of Christ. Young people must begin to realize that service in the kingdom begins now, not years down the road. They must see that the giving of their money is not any more important than the giving of their time and service. They must see that they can have an active role in the Church. They must be taught that they are not second class members in the church.

Do we want leaders in our churches? Then our churches must be willing to teach the young people how to lead. Maybe this means that the older young people should be given the opportunity to instruct younger Christians in the church. Do we want more men to enter the ministry? Then maybe the elders should begin to groom young men early on so that when the young men choose a profession or vocation, a role in the church is not eliminated. Do we want church members who are active in the church? Then maybe the young people should be given more responsibility than the requirement to faithfully answer their catechism question. Maybe these young people should visit those in prisons, should help the needy, bring food to the hungry and water to the thirsty. These young people should be taught to witness to their neighbors and friends, not later but now. They must be given the opportunity to pray in the presence of their peers so that later in life they are not shamed to lead large or small groups in prayer, that when they are married they can pray with their spouses, that when the church cries in need they answer in force. Maybe the young people should assist the deacons, take a paint brush and help paint a house for the poor, take the time to be positive influence in a broken family. Do we want our young people prepared to defend the truth of the Bible? Then maybe the elders should encourage Bible discussions with young people from other denominations. Or is the church afraid that the young people are not prepared for such an activity? Imagine how quickly a young person would realize that doctrine and walk of life are partners and not aliens. What an opportunity for the young person to search the Scriptures for the answers! What an opportunity for the young person to ask the questions that otherwise never would be asked!

No, it is not apathy that afflicts the members of our churches; it is a passivity in our spiritual lives that we learned in our youth. Do our churches desire active members in the church? Then the members must be taught to be active at an early age. The Roman Catholics claim that they need only seven years to teach a child. We should be able to the job even better in double that amount of time. Do you care about the young people in our churches? Young people show that you care; demand an active rather than a passive role. If our ministers and elders observe the symptoms of apathy that are so prevalent in our churches, then they must be willing to implement the changes. The rest of the church must encourage the youth to become active participants in the kingdom of Christ because therein lies the future of our denomination.

In Romans 8:13, Paul tells us to put to death the misdeed of the body. We do this my the choices we make - not only to say no to temptations, but also to say yes to the positive steps we must take to pursue holiness. We must exercise ourselves in the disciplines of choosing to feed upon the Scriptures so that our convictions will conform more and more to God's will for us, of choosing to pray constantly for his enabling grace to say no to temptation, of choosing to take all practical steps to avoid known areas of temptation and flee from those that surprise us.
- The Practice of Godliness - by Jerry Bridges, Navpress, 1983, p. 127

The Pulpit in the Past and Now II

by Rev. C. Hanko

A short time ago we compared the content of the preaching from our pulpits in the past and now. There are still a few details that should be mentioned.

As I ask around among our older folk about the difference in the preaching then and now the common remark is made, that the preaching is far more positive now than in the past. For some time after 1924 the preaching was negative in the sense that the controversy was still fresh in the minds of the preacher and the pew. Much time was devoted to exposing the error of common grace and the well-meant offer of salvation. This apologetic preaching was likely also in evidence after 1953. That can readily be overdone, since the church must be built up in the most holy faith in every aspects of our lives.

It must be admitted that not much consideration was given to the young people and children of the congregation. They were usually expected to pick up the crumbs that fell from the table. And they often did. Even when they were very young they were encouraged, not only to sit still, but also to listen. It is really quite surprising what young children do pick up from a sermon. Maybe you adults can still remember certain things that struck your attention in your early days. Yet I do consider it a good practice to keep in mind the younger element of the congregation in the preaching, and also for parents to help their children to listen by asking them about the sermon. Soon they take our places in the congregation.

In those day the preaching from our pulpits was definitely theocentric. When the text centered about love the emphasis fell upon the fact that "God is love", and there is no love apart from God. He is the Fountain of love, and our love must end in Him. When the text spoke of grace the emphasis again was on the fact that God is the God of all grace. In fact, the first denominational radio message over WFUR struck the key-note: "God is". And the second followed with: "God is God".

