BEACON LIGHTS

Salvation is God's work, completely, from the very beginning to the very end. Because His grace is irresistible, we will stand humbly before Him in awe of how good He has been to such poor sinners.

An Irresistible Need by Brian Dykstra

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Public Universities:

The Answer To our Prayers?

by Allen J. Brummel

"The end of learning is to repair the ruin of our first parents by regaining to know God aright, and out of that knowledge to love him, to imitate him, to be like him." John Milton

Young men and women, in whose hearts God has worked regeneration, have a desire and zeal to learn all they can about how they can best serve and glorify God with the talents He gave them. Teenagers, with their parent's assistance and support, must seek an education which will help them grow and develop as Christians in the midst of a secular world. This education, as any education, must be based on God's word. Emphasizing the need for Christian education, Herman Hoeksema wrote in an early Standard Bearer article: "Religion must not be something added to our life, but it must be the heart of our life. Religion must not be something that is added to our education, but it must be the heart of our education. The precepts of the Lord must be the basics from which our entire education must proceed" (Volume 3, p. 536).

Christian young people, therefore, who wish to continue their education past high school must seek Christian education which is based on the precepts of the Lord. The goal of Christian education is not simply to teach one to be proficient in a certain occupation, but to teach an occupation along with the desire to serve, glorify and honor God in that occupation.

> Since the goal is God's glory, covenant education cannot merely end in the child's being saved, much less in the child's earthly success. This would make the goal of education man. But the goal of covenant education must be the child's service of God. Only then is the goal, God (Prof. David Engelsma, Reformed Education, p. 85).

God uses Christian education as one means by which He brings His adopted children to spiritual maturity.

Christian education is essential because all education which fails to make Christ central is fundamentally anti-Christian. Some people object to the assertion that secular universities are anti-Christian. They insist that although they are not Christian neither are they anti-Christian, they are neutral. Gordon Clark tackles this objection:

> What does neutrality mean when God is involved? How does God judge the school system which says to him, "0 God, we neither deny nor assert thy existence; and O God, we neither obey nor disobey thy commands; we are strictly neutral." Let no one fail to see the point: the school system which ignores God teaches its pupils to ignore God, and this is not neutrality but the worst form of antagonism, for it judges God to be unimportant and irrelevant in human affairs (Clark, A Christian Philosophy of Education, p. 207).

It ought to be obvious to the Reformed Christian that this type of education is devastating. Subjection to any pagan influence is dangerous for the Christian, but how much more dangerous to be taught and instructed by those who repudiate the Bible and all the truths for which the Reformed Christian stands? The Reformed Christian who confesses the truths of total depravity, limited atonement, and the covenant of grace ought to be able to see more clearly than any other person the danger and injustice of subjecting ourselves or our children to pagan education.

Education needs a common theme. That common theme must be the glory of God as that glory is manifest in every different discipline and in the lives of the students. According to professor Allan Bloom, who is not a Christian, education without a common theme is worthless and devastating. In his book, The Closing of the American Mind, Bloom writes:

> The university now offers no distinctive visage to the young person. He finds a democracy of the disciplines. . . . This democracy is really an anarchy. . . . There is no vision, nor is there a competing set of visions, of what an educated human being is . . . there is no organization of the sci-

ences, no tree of knowledge . . . when a student arrives at the university, he finds a bewildering variety of departments and a bewildering variety of courses. And there is no official guidance, no university-wide agreement, about what he should study. . . . So the student must navigate among a collection of carnival barkers, each trying to lure him into a particular sideshow (Quoted from Gordon Clark, A Christian Philosophy of Education, p. x).

The world and life view of the Christian must be the thread which binds his education together. The Calvinistic world and life view must permeate all of education in order to prepare us for a life of service. Herman Hoeksema wrote about the cultural mandate in a journal entitled Religion and Culture:

> The truly Calvinistic Christian is a Christian everywhere and always. In the home and in the church, in society and in the state, in shop and office, in art and in science, in trade and industry, always and everywhere is the Calvinist a Christian, would he be consistent and in harmony with his own confession. All life and all relations of life he claims must be based on and permeated by Christian principles. In a word I know of no view that is broader in its vision, that is more cosmological in its application, that is more all embracing in its powerful grasp, that is more truly liberating in its power than the Calvinistic view of life and the world (Quoted from Engelsma, Reformed Education, p. 57).

There are also many practical benefits to be derived from attending a Christian College. First, generally, the professors are required to be professing Christians and therefore will treat the student with respect. The teachers respect will be demonstrated by the quality of the required reading, the style of the writing required, and assignments which are more in accord with the students convictions. The Christian professor will respect the name of God in the class room and will avoid offensive jokes and illustrations. Secondly, students have the opportunity to live with fellow Christians, and in that way are able to have their faith challenged as well as strengthened as they discuss things pertaining to the Scriptures. Thirdly, college is often the time for dating and meeting a marriage partner. Attending a Christian college helps to insure that the mate will also be a Christian. Fourthly, college and university education is often far more than simply the classroom. Students become involved in intramurals, dorm activities, sports, and many other friendships are made. Again, living in a Christian context helps insure that these activities and relationships will be beneficial and profitable for spiritual growth. Fifthly, the first two years after high school are very important years for personal growth and development in the faith. Many decisions must be made during this time of life. Living and being educated in a Christian context will assist this development and decision making.

Many agree with the need for Christian colleges and universities but they hesitate to support existing institutions because so many of them have become secular. There may be no Christian college with which we can perfectly agree. We then must face the question whether a pagan curriculum is better than an apostatizing school. Is there any spiritual profit to be had from attending an institution which views men merely as baboons? The late Supreme Court Justice, Oliver Wendell Holmes summed up the philosophy of education practiced by public colleges and universities when he stated: "I can see no reason for attributing to man a significant difference in kind from that which belongs to a baboon or to a grain of sand. . . . I wonder if cosmically an idea is any more important than the bowels" (Quoted in A Christian Philosophy of Education, p. 8). Pagan education views man merely as a complex animal who is the product of his environment. He has no soul, nor does he exist in a relationship with God.

Even an apostatizing Christian college will have faculty members who are faithful to the Scriptures and who refuse to give in to the current trends. Faithful professors can be positive mentors for the student who needs advice and direction in his major. A student can easily identify these professors and receive a Christ-centered education from them.

It is the desire of the Christian young person to find the best Christ-centered education which is available, therefore, he ought diligently to check out different colleges in order to find one which honors both his field of interest as well as His Lord. Parents must encourage and help their young people in this process. Parents have the continual responsibility to see to it that their children are instructed and raised in the fear of the Lord. Although the nature and character of their responsibility changes, the baptism vows continue to be binding.

I do not want to minimize the financial burden of Christian colleges. However, can we place a price on a Christ-centered education? Can we put a price on our future? Can we afford to sacrifice in order to be assured that we are seeking God's will for our lives? God will use our Christian education for His glory and honor and in that way we will be assured that we are seeking His will for our lives.