We do well to maintain this emphasis. The chief aim in our preaching must be to glorify God's holy Name, for of Him, and through Him, and unto Him are all things forever and ever. Let us never become anthropocentric (man-centered).

It was a common practice in those years to preach a series of sermons not only on the shorter, but also on the longer Books of the Bible. I can recall hearing sermons from the historical sections of the pentateuch, from Judges, Isaiah, Malachi, Romans, Galatians, Ephesians, Philippians, James, I and II Peter, Jude and Revelation.

Members of the congregation enjoyed those series. They knew exactly what to expect on Sunday and many read that portion of Scripture at their devotions. They became thoroughly acquainted with that Book or Epistle, which continued to live in their souls. One woman remarked that every Sunday afternoon she read the entire epistle of Ephesians in anticipation of the evening sermon. She said she had virtually learned it by heart. It seems to me that this had a distinct advantage. For the minister it meant that he did not have to search for a text every week.

In times past ministers seemed to prefer short texts rather than large sections of a chapter. Today the tendency of some seems to be more toward larger passages of Scripture. Something can be said in favor of both. A shorter passage allows for a more thorough and detailed exegesis. A longer passage, if properly presented, gives a clear insight into a larger portion of Scripture. That is especially true if the central thought of the text is clearly presented. When I was doing mission work in Ripon, California we had only an afternoon service on Sunday. In the morning I attended one of the local churches. That minister always took a large part of a chapter for his text, and discussed each verse separately. The central thought was never brought home. For example, when he preached on John 7:1-10, Jesus' brethren challenging Him to declare openly His mission, the minister never once referred to Psalm 69:8, "I am become a stranger unto my brethren, and an alien to my mother's children. "In such instances one does not see the forest for the trees and goes home with the question: "What do I take along with me for the week?"

One other remark: is there possibly even in our day a lack of consideration in our prayers and sermons for the sinner who is wrestling with his sins; the weak, the weary one who has not yet found rest for his

soul?

In passing, something also should be said about counseling. Personally, I have a feeling that in our day counseling is overdone. That is, too much emphasis is laid on personal counseling and not enough on the power of the Word that is preached. Also in counseling the minister is called to: "Preach the word". (II Tim.4:2). He must not lend an ear to all kinds of modern theories of psychologists.

As young people in the congregation you do well to remember that our Sabbath can be desecrated already before it begins by not preparing ourselves properly, so that we are not fit to devote ourselves wholeheartedly to the Lord. Worship takes effort, concentration, and above all consecration. Our God is worthy of that! Never fail to pray the Lord of the Sabbath for His indispensable blessing!

In conclusion, we live in perilous times. What happened recently in Waco can also happen to us in the future. Now more than ever we must remember the key-note that is struck every Sunday at the beginning of our worship service. The congregation arises to sing:

"Praise God from whom all blessings flow,
Praise Him all creatures here below,
Praise Him above, ye heav'nly host,
Praise Father, Son and Holy Ghost.

Then in awesome silence we bow our heads to receive the benediction of Christ, who speaks to us through the minister. Ministers are ambassadors of Jesus Christ. We come to hear the voice of Jesus when we worship on the Sabbath.

Northern Ireland

by Jennifer Hanko

Northern Ireland is known as the "Emerald Isle." Because of the beauty and lush greenness of the countryside, this seems an appropriate nickname. The members of the Covenant Reformed Fellowship have welcomed us very warmly to this beautiful country. Their friendship has made the adjustments to a foreign country easier.

Although there are quite a few young people who attend the Fellowship, we do not, as yet, have a society. There are, however, plans to start one this fall. In the meantime, the young people, as well as the adults, attend the Wednesday Night Bible Study, and we visit back and forth as families.

On Thursday evenings, Andrew and Jonathon Reid (19) and their brother Stephen, who is sixteen, come to the manse for catechism classes. Between classes, we have tea and a chance to talk. Andrew and Jonathon are both busy with full time jobs; Jonathon is working as an electrician, and Andrew is taking classes in heat engineering. Stephen has just finished the equivalent of a high school education.