Rejoice in Your Youth (I)

by Rev. C. Hanko

Ecclesiastes 11:9- Rejoice, O young man, in thy youth; and let thy heart cheer thee in the days of thy youth, and walk in the ways of thine heart, and in the sight of thine eyes: but know thou, that for all these things God will bring thee into judgment.

The days of your youth are happy days. Although the text speaks only of young men, young women are included. You may be confronted with many duties, various disappointments and problems that arise in your life, yet when you stop to consider, this phase of your life is, indeed, a happy time. Years later you will look back and realize that this was in many ways the happiest time of all.

There are various reasons for this.

You are maturing. When you were a child, you spake as a child, you thought as a child, but now you have put away childish things. You sense your vitality. As a young man you are strong, muscular, capable of tasks expected of adults. As young women you have taken on the grace and attraction of bud unfolding. A sexual urge has awakened, you are aware of and even attracted to the opposite sex.

Mentally you have matured. You are an individual. You begin to think for yourself and to form your own opinion of life. The things you learned as a child take on new meaning. You see life through more mature eyes, hear and speak like an adult. Life becomes extremely interesting.

But also psychologically you have changed. You face some tremendous decisions that determine your entire future. If you are going on to college, you must decide where and what courses to take. You ask yourself, what is my future role in life, what occupation do I choose? You begin to think about choosing a life mate. Last, but certainly not least, you take your place in the church as a confessing member.

Exciting, isn't it! You are filled with the exuberance, the joy of living.

For that reason Scripture tells you: Rejoice, O young man, O young woman, in your youth! You are young only once.

The Preacher in Ecclesiastes tells you, according to the picture language of the original, to "cause the brightness of your heart to radiate upon your face and your whole person". The idea is that the joy of your heart (which is the source of all our outer expression) should shine on your faces and be experienced in all your activities.

You are urged to do that by walking "in the ways of thine heart and in the sight of thine eyes". Your inner joy must become evident in all your thoughts, words, actions and deeds, wherever you

are and in all your associations with others.

There is an implied warning here that you must not ignore. To do so can have bitter results.

Your perverted nature dictates an entirely wrong view of life. It tells you that black is white, wrong is right, sin is fun, the only real enjoyment of living. You cannot have a good time unless you give in to the lusts of the flesh, the lust of the eyes and the pride of life. Stolen waters are sweet, and bread eaten in secret is pleasant. You want to get out of life all you can, in spite of the advice of your elders, who are too old and narrow minded to understand.

Your inner joy must become evident in all your thoughts, words, actions and deeds, wherever you are and in all your associations with others.

The world round about you takes on a special appeal. The TV offers entertainments that you know are wrong, but your urge is to watch them. Movies do present a lot of perverted sex and crime, but they are exciting. The "crowd" tend to go too far in the wrong direction at times, but you do go along. Your closest friend entices you to sin; you would rather yield than be a "prude". It is so hard to say no, and so easy to travel the road of least resistance. Besides, You don't want to be laughed at.

The urge to follow the dictates of your sinful nature becomes a powerful, irresistible force. It is so "natural", so appealing, to give in to sinful lust and pleasure. "I `11 enjoy life now and settle down later. I have complete control of myself. I know how far to go and when to stop." Famous last words.

Beware, sin is a seductive and destructive power. At the moment it seems perfectly proper, even necessary to yield, even though you know that you would condemn that act in others. Your conscience retreats to the background, you imagine that you can sin and get away with it.

We are reminded of Eve in paradise, discussing with Satan God's command concerning the forbidden tree. Why is it so wrong to eat of that tree? It cannot hurt; I won't die. The tree does produce appealing fruit that makes my mouth water. By eating I can do my own thing, I can be like God in the sense that I decide for myself what is right or wrong, what I will or not. Now her hand goes out irresistibly, as it were, to the forbidden fruit. She ate, gave to Adam, and he ate with her. That's where it all started. And we follow in their footsteps.

Sin is like a poison adder that strikes and kills. It is only after the sin has been committed that the conscience awakens and you realize that he who sins becomes sin's slave. As God warns us, "Let no man say when he is tempted, I am tempted of God." (We might excuse ourselves by saying, This is my weakness, I can't help it.) "For God cannot be tempted with evil, neither tempteth he any man; but every man is tempted, when he is drawn away of his own lusts, and enticed. Then when lust hath conceived, it bringeth forth sin: and sin, when it is finished bringeth forth death." (James 1:13-15)

The Preacher warns: "But know thou, that for all these things God will bring thee into judgment."

Judgment begins already in this life. We only fool ourselves when we imagine that there is joy in sinning. Lend an honest ear to the wild, off-beat music and singing of the world. It reminds you of the wild dancings of the aborigines in the jungles. Take a serious look at the faces. Do you see any real happiness radiating from them? And notice the misery of those who seek their refuge (their pleasure) in wild orgies, drinking, drugs, gambling, stealing, murder, and suicide.

The first step seems so innocent, yet it becomes a snare. And think of the secrecy, the deceit involved, the guilty conscience, the fear of being discovered, and of the consequences. Consider also how your sin hurts your parents and your family, and brings shame on your church.

Still worse, what follows is a life-long, bitter complaint: "Sins of youth remember not." For the sin may be forgiven, but the scars and damage remain. Marriages can be tainted and spoiled, distrust aroused before the vows are spoken.

There is also the inescapable fact, that there is a final judgment when all our life is exposed before our consciousness. And, unless there was a heart-felt repentance, in hell there is only an endless remorse. God says "Son, remember" You had your good things, that is, you had what <u>you</u> wanted. (Luke 16:25)

(to be continued)

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Praying for the Peace of Jerusalem

by Rev. B. Woudenberg

Pray for the peace of Jerusalem: they shall prosper that love thee.
Peace be within thy walls, and prosperity within thy palaces.
For my brethren and companions' sakes, I will now say, Peace be within thee.
Because of the house of the Lord our God I will seek thy good.
Psalm 122:6-9

Jerusalem was always a fascinating city. We first read of it in connection with Melchizedek, at the time of Abraham. This man apparently showed up one day in the pagan Jebusite city of Jebus, and began to lead the people there in the worship of the Most High God. The result was that they made him their king, and called him "Melchizedek," *King of Righteousness;* while their city became known as "Salem," *Peace;* or "Jerusalem," *City Of Peace,* a sure indication of the success of what he did. It was during that time that Abraham came to him. Those two worshippers of God had fellowship together. He blessed Abraham; and Abraham, recognizing him as a priest of the Most High God, paid to him his tithes (Gen. 14:20). And then, some time thereafter it seems, Melchizedek disappeared from the scene, leaving no heir, and the city returned to its pagan ways. (Hebrews 7:1-3)

It was a brief but beautiful beginning for a city which was to become the City of God, particularly when David became king. One of the first things he did was to capture that city, whose inhabitants had long forgotten Melchizedek's ways; and there he established his throne. But even more, to it he brought the tabernacle of God, so that in it the worship of the Most High God was again restored.

And so it remained until Jesus came — except that at His death He transformed it in a most wonderful way, as he sad to the Samaritan woman, "*Woman, believe me; the hour cometh, when ye shall neither in this mountain, nor yet at Jerusalem, worship the Father... But the hour cometh, and now is, when the true worshippers shall worship the Father in spirit and in truth: for the Father seeketh such to worship him.*" By that He meant to say that after his death the true Jerusalem, *the City of Peace;* would no longer be found in a particular geographic place, but wherever true people of God would gather *in spirit and in truth* to worship. It is just as the book of Hebrews says of all who now walk in faith, "*But ye are come unto mount Sion, and unto the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem, and to an innumerable company of angels, to the general assembly and church of the firstborn, which are written in heaven, and to God the Judge of all, and to the spirits of just men made perfect, and to Jesus the mediator of the new covenant.*" For you and me this says that every time we go to worship

in church we stand at the entrance of the new heavenly Jerusalem, the true City of Peace, into which, if we come *in spirit and truth*, we may take our place.

And then to us David says — as we read in the psalm quoted above — *"Pray for the peace of Jerusalem... Peace be within thy walls, and prosperity within thy palaces... Peace be within thee."* This is what Jesus meant when He said, *"the true worshippers shall worship the Father in spirit and in truth."* We must come to worship God with a prayer for peace in our souls.

The word peace in the Hebrew is *shalom*, a word used by Jews as a greeting to this day. As with so many Hebrew words, its meaning runs deep and full. *Shalom* means much more than just to be *free from war* or even to be *quiet* or *tranquil;* it also has in it the idea of being *rich* and *full, spiritually complete* and *satisfied.* It really means to live in the *City of Peace* with the true *King of Righteousness* ruling in our hearts; then our sins are gone as well, and we have peace in our souls. There were a few beautiful moments in Old Testament history when that physical city of Jerusalem provided an earthly picture of this — although not many, and they were brief. But there will be a time when in perfection it will come to be, that time when in the new heaven and earth, the New Jerusalem will come *"down from God out of heaven, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband."* Nevertheless, what we must not forget is that as children of faith we may taste this already whenever we come together to worship in the Name of Jesus as we should.

And so to us David says — speaking across the ages — *"Pray for the peace of Jerusalem:"* and he means, not just to stop to say a brief prayer before leaving for church, or just briefly when we sit down in the pew — although such certainly is in order as well — but, come in an attitude of prayer, an attitude which says in the heart, *"For my brethren and companions' sakes, I will now say, Peace be within thee."* It is this attitude of peace, of love for God and His people, which constitutes the spiritual stones from which this new city is built (I Peter 2:5); as we become part of the New Jerusalem, that City of Peace. And for those who so do, *"they... prosper that love thee."*

Shalom!

Rev. Woudenberg is the minister at Kalamazoo Prot. Ref. Church.

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Watching Daily At My Gates

by Skip Hunter

May 1 — **Ephesians 5:1-7** Do you follow Christ? Or as the first verse can be read, do you imitate Christ? Do you know what to do in order to follow or imitate Christ? Verse two tells us to walk in love. That will be first. This will be the love that Christ has given to us for an example. This is the love that was so great that He died for our sins. That is what we must do first of all. We must love God and our neighbors. Then we must not be lovers of the things of this world. When we imitate Christ, we will not walk in the lusts of the flesh or the pride of life. When we imitate Christ, we will flee those things and follow God as dear children. Sing or read Psalter 1.

May 2 — **Ephesians 5:8-14** Do we walk as children of the light rather than children of the darkness? Are we "proving what is acceptable unto the Lord"? That is to what the Holy Spirit calls us in this portion of Scripture. In every aspect of our daily walk we must be testing it in order to see if it is acceptable to God. We must be using the test of the Scriptures in order to see if what we do is completely God glorifying. As children of the light we will refuse to walk in ways not pleasing to God. As children of light we will even reprove those around us who do not walk In ways of pleasing God. This is not an easy calling. It is one for which we must pray for grace to carry out. Sing or read Psalter 6 especially the first 4 stanzas.

May 3 — **Ephesians 5:15-21** Are you redeeming the times, young people? As you go about your daily life are you walking in a way that is pleasing to God? Redeeming the times has in it the idea of doing that which makes the most of the opportunities that God has given us. Did you use your time in the catechism room well this year? How have you done in school? Have you studied to show yourself approved unto God? As we walk in this life we must prepare ourselves for the life to come. We cannot get ready for heaven by living a life full of evils. We must be wise trying to understand the will of our Heavenly Father which He makes known to us by His Word. Sing or read Psalter 17 especially stanzas 1, 4, and 5.

May 4 — **Ephesians 5:22-33** Are you content with your marriage to the Lamb? That is what we are since we are the church. We are married to Christ, and must live a life pleasing to our husband. Just as a wife is subject and obedient to her husband, so also must we as the church be subject to Christ. We must listen to His word who is Word. We must hold onto every word of Christ, and then walk in that word obediently because we love Him. Is this our desire throughout our pilgrimage on this earth? Do we walk circumspectly as only ones who have the wisdom which comes from above? We have a wonderful privilege in our marriage to the Lamb. He sacrificed much for us. We must live a life of thanksgiving and praise to the Lamb who is worthy. Sing or read Psalter 125 especially stanzas 1-4.

May 5 — **Daniel 1:3-7; 17-21** Daniel and his three friends were given great gifts by God. They had been chosen by Ashpenaz because of physical attractiveness as well as great mental characteristics. This earthly man could see in them the physical gifts with which they had been endowed by God. What he could not see was their spiritual strengths. We find that they show themselves ten times better than the wisest Chaldeans. But these captives of Israel had more. By grace they had been given faith with which they could avoid the devil's traps. They had stood by faith and God had blessed them. Are we standing by faith? Do we recognize Satan's traps and avoid them? Sing or read Psalter 12.

May 6 — **Daniel 2:36-45** By faith Daniel received wisdom not only to tell Nebuchadnezzar his dream but also to interpret it as it was sent by God. This was no ordinary dream. This was a dream that mapped out history as ordained in God's counsel. This dream showed that God not only set up certain world powers, but also that He brought them to destruction. This dream shows us that God's counsel is sure because the nations of this dream have made their mark In history. This dream also shows us of the certainty of the antichristian kingdom which has raged since Adam and will rage most furiously just before Christ returns. God has prepared a Daniel to bring us the comfort of a stone cut without hands. This stone is the Christ foreordained for our salvation. What a blessing we have as we consider this dream and all of history and realize that all things work for our good. Sing or read Psalter 4.

May 7 **Daniel 3:22-30** By faith Daniel's three friends were able to tell the king that they were not afraid of his fiery furnace. These three men feared the fires of hell more than they feared this furnace. These three men knew of the fury of their God and yet could calmly face the furious Nebuchadnezzar and tell him that God would deliver them if it was His will. God rewarded such faith by sending the Old Testament form of Christ to comfort and deliver them in this trial. Then He caused the king to reward them for their faith. This reward is proof of God's goodness to His people. Are we walking by faith looking for the reward that is not earthly? If we do, God will bless us in this life and the life to come. Sing or read Psalter 20.