Cathy McCrory is a twenty-one year old college student attending Queen's University in Belfast. Because of her outgoing personality, we have a lot of fun with her.

Linda Callendar is a young woman who has a special talent with children; the children of the Fellowship are all drawn to her. She works as a nurse in a local clinic.

Jonathon Foster is twenty-one, and his brother Luke is sixteen. Jonathon is interested in painting and decorating and will be taking classes this fall. Luke has converted the garage of his townhouse into a gym where he teaches the martial arts to about eight students; between this and his schoolwork he keeps very busy.

Mark Fenton (16) has been attending the Fellowship regularly with his parents. He has just finished his basic schooling and plans to take classes in mechanical engineering.

Now that you know a little about the young people here, would it not be great to meet them? We have considered the idea of having a retreat here. There are a lot of things that we can do, and, in spite of what you may have heard, the sun does shine. Would you be interested?

A Holy Church?

by Rev. Spriensma

The Holy Spirit through the Apostle Peter calls the church "a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, an holy nation, a peculiar people, that ye should shew forth the praises of him who hath called you out of darkness into his marvelous light" (I Pet. 2:9).

We as Christians confess in the Apostles creed, "I believe a holy catholic church..." and in the Belgic Confession art. 27, "(its members) are washed by (Christ's) blood and are sanctified and sealed by the Holy Spirit".

What does it mean that the church is holy? Is the church holy now, or only some day when Christ comes back again? When I look at the church I see a lot of sinners. Who needs the church?

O young person, what is your attitude towards the church? Do you love the church? Do you need the church? Is the church holy?

THE MEANING OF HOLINESS

"I believe a holy catholic church." What do we mean that the church is holy? In what sense is it holy? The Spirit says that the church is a "holy nation."

The church is holy first of all in the sense that as such she is the creation of the Holy God. Jesus Christ gathers, builds, defends, and preserves His church. God is taking out his people from the world, separating them for His glory and His service.

In the O. T., the tabernacle and the temple, together with all its furniture and dishes were dedicated to the service of the Lord and were therefore holy. The priests, taken out from ordinary labor in the fields and other occupations, were to labor only in the temple service and therefore were holy unto the Lord. This holiness lies not in the things themselves whether it be the furniture, animals, or the priests. These things were holy in virtue of God separating it from the world and assigning it to His service. That is the great honor that God has given to His church. Do you know yourself as bestowed with that honor: taken out of the world, separated for God's service?

*Rev. Spriensma is the pastor of Grandville Prot. Ref. Church.

But the holiness of the church also consists of Christ's work within us. We are regenerated by the Holy Spirit. We have received hearts of flesh instead of hearts of stone. We are no longer servants of sin (Rom. 6:17) but saints (I Cor. 1:2; II Cor. 1:1). We are washed clean in the blood of Jesus Christ and are made new creatures (II Cor. 5:17). We were quickened from death to life (Eph. 2:1, 5). There we are admonished in Eph. 4: 24 to put on the new man which after God is created in righteousness and true holiness. Thus those who are true and living members of the church, born again, love God and walk in his ways. They "delight in the law of God after the inner man"(Rom. 7:22), Young person, are you a true and living member of the church? Are you born again? Do you love God? Do you strive to walk in his ways?

HOLINESS AND SIN

"I believe a holy catholic church. Obviously the church is not perfect. Its individual members are imperfect. As the Catechism describes it, "We have only a small beginning of obedience". The very best member is a poor Christian. Therefore the very best church has many spots and wrinkles.

The visible church has hypocrites and sinners in it. Just as all the priests who served in the O.T. tabernacle and temple were not true and living members of the church. They were holy in the sense that they held the office of priest, but many of them were exceedingly wicked. A striking example is Hophni and Phinehas, the sons of Eli, whose behavior God was so thoroughly displeased that he destroyed them. Or think of the wicked high priest Caiaphas who pronounced Jesus worthy of death because he claimed to be the Son of God.