May 8 **Daniel 4:19-27** Once more Daniel is called to use his God-given talent of interpreting dreams. Once more he must interpret a dream which foretold history. But this time he must tell of the humiliation of the highest man in the world of the day. Daniel has to tell his boss that God would drive him out of Babylon, and he would become as a beast of the field. When the king pressed Daniel for the interpretation, he gave it as God gave it to him. Then Daniel gives words of warning and admonition. He tells the king to repent. This is God's command to all men. But yet we know that all men like Nebuchadnezzar do not have the grace to repent. For us we must see that we must obey the call to repent. When we are being consumed by pride, we must stop and fall upon our knees and pray; for we know that pride goeth before destruction. Sing or read Psalter 366.

May 9 **Daniel 5:10-17** God came to Belshazzar and his friends with a sobering judgment while they were having a drunken feast. They did not understand the words themselves, but once again Daniel was called to show his talents and profess his faith. We see that God used Daniel to humble the wicked Belshazzar even as he had humbled Nebuchadnezzar. When the king tried to "butter him up", Daniel told him that the glory belonged to the God of heavens who had judged the king and his nation, found them wanting, and would deliver them into the hands of the Medes and Persians. Are we willing to let the earthly praise go to another? Will we give up the rewards of this life so that God's name alone will be glorified? That is Daniel's example in this chapter, and that is what we must follow. Sing or read Psalter 146.

May 10 **Daniel 6:1-9** Can all men see our faith and devotion to our God? Can men see that we love God by the work that we do? Do we carry out our work, whether it be in school or on the job, in such a way that men can see our love for God? That is what Daniel did. Darius saw Daniel's care for his talents and made him chief in the kingdom. The other princes saw Daniel's diligence and hated him for it. They knew, too, that they could not catch Daniel in wrong doing as he went about his daily work. The only grounds they could use was his religion. We must pray that we, too, show our diligence and love for God to all that see us. When we do this, we please God; and pleasing God is our calling on this earth. Sing or read Psalter 249 especially stanzas 1-4.

May 11 **James 3:1-6** In these verses the child of God is taught the importance of the control of the tongue. We sin against the neighbor quite often with our tongues. We do this to his face, and we do this behind his back. With our tongues we also fail to show our love for God. The words of our mouths show what kind of person we are. If those words are full of slander and deceit, our whole life will soon go on that course. And that course is one that leads straight to hell. We must pray often that we not sin against the third and ninth commandments. We must show our love for God and our neighbor; we must not show hatred. Sing or read Psalter 26 especially stanzas 1-3.

May 12 **James 3:7-12** James continues his discourse on the use of the tongue. In these verses he warns us not to say one thing part of the time and something else other times. Do you do this young people? Is your speech pure when parents, teachers, and ministers are around; but when you are alone, does your speech become full of all types of profanity? Do you sing the songs of Zion at school and church, but when you are in your car or with friends, are Satan's songs your choice of music? Do you do this people of God by going to church and worshiping God, but when you are In the business world, are God's laws forgotten? On this day that we celebrate the ascension of Christ, we must stop and think that while He is in heaven preparing a place for us, we must be fountains of sweet water having our conversation salted with grace. Sing or read Psalter 21.

May 13 **James 3:13-18** There are two types of wisdom available to us. The one comes from above. It is the wisdom that has Christ as its basis. It is the wisdom that teaches us to love God and the neighbor as ourselves. This is the wisdom that Solomon tells his son and us to seek after and to not let it go. Then there is the wisdom from this earth. This wisdom is from Satan and tells us to hate God and our neighbor. This is the wisdom from which Solomon tells us to flee. This wisdom tells us to look out for ourselves at the expense of God's laws and the neighbor's welfare. Which wisdom do our lives portray? Which wisdom is characterized by our speech and actions? Get wisdom, people of God, but make sure it is the wisdom that is from above; and bring forth fruits of righteousness. Sing or read Psalter 145.

May 14 **Psalm 37:1-7** Are you committing your ways unto Jehovah? Do you trust in His ways even when they do not look like the best choice in the situation at hand? Are you willing to be patient until God shows you the path you must travel? What a comfort if you are! When God gives the grace to wait on Him, the peace that fills our souls is far beyond all understanding. It is easy to look at those around us and become jealous for their way. We see the way of the wicked and wonder if God is being fair to us. If we look at verses 4 and 5, we see that He promises that He will bring our way to pass, and we know that all things work together for good to them that love God. Rest in

the Lord, people of God, and He will bring our ways to pass. Sing or read Psalter 95.

May 15 — **Psalm 37:8-15** The anger of the wicked is displeasing to God. The anger of the righteous is also displeasing to God. Did you ever stop and think about that, young people? When you are angry at your parents, teachers, or fellow young people, you transgress the sixth commandment and displease God. Your anger is not the way that a wise man chooses. If you look at these verses again, you see that the way of a child of God is in meekness. You also see the great reward of the meek. Walk not in the way of the wicked, but rather choose the way of meekness and you will be rewarded both in this life and in the life to come. Sing or read Psalter 51

May 16 — **Psalm 37:16-22** How do we handle the wealth that God has given us? I ask this question of all age groups in the church. Are we like the wicked who want more and devise great schemes to get more and care not for whom they hurt? Or do we use our money as the righteous and show mercy to those in need and help those less blessed than we? Do we try to get more and more for ourselves, or do we show our gratitude for our salvation and give liberally to the kingdom causes which God has placed before us? How do we use the money we have? Will God be pleased with us and gives us the earth or will He cut us off in His anger? Sing or read Psalter 97.

May 17 — **Psalm 37:23-31** In the rest of the chapter David continues to contrast the way of the righteous with the way of the wicked. Notice the truth of the antithesis as found in verse 27. Which is your way, young people? Are you departing from evil and doing good? What is your choice for entertainment? Do you look for things pleasing to God, or are you enjoying the dance, the movie, or the other pleasures of the world and Satan? Jehovah delights in our ways, but only when our ways are in accordance to His laws. Are His laws in your heart? If they are, rest assured that you will never fall. Sing or read Psalter 98.

May 18 — **Psalm 37:32-40** People of God, do you feel alone? Do you feel that the pressures of this world are too much for you? Do you feel that all around you is trouble and despair? David had such feelings during his life. Think of the times while he was fleeing from Saul. Think of how his own son chased him from Jerusalem. David knew adversity, and David knew what to do during that adversity. David knew and confessed that his salvation was of Jehovah. He knew that his strength could be found In Jehovah, and that Jehovah would help and deliver him during troubled times. Is this your hope and trust, people of God? Do you turn to Jehovah for help when all seems against you? If you do, He will deliver you even as He has promised. Sing or read Psalter 100.

May 19 — **I Peter 4:1-6** How do you appear to those around you? Are there times that they think you are strange because of things you do or do not do? Does living according to the antithesis cause you to receive some funny looks or strange conversation? If those around you are not people of the church, your life should appear strange to them. Your life should be different from the world. Sometimes we walk in ways we should not. We must put those away and walk a new godly life. We must live a life that is Christlike. We live that way in gratitude to Him for the suffering that He did for us. This is to be our life in the Spirit according to the ways of God. Sing or read Psalter 349.

May 20 — **I Peter 4:7-11** Do you show love toward your brothers and sisters in Christ? In these verses we can see at least three ways to put this love into action. First, we must love them and forgive their sins against us. It is not the way of a true child of God to hold a grudge against those that do us evil. The example of Christ tells us to love those who have wronged us even as He died for us who daily break His commandments. Secondly, we must show friendship to one another. Our treatment of the fellow believer is an expression of our gratitude for the salvation we have from Christ. Thirdly, we must minister to each other. This may be financially or this may be some manner of encouragement to those who need it. The goal in all this is that God be glorified for ever in all that we do. Sing or read Psalter 24 especially stanzas 1 and 3.

May 21 — **I Peter 4:12-19** The end of the world is coming! When? We do not know for sure, but we do know by the signs provided in the Bible that Christ is coming to take us to heaven and to destroy this world. For what must we be ready? One thing is sure. There will be a tribulation for the believers. We may suffer many things, but we can be glad for this because God's glory will be revealed. We can be glad for this because even though our bodies may be hurt or even destroyed by man, man can never harm our souls. Our souls are kept by the Heavenly Father through his Son our Savior. Let our suffering be on account of His gospel and nothing else. When this is our suffering, then we will have exceeding joy because God is glorified. Sing or read Psalter 182 especially stanzas 1,2,6, and 7.

May 22 — **Isaiah 55:1-7** Do you thirst, people of God, for happiness? Are you hungry for relief from the cares of this world? Do you look for a way out of the despair and worries of this life? If you do, then this chapter of Scripture is for you. The child of God sees in himself the impossibility of doing good. We, like Solomon, see only vanity and vexation of spirit. In these verses we have the command to go to Christ. Notice I wrote command, not invitation. It is not a choice we have but an obligation. We must go to the fountain of living waters; we must seek after the bread of life; and we must seek the Lord in this life. He has a promise for us. The water, bread, and mercy is free. We do not have to do anything for it. And that is good because we have all "sinned and come short of the glory of God." He promises that He will abundantly pardon all of our sins. As we celebrate Pentecost today, let us go to Christ who

has sent His Spirit for our comfort. Sing or read Psalter 143.

May 23 **Isaiah 55:8-13** Did you wonder about the free gifts of yesterday's meditation? Do you wonder how God can give us salvation because He wants to even though we are worthless sinners? He can because He is God. He is heavenly. His ways are past finding out. They are unsearchable to our sinful minds. His thoughts go far beyond our feeble intelligence. He does what He pleases and it always prospers. Therefore, people of God, rejoice in the joy and peace that He gives to you. Look to Him for your hope and wait patiently until Christ comes. Sing or read Psalter 378.

May 24 **Luke 7:1-10** How is your faith? No, I do not mean the gift of God. That I know is good because it comes from God. How Is the expression of your faith? Is it like the centurion's faith? This man was more than likely a pagan when he came to Israel. But as the Spirit planted the seed of regeneration in him he began to bring forth fruit. He first showed this in unusual kindness for a Roman to the Jews. Then he built a place of worship. When his servant fell sick, he then showed compassion and called for the Great Healer. Jesus rewarded his faith by healing the servant. Jesus also rewarded his faith by saving the centurion from his sins. How Is your faith today? Sing or read Psalter 363.

May 25 **Luke 7:11-18** Our Lord had a compassionate human nature. In today's account we see that He raises to life the only son of a widow woman. Here was a woman who apparently had no one left in this world to look after her. She was destitute of all earthly aid. Jesus had compassion on her and gave her back her son. This compassion went farther than that. We have no one to look after our spiritual concerns. There is not a person on earth that can help us out of spiritual problems by his own power. Only through the death of Christ on the cross are we saved. It is not of ourselves but only through faith in Christ. Sing or read Psalter 293.

May 26 **Luke 7:19-35** How do you receive the testimony of Scripture concerning Jesus? When the disciples of John the Baptist came to Him wondering if He was the Christ, He sent them back with the evidence of the miracles. But this was also the testimony of the fulfillment of several of Isaiah's prophecies. Then Jesus turned to the people and asked them about what they thought. It came out that as always there were two camps. Some believed and glorified God; others rejected the counsel of God because it condemned them. What about us? Do we receive the testimony of Scriptures concerning Jesus the Son of God? Sing or read Psalter 403.

May 27 **Luke 7:36-50** Once again we see the two results of the preaching of the Word. We see a woman crying because of her sins and washing the feet of Jesus even as she saw in Him the way to eternal peace. We also see proud Simon wondering if Jesus was anyone from an earthly point of view. How disappointed Simon was when he saw Jesus paying attention to the woman. This Jesus could not amount to much if that was the type of company He would keep. How happy the woman was as Jesus publicly forgave her sins and told her to "Go in peace". Are we Simons or sinning women coming to the Savior for forgiveness? Sing or read Psalter 83.

May 28 **Proverbs 6:1-11** Students, have you been diligent throughout this catechism and school year? Have you been busy learning the things of God so that you will be ready in the years to come to give answer concerning your faith? God gives us several examples from His creation to follow in these verses. The most graphic is that of the ant. Watch the ants this summer and learn from them. They know that their continued existence depends on their diligence in gathering food when it is available. Learn from the ants and realize that your diligence in learning is required by God the creator of all things. Sing or read Psalter 213 especially stanzas 1-4.

May 29 **Proverbs 6:12-19** In these verses we are warned against using the gifts God has given us in the service of the devil. We read that the Lord hates these things; that they are an abomination to Him. If that is the case we should pay heed to these words and flee these sins. These are sins committed by young and old alike. These are evils placed before us by Satan which never go away. These are evils whose end is eternal destruction in hell. Let us be wise and not follow these things but rather follow the things of God all of our lives. Sing or read Psalter 93.

May 30 **Proverbs 6:20-26** Young people, what is your response to the teaching of your parents? Are you binding them to your hearts and continually walking in them? If those teachings are based upon God's word, you must. That is the testimony of this portion of the Bible. This is good for us to consider at the end of another school year. Your parents have you instructed in the fear of Jehovah so that you have something worthwhile to tie around your necks. They want to give you a bright light upon your path as you go about this life. They also want you to go in the way of life. Think on these things even as you put your books away for another year. Sing or read Psalter 215.

May 31 **Proverbs 6:27-35** Have you ever gone near any kind of fire and then noticed the effects of that fire on your clothes many hours later? The smell of the smoke will linger for a long time. Now imagine picking up the burning wood in your hands or walking on hot coals. The burns would last for a much longer time than the smell of the smoke. God likens this to committing the sin of adultery. This sin stains a man or woman for a long time. From this sin as well as all others we are warned to stay clear. This sin is also the picture of following any husband other than Christ, who is wisdom, for the child of God. We must flee all sins because they will cause us to leave our husband, Christ. Sing or read Psalter 385.