So there are many tares in the visible church on earth. They will be separated out only when Jesus returns and burns them with fire and gathers the wheat. But true and living members of the church have also their spots and wrinkles. None of them are without sin. Daily they must fight their old sinful natures. But notice what we confess. "I believe a holy catholic church". We do not say, "I see a holy church". Do you remember Elijah when he complained to the Lord that only he was left. The Lord told him, "Yet I have left me seven thousand in Israel, all the knees which have not bowed unto Baal and every mouth

which hath not kissed him."

Although Elijah could not see them, he could believe because God said it. So also as regards a holy church. We cannot always see it, but we believe because God tells us in His Word. What a glorious fact to know. Not merely a few outstanding members of the church are saints, as Rome would have us think: all true members of the church with all of their blemishes are saints.

HOLINESS AND DISCIPLINE

The church's holiness is not only a glorious fact but also a most solemn duty. "Be ye holy for I am holy" says the Lord (Lev. 11:44; I Pet. 1:16). God has chosen us in Christ before the foundation of the world "that we should be holy and without blame before him in love" (Eph. 1:4). Christ died to reconcile us "to present us holy and unblamable and unreproveable in his sight. Young person, you are called to be holy! Yours can not be the motto, as the world, "I'll do as I please". No, we are called to reflect Christ's holiness as a shining light in the world. That is the calling not only once one makes profession of his or her faith, but of all true and living members of the church, baptized or professing.

How can we do this? First of all by fighting. We must fight the world, the devil, and our old sinful nature. We must fight worldliness. Worldliness is the opposite of holiness. That does not mean fleeing the world, but walking antithetically in the world. In our thoughts, in our words, in our actions, in our work, in our recreation, and in our dating, in all that we do, seeking to be pleasing to God and be in obedience to his commandments. And we must progress in this holiness. We do that by delving even more deeply into the truth of God's Holy Word. Jesus prayed, "Sanctify them through thy truth . . . thy Word is truth" (John 17:17), Do you pray for the holiness of Christ's church, beginning with yourself?

Spiritual Work-out: ERCS Family Camp 1993

by Fong Yoke Sim

"But refuse profane and old wives' fables, and exercise thyself rather unto godliness. For bodily exercise profiteth little: but godliness is profitable unto all things, having promise of the life that now is, and of that which is to come." I Timothy 4:7,8

With this exhortation in mind, the committee for the ERCS Family Camp 1993 began their preparations around the theme of "Exercise unto Godliness." Planning and prayer were spread over nine months and the four-day camp became a closer and closer reality. The advance publicity drive drew the parallels between physical health and spiritual well-being, exhorting the congregations to come to the camp for a time of spiritual restoration and exercise.

Over four Lord's Days in May, the camp officials comprising of Jason Goh, Daniel Kwek, Mrs. Cheah Lee Choo, and Angelia Teng, were on hand after worship service to register campers. In all, over 80 campers and visitors signed up. Notable among them were mothers with young children who had to manage without their husbands' help during the camp.

Yet, it is not out of order here to mention the problems that confronted the camp and its officials. This will serve to show that, truly, "the Lord had done great things for us, whereof we are glad."

First, we could not use the TV or Reading Room in the Nanyang Technological University halls, the venue of the camp, for the night meetings. Consequently, a lecture hall had to be rented and that added to cost and inconvenience. But God provided us both the wisdom and the means to transport the campers, especially our little ones, to the lecture hall. The brethren with cars were more than willing to put their vehicles at the disposal of the camp's needs.

Secondly, the camp committee were handicapped by the absence of two members. They were unable to obtain leave from their work. But praise the Lord that camp "veteran" - Deacon Yuen Kam Loon and brother Tan Bak Wei volunteered their help in the running of the camp.

Another big consideration was the relatively high number of 50 babies and young children to the number of adults. To ensure that everybody could attend the message sessions, both sisters and brothers took turns to baby-sit. We thank God for the love that prevailed among the campers.

Lastly, weather forecasts had predicted rain during the duration of the camp from 8th to 11th June.

That sounded dismal but the Lord answered our prayers and the rain held off. Imagine our joy on the day of the picnic, when the sun broke through the overcast skies!