An Irresistible Need

by Brian Dykstra

Many years ago I was sitting in a religion class with a Protestant Reformed friend when the religion professor, who was also a minister, said concerning man and God's grace, "What makes man different from all the other animals is that he can say `no' to God." We glanced at each other with expressions of, "Did he really say that?"

A Christian Reformed classmate then raised his hand and asked, "I thought that God's grace was irresistible. Isn't that one of the five Points of Calvinism?"

The professor began to be quite ill at ease. After all, this was a religion class at Calvin College. He stammered, "Of course the concept of grace is quite complicated and complex. We will discuss it again later." It was no surprise that we never did.

The doctrine of irresistible grace is not complicated. It is in accordance with the clear teaching of the Scriptures. Also, the truth that God's grace is irresistible is true to the experience of every child of God.

It is not the purpose of this article to offer proof that irresistible grace is indeed scriptural. Others have already done this very well. Rev. Van Baren wrote a book titled *The Five Points of Calvinism.* Years ago a pamphlet by Rev. Harbach was published called *Calvinism, the Truth.* Proof for the doctrine of irresistible grace is also found in the Canons of Dordt.

The purpose here is to show that this doctrine is not something dry, lifeless and dull. It certainly is not true that this doctrine is of no importance to us. Contrary to what I believed during my younger years, the doctrines of scripture are not meant to make catechism students' lives miserable by making them memorize proof texts and long definitions of seemingly endless terms. The doctrines of scripture profoundly affect our lives. All of Scripture's doctrines are important because they affect our daily walk on earth. This is also true for irresistible grace.

I' m sure that you know what "irresistible" means.

However, here we mean something more than that particular tint of blue in a young woman's eyes or a young man's friendly smile. We are speaking of the power of the Almighty God. The Spirit of God seizes our hearts. What was dead and cold is made alive and warm! What found pleasure in sin now finds pleasure in being an obedient servant! We, who are so easily self-righteous, are forced to confess our desperate need for the Savior!

When God moves so powerfully into our hearts, we cannot say "no" to Him. Our salvation does not depend upon us opening the door to our hearts. In His grace God takes away the foolish thought that we are able to save ourselves or do not need the Savior because we are "pretty good" or "better than others." By the power of His irresistible grace, that old self-praising Pharisee, who so easily creeps into our hearts, is evicted and replaced with Paul's "wretched man" of Romans 7:24 who cries for God's gracious deliverance. That "wretched man", who finds deliverance in Christ our Lord, then sings the glorious song of the redeemed which we read in Romans 8.

"irresistible" means something more than that particular tint of blue in a young woman's eyes or a young man's friendly smile.

Why do we need such irresistible grace? Why is this doctrine important in our lives? Before we can answer these questions, we need to understand something else. We must understand the seriousness of our sinful nature and our sins.

A knowledge of sin is lacking in our day. In today's world, what we call "sin" is very entertaining to many others. We only have to look around us to see evidence of this. The magazine Newsweek shows this while reporting on a wretched movie which shows what sinful man finds irresistible. A rich businessman finds the sin of adultery with another man's wife so appealing that he offers the couple a million dollars for a night of sin. The young couple, finding such a sum of money irresistible, accepts the offer. Sin isn't sin to the wicked. It' s entertainment.

Sin is not viewed as a violation of the perfect Law given by the holy God. There are those who call themselves preachers who say that sin is 'not reaching your highest level of self-fulfillment'. Such preachers do not wish to speak of sin any more. It makes people depressed. They stop coming to church. Revenues decrease. Sin is given a sugar coating or ignored.

In the face of all this, we must see the depth of our depravity. It is because I know the greatness of my sins and sinful nature that I need, desperately, for God's grace to be irresistible. I am corrupt to the core. I am not able to choose what is good when left to myself. Bible history even makes this plain.

Eve believes Satan's lie. Adam rejects God and follows his wife into sin. Moses does not want to serve as the leader of Israel. Israel does not want to leave what they believe to be the pleasures of slavery in Egypt. Israel desires a king instead of God and chooses Saul. David is rejected and Absalom is enthroned. Israel turns against the house of David and follows Jeroboam and the golden calves. Peter denies his Lord. Yes, even Christ is rejected and Barabbas is desired.

It is the same for my sinful heart. Apart from God's grace, I would not even confess my sin. I wouldn't want the Jesus of the cross. I would reject Him, and then foolishly believe that I could walk a path of ease and happiness on this earth. Truly, I cannot be left to choose salvation. God's grace must be irresistible.

We cannot even imagine how offensive our sins and sinful natures are to our holy God. "Holy" is not just some word we can use to describe God. God IS holiness. God IS perfection. God IS righteousness. Oh, how awful our sins must appear to such a God! What an everlasting debt of gratitude we owe to Him for His irresistible grace!

Our salvation depends upon the fact that God's grace is irresistible. Having seen our sinfulness, we know that we would never choose to accept some gracious offer. We could never begin to save ourselves or earn such a priceless blessing.

Knowing that God's grace is irresistible, we must give ALL glory to our almighty God. We see, clearly, that our salvation is not of ourselves. Salvation is God's work, completely, from the very beginning to the very end. Because His grace is irresistible, we will stand humbly before Him in awe of how good He has been to such poor sinners.

Irresistible grace is not some irrelevant point of doctrine. We cannot toss it into some grab bag of doctrine and then take it or leave it. Every day we must be thankful for God's irresistible grace. Our everlasting joy depends upon it. It is an irresistible need.

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The Beacon Lights is looking for energetic people, who are interested in writing and using their creative skills, to become members of the staff.

Please call Peter Faber, 956-9354.

Spiritual Youth In A Carnal World: Entertainment

by Rev. A. Spriensma

Without giving overwhelming negatives or a long list of rules, Rev. Spriensma gives four basic principles for entertainment in the young person's life.

As we explore the theme "spiritual youth in a carnal world", we will look at the areas of entertainment, work, and sex. Perhaps you ask in your mind: What does that have to do with being spiritual? Does not being spiritual mean that I go to church, that I make profession of my faith, that I have personal devotions, etc.?

Yes, it is all of that. But it is much much more. All of life is sacred. All of life is to be lived for God's glory, and in service of His kingdom: our church attendance and our sleep at night, our work and our play, whether remaining single or dating, our studies at school or recreation. Being spiritual means that we live the Christian life in a sinful, sinful world.

If I asked you to state your formula for living the Christian life, what would you tell me? Would you say, "I don't do drugs" or "I try not to tell lies" or "I try not to tell dirty jokes"? The average Christian might have a list of seven to eight don'ts. If they get through a week and avoid these don'ts then they feel that they have lived a Christian life. Get through two weeks avoiding these don'ts, and you are a super Christian.

What is wrong with that mentality is that it views Christianity as a lot of "do nots". The things that stand out are the things a Christian can not do. In other words, Christianity is basically negative. But being negative does not make us Christ-like.

You mean that there is no place for "do not's"? Does not the Bible tell us not to do certain things? I am sure your parents and those who plan the Young People's Convention have rules that state that you will not do this or that. Is there no place in our lives for "do not"? And the answer is an emphatic YES. The Ten Commandments are mostly stated in the negative: "Thou shalt not..."

And the reason for these "do not"s is our old sinful nature. We must say no to sin. We must say no to Satan. And we must say no to our old man of sin. But we must keep the bigger picture before us. The Christian life is more than negatives. The summary of the law is "Thou shalt love the Lord thy God.... and "Thou shalt love thy neighbor..." So in this discussion on spiritual youth and entertainment I am not going to try to dwell on negatives because I do not want you to think of the Christian life as negative. There is a time and place for fun, joy, happiness, and entertainment:

As Christians we must see that work is our calling. We rest and engage in entertainment and relaxation that we may better work.

Moreover, in our discussion I am not going to give you a list of rules for a Christian in entertainment. There are those who would like the list. I am quite certain that your parents already have their lists for you: a neat little list or a long list, whatever may be the case. Neat and tidy. It does not take a lot of thought. Just follow the list. The Pharisees had their lists. So if you are looking in this article for a handy list of do's and don'ts, you are going to be disappointed. The problem of having lists of do's and don'ts is that it tends to legalism. There is a place for rules! I have them in my home. But you young people need to get past only observing rules that others make for you. You need to think and work out what is Scripturally right and wrong. Successfully living the Christian life is more than following blindly a system of external do's and don'ts.

Thirdly, in the matter of the Christian and entertainment we want to stay away from all hypocrisy. What I am talking about is strongly condemning movies but at the same time waiting one or two years and then renting the picture when it comes out in video. It is hypocrisy to say that a hollywood production is a video, but do not say the "M" word. Sorry folks, a show is a show. Drama is drama. A rose is a rose, no matter what you may call it. Or again, I am speaking about our living the Christian life. To be strong in doctrine, having all the right theological answers, but being known as those who "drink the most", "party the hardest", etc. James writes (James 1:22), "But be ye doers of the Word, and not hearers only, deceiving your own selves."

So avoiding negativism, legalism, and hypocrisy, what is there yet to say about the Christian and entertainment? I want to explore the place of entertainment in our lives, principles to guide us in entertainment, and conclude with three Scripture texts.

THE PLACE OF ENTERTAINMENT IN THE LIFE OF A CHRISTIAN: There is definitely a legitimate place in life for relaxation, recreation, play and fun. To be a Christian does not mean that you cannot have fun and enjoy yourself, that you must always be working or studying. There are those people who can not understand how anyone else can take time to read a book. There are those who feel guilty if they relax or spend a day with the family. There is a legitimate place in the life of a Christian for relaxation, play, and entertainment. All work and no play makes Jack a very dull boy.

But that place for fun, play, and entertainment must be a secondary, and subordinate place. For far too many people, entertainment and recreation have become a god. It is primary. They work and labor in order to get the boat, snowmobile, and the money to play. They work in order to play. They strive for shorter and shorter work weeks in order to have more and more time for leisure and entertainment.

As Christians we must see that work is our calling. We rest and engage in entertainment and relaxation that we may better work, have renewed strength, energy, and eagerness to work. The sixth commandment teaches us that "six days shalt thou labour and do all thy work". Leisure time is never an end in itself but is a means to make us more qualified for more service to our God.

Principles to guide us us in our entertainment:

I would like to highlight four basic principles to guide spiritual youth in a carnal world — in entertainment. We must consider the honor of God, the welfare of man, a Christian's separation from the world, and the matter of Christian liberty.

Principle #1: The Honor of God

First, according to Scripture, man's chief end is to glorify God. God created man in His own image to live in a relationship of fellowship and friendship with God. And when man willfully fell into sin, God redeemed man that in Christ we again might live in covenant fellowship with God.

So our whole life, including our entertainment should be directed to that end. The Apostle Paul writes, "Whether ye eat or drink or do anything else, do all to the glory of God." So, young people, in our entertainment we should seek to glorify God. That means that what we do cannot be anything that conflicts with God's law.

We live in an age characterized by an universal craze for pleasure; a craving for physical enjoyment. We who are Christians must be ready and eager to make our own pleasure subservient to keeping God's commandments. We do not believe that whatever feels good is good. God must be supreme in our lives. To glorify God means that we keep His commandments.

In our fun and entertainment we must remember who we are by God's grace. We must remember our covenant relationship. We are God's peculiar people. We should be careful not to participate in any activities or go to any place that blasphemes God's name or flaunts His commandments. Otherwise we become partakers of the activity. Should we passively listen to someone taking our Saviour's name in vain? Should we roll ourselves in the sheets of fornication in listening to dirty jokes or reading filthy literature or watching Hollywood's productions? So the matter of our involvement in entertainment is not just a question of whether we are jeopardizing our spiritual welfare, but it is a question of whether we are honoring God?

Principle #2:
The Welfare of Man

But we must, secondly, also be concerned with our welfare. Now there will be no conflict between what honors God and what is good for us. That which glorifies God is good for us. That which disobeys God is destructive to us. "The wages of sin is death." We have a calling to seek that which is good for our physical and spiritual wellbeing. As we have said, there is a legitimate place in the life of a Christian for recreation, rest, and fun. Jesus said to his disciples "Come ye yourselves apart... and rest a while" (Mark 6:31). Again we read in I Tim. 4:8 of "bodily exercise as being profitable for a little". God has made us with the need of physical and mental diversion. That is why we are here at this convention. The chaperons and leaders are as eager as you young people for some good fun! A whole week! (Now that much fun might be hard on some of the older folks, but I am not saying which of my colleagues I have in mind.) Our entertainment should be truly relaxing, not so exhausting that we cannot return to our work, or inherently dangerous to one's life, limb, or body.

No physical recreation or mental diversion should be tolerated which is in any way subversive to our spiritual or moral well-being. "What shall it profit a man if he gains the whole world and lose his soul?" "Bodily exercise is profitable for a little, but godliness is profitable for all things having the promise of the life that now is, and of that which is to come" (I Tim. 4:8) If a form of entertainment, regardless of the pleasure it gives hinders your spirituality, your prayer life, or endangers your Christian morality it grieves the Holy Spirit and therefore is to be avoided and is incompatible with a Christian life style.

The bird is free to fly in the air unhindered. The fish is free to swim only in the water. The child of God has been set free to move in the sphere of holiness and obedience to God's law.

Even when our entertainments are not spiritually and morally harmful, they should not be allowed to occupy a primary place in our lives. They must be only diversions. Their function is to keep us joyful and zestful in our work. They may not become our gods, so that we live for our play. Sports or a recreational vehicle can become a god just as much as a gold or stone statue.

Principle #3:
Separation from the World

A third principle to guide a Christian in the matter of entertainment is the child of God's separation from the world. The word `world' does not always have the same meaning in scripture. The word `world' in the evil sense is the whole mass of mankind alienated from God. It is earthly things, riches, advantages, pleasures which are hollow and fleeting, stirring up evil desires, seducing us from God and are obstacles to the cause of Christ. The "world" is that sphere of evil as it exists on earth. So 'world' can mean 'godless men' or 'the sphere of ungodliness'.