Finally, it was the long-awaited moment. The camp master, Deacon Cheah Fook Meng, gave the opening address at 3 pm, stressing that camp is a time to get close to God and a time of fellowship. For the godly man is a rare specimen in our time. We do not take time to cultivate godliness any more. Therefore, in this camp, we ought to exercise to cope with our spiritual life and to work out our salvation.

Over the next three days of the camp, spiritual health specialist 'Dr.' Kortering addressed the theme of "Exercise unto Godliness" in three parts:

I. By Keeping the Heart
II. Through Divine Psychoanalysis
III. Through Getting Along with Others

It was a soul-searching time as the campers were faced with the diagnosis and offered God's prescription in each message. Then we were shown the healthy results of spiritual vibrancy, inner peace and harmonious living when we follow the treatments prescribed in God's Word. As Pastor Kortering said in the introduction to his messages, the speaking times serve only to furnish the material for our quiet times with God. Thus, we need to meditate and pray over what we hear, and to exercise our faith.

Our other specialist, 'Dr.' Lau, spoke on the related themes of "Disciplines of a Godly Man" and "Disciplines of a Godly Woman." The two examples held up for our study and emulation were Daniel and Ruth. Pastor Lau showed how Daniel, a man of prayer and of truth, cultivated the presence of God, participated in the communion of saints and maintained a good testimony before man. On the other hand, Ruth was a Moabitess. In God's providence, she became a godly woman and disciplined herself towards God's people, towards those in authority and towards herself. Her reward was great for she became a mother of Israel.

Besides the spiritual intake of messages, the campers also had doses of fun and physical activities. On the second day, campers and visitors traveled in a convoy of cars and vans to the Kranji War Memorial for the family picnic. We had a surprise on arrival: picnicking was not allowed at the memorial. So we had the unusual experience of lunching in the car park. Then Elder Loh Peng Kee gave a short exhortation on "Numbering Our Days" before the children immersed themselves in an art contest and the adults engaged in a discussion on spiritual discipline in their various small groups. It was a meaningful and refreshing time for all.

At night, a forum on "Christian Social Decorum" provided the opportunity for both forum speakers and audience to air their views. Some questions, like "Can a church leader spot a moustache?" and "Can a sister initiate dating?" drew much laughter and discussion

After the morning message on the third day, the various small groups had a time of sharing and prayer. It helped us know each other's needs and share the burdens. In the afternoon, a game of Captain's Ball provided good therapy for building fellowship and sportsmanship. The Married verses Singles match ended in the former's favor but all were winners at the watermelon eating session afterwards.

The last night meeting saw a Spiritual Fitness Test prepared and administered by the camp officials. The five groups, Archers, Gymnasts, Wrestlers, Boxers, and Runners were put through many rounds of examination. Eventually, Runners emerged as the fittest group of the whole course. Our congratulations!

The camp came to a close on a very special note. In his last message to the camp, Pastor Kortering mentioned that it was the 36th wedding anniversary for him and Mrs. Kortering. A little pie was presented as a token of our rejoicing with them. At photo taking time, we became their family in this family camp.

It is perhaps fitting to conclude this article by quoting one camper, Mrs. Mary Teo. "On behalf of the campers, I would like to say that we have not only been physically refreshed at this camp, but more importantly, we have been spiritually blessed as well. I want to thank the camp officials for all their labour."

"Drs." Kortering and Lau

Group at one of the speeches

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Last morning at camp
Kortering's 36th wedding anniversary

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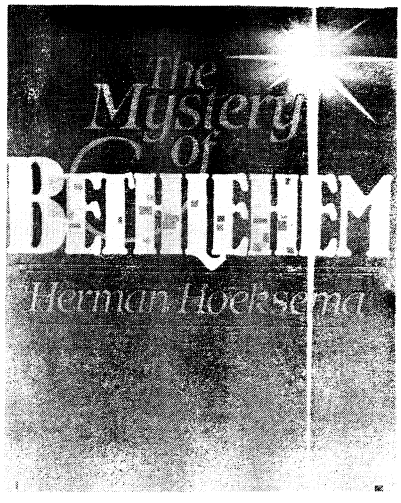

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