We must stay away from those amusements which belong to the sphere of ungodliness. We as spiritual youth in a carnal world must shun all association with ungodly people and ungodliness. We must realize that the world is no friend to grace. In II Cor. 6:14,15 we read,"Wherefore come

ye out from among them and be ye separate saith the Lord."

The Christian Reformed Church would say that we can have some fellowship as children of God with the man of the world on the basis of common grace. In his general grace God has given certain joys, pleasures, diversions to men and He restrains sin in the hearts of the ungodly so that the diversions and amusements which they devise are not always and necessarily tainted with sin. As Reformed youth, WE REJECT THAT AS UNSCRIPTURAL! There is no general grace. There is no restraint of sin by the Holy Spirit in the hearts of the wicked. Therefore there can be no friendship with evil persons or participation in their works and pleasures. We must shun all the evil that is in their worldly speech, songs, films, and literature. This is not being negative. We cannot be passive to these evils. We must be active in finding entertainment that is wholesome. In all our work and play, the life we live is a heavenly life, and we are called to seek the things above, not the things that are upon the earth (Col. 3:1,2).

Principle #4:
Christian Liberty

Fourthly, a principle to guide us in the matter of entertainment is the issue of Christian liberty. What is Christian freedom? Christian freedom IS NOT the right and ability to do as one pleases. It is the ability to move in the sphere for which God made us. The bird is free to fly in the air unhindered. The fish is free to swim only in the water. The child of God has been set free to move in the sphere of holiness and obedience to God's law. So Christian freedom consists in our deliverance from the power of sin and being brought into the loving service of God His Saviour. We have freedom from the law of God. That freedom does not mean that the Christian has nothing to do with the law, but that the law demands nothing more of the Christian as a condition of salvation. The law can no more condemn and sentence us. We are free from the curse of the law by Christ's atonement. We are free from the law's demands as a condition for salvation (legalism). We are free from the law as an oppressive, galling yoke. We are able by God's grace to say, "Oh how love I thy law". We are free to lovingly serve God in our relaxation and entertainment.

That is really the heart of the issue, is it not? IF YOU REALLY LOVE JESUS, YOU DO NOT NEED TO WORRY ABOUT WHAT YOU ARE GOING TO DO AND NOT DO BECAUSE YOU WILL WANT TO PLEASE HIM! Augustine wrote these words: "Love God and do as you please." If we love him, the do's and the don'ts will fall into line without legalism. We will want to please Him. We will want to abstain from the things that displease Him. If we love Him, our life will not be merely negative, legalistic, or hypocritical. Do you love God, young person? Then it will show itself not only in a Sunday worship service but on your dates, in your work, and in your forms of entertainment.

Notice, I have deliberately stayed away from what is right and what is wrong in entertainment. I am not going to give you all the right answers. YOU WORK IT OUT! You are young people. You will not always be under the eye and thumb of your parents or elders. YOU must take the pains of searching what is pleasing in God's sight. You then will no longer be asking the question, "May I do this?" but "Should I do this or that?" "Is it God-glorifying?", "Is it good for my physical, mental, spiritual well-being?", "Is it the activity of a child of God?", "Is it pleasing in God's sight?"

Spiritual youth in a carnal world as they consider what to do for their entertainment and fun must not let this evil world tell them what is good and acceptable. Rather God's Word is our guide and we must produce our own forms of fun and entertainment that are refreshing, relaxing, and wholesome. I leave you with a couple texts to consider in your small groups:

Romans 12:2 *"And be not conformed to this world: but be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind, that ye may prove what is that good, and acceptable, and perfect, will of God."*

Ephesians 5:11 *"And have no fellowship with the unfruitful works of darkness, but rather reprove them."*

Philippians 4:8 *"Finally, brethren, whatsoever things are true, whatsoever things are honest, whatsoever things are just, whatsoever things are pure, whatsoever things are lovely, whatsoever things are of good report: if there be any virtue, and if there be any praise, think on these things."*

There my friends, that is a good formula for living a spiritual life in your entertainment.

Rev. Spriensma is a minister at Grandville Prot. Ref. Church

Sinless At Birth?

by Nicholas Kleyn

As I was studying up about Pelagius, I wondered if Pelagius ever had children? I say this because Pelagius believed that children were born without sin. As a Father of three young children, I really do not know how Pelagius could come to such a conclusion.

Pelagius was a British monk and theologian born in approximately 360 A.D. Little is known of his early life, and even his birthplace is uncertain.

He came to Rome around 400 A.D. and met up with a man named Coelestius. Together these men preached their ideas concerning how man is saved. In the year 411 Pelagius and Coelestius traveled to Africa to preach their heresy. It was there that they met up with Augustine. It was also here in Africa that Augustine and Pelagius disagreed with each other concerning how man is saved.

Augustine believed in the total depravity of man. He maintained, and correctly so, that it is only through the sovereignty of God that man is saved.

Pelagius had a very weird view of salvation. He taught that every child that is born is born good and without any sin. In fact, he insisted that every child is born as good as Adam was before Adam ate of the forbidden fruit. Sin, in the view of Pelagius, is a habit that is picked up from other people's bad habits. He insisted that there is no need for divine grace and salvation. All a person has to do to break the bad habit of sin is to have a firm enough resolve. Pelagius believed that man can save himself.

Augustine would have no part of the extreme ideas of Pelagius and in 418 he was instrumental in the excommunication of Pelagius from the Roman Catholic Church, the true church of that day.

In 431 the Council of Ephesus condemned the radical views of Pelagius but at the same time they did not want to accept Augustine's views on the total depravity of man and the sovereignty of God in salvation. Instead, the Council found a compromise position called semi-pelagianism in which they believed that the human and divine will could cooperate in salvation. They taught that man was born sinful. At the same time, however, they insisted that man was not totally depraved but had the capability of accepting Christ as his Savior. Semi-pelagianism taught that God offers salvation to all men and it is up to man to accept or reject it.

This is exactly the same heresy that is taught in most churches today. God loves you and all that you have to do is accept him. Isn't it amazing that even in the early days of the church this heresy of God's universal love was taught?

The whole system of semi-pelagianism became the foundation for the Roman Catholic doctrine of works righteousness. It is also the same heresy that our mother church fell into in 1924 when the Christian Reformed Churches adopted the three points of common grace.

It is sad to see that so many people nowadays, just as Pelagius did in the fifth century, deny the total depravity of man and think they can save themselves through their own works. The truth is that we all have this same sin dwelling in us and more often than not we think just like Pelagius. Let us as youth in God's church cling to the truth of God's sovereignty and in this way stay clear of the heresy of Pelagius.

Nicholas Kleyn, a member of Hope Protestant Reformed Church, works as an electrician in Grand Rapids.

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- ○ "Contentment and Anxiety"
  by Rev. M. Dick

We hope to see you there!