BEACON LIGHTS

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Conventioneers:
Outlines for
discussion groups
are inside
for you
to read and study!

"Peer Pressure"
by Rev. Mitchell Dick

"Devotion to the Church"
by Rev. Barry Gritters

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"Little Lights" is a special page for children. Look for it every month!

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Daniel's Godly Witness

by Daniel Kleyn

For most of us the first thing that comes to mind when we think of witnessing is that it is what one does when he tells others about God and about being a child of God, a Christian. That is certainly true. But witnessing is more than that.

Witnessing begins, not with telling others about God and the salvation that we have in Him (though that certainly is a very important part of it), but with our personal behavior and conduct. Our actions are the most important part of witnessing.

In all our witnessing there are only two possibilities - we are either showing ourselves to be children of God or children of the devil. We are each confronted, therefore, by an important question: "Do I show by my actions that I am a child of God, or do others see me and think that I am a child of the devil?"

Examples of godly witnessing abound in Scripture. Many of God's people, in both the Old and the New Testament, were faithful in their witnessing and showed clearly that they were children of God. Perhaps you could sit down and come up with a list of such men and women. Let us for now, however, turn our attention to the example of Daniel. By looking at Daniel we will find out what true witnessing is and involves.

The specific incident of Daniel's life to which we will turn is the well known story of Daniel in the lion's den. Daniel, as we all know, was a godly man who loved God and strove to serve Him. But certain men hated Daniel and desired to kill him. These wicked men devised a plan so that Daniel would be thrown into the lion's den. Daniel knew about this wicked plan, but yet he served God before he obeyed the wicked and ungodly rules of men. In spite of the king's command, Daniel continued to pray to God three times a day.

We see four very important parts of witnessing in the example of Daniel. If we remember this story and remember what Daniel did then we also have a guide for godly witnessing.

First - Daniel acted according to God's law and did what was right in God's sight, and not what man said was right. Daniel knew that he would be thrown into the lion's den, but he went and prayed to God as he always had done. Daniel did what was commanded by God.

This is what you and I should do. God says to us that we must obey him and so we must. Either we act as children of God or as children of the devil. Whenever we disobey God we are acting as children of the devil, as those who are on the way to eternal damnation in hell.

Just as Daniel obeyed God by praying to Him three times a day, so we also must obey God by always doing as He commands.

Second - The second thing that we notice from the example of Daniel is this: when we obey God as we should, then others, both Christian and non-Christian, see how we act and see that we are children of God and not of the devil.

In Daniel 6:1-3 we find that Daniel was made a ruler over King Darius' kingdom. He was not made a ruler because he made himself friendly with the king and sought fame and glory. No! Daniel acted as a child of God. And the king, seeing that Daniel was an honest man and faithful in all that he did, appointed Daniel as ruler because he knew that he could trust Daniel.

You and I must also act as did Daniel. When others see us they should

be able to tell that we are Christians. Each of us must be a godly witness. This does not mean that we have to go down the street and talk about the things of God to people that we meet, though this certainly is a good and important thing to do. But it means that we must witness by our actions.

This is always easier to do when we are seen and observed by our parents and others in authority, for then we know that we will get into serious trouble if we don't do the right things. But what is more important is that we act this way when we aren't seen by those in authority.

What is even more difficult than being a good witness when we aren't seen by parents, teachers, elders, etc., is being a faithful witness when we are with those who are unbelievers and who show themselves to be children of the devil. These people are always ready to laugh at us, to mock us, to hurt us, and even to hate us if we don't do things their way. But we must never give in to them nor join with them in their evil actions. We must never think we can get away with sin. We must always act so that they look at us and see that we are those who love God.

It is here that we see the truth of that well known saying: "A picture is worth a thousand words." By our actions, which are like a picture to those who see us, we must show that we love God and that we are children of God and not of the devil. It is when others see that we are Christians that God is glorified. We are then able to tell others about God and to witness not only by our actions but also by our words.

Third - The third thing we notice from the life of Daniel is that he was persecuted, for he was thrown into the lion's den. Because he obeyed God and was a godly witness he had to face certain death by being eaten by the lions. Daniel realized this, but what did he do? Did he disobey God so that his life would be spared? No! Daniel did not even hide, but he opened his windows and prayed to God as he always had done. The threat of death did not stop him from being a faithful child of God.

You and I also face this. If you are a true witness you will be mocked and laughed at. This will certainly happen, for the world sees us and hates us. The world never wants to be friends with us. The world always tries to make our lives difficult. And sometimes even those who are our own Christian friends will treat us this way. This is difficult, but still we must witness by acting as God commands. Even if we know that we will be mocked, ridiculed, and punished, we still must do what is right. Scripture teaches us this, for we read in I Peter 3:17 - *For it is better, if the will of God be so, that ye suffer for well doing, than for evil doing.*

So what about you? Are you afraid to serve God because you might be laughed at and mocked? The threat of these things is never a reason for not being a good witness. You must always obey God, no matter what the cost may be.

Fourth - This brings us to the fourth and final thing that we see from the example of Daniel. What happened to Daniel in the lion's den? Did the lions kill Daniel? No! Daniel was still alive the next morning when the king went to the lion's den. Was that because the lions weren't hungry? No! The only reason why the lions didn't kill Daniel was because God cared for him. God was with Daniel and saved him from harm and danger and death.

And this is what God will do for you and me too. God has promised to care for us. He loves us who are His children. God controls all things, even the dangers that we face in our lives, and God will care for us when we faithfully witness for Him. Even though we may lose our earthly life, God will care for our souls and bring us to glory. We never need to worry about what others think when we show by our actions that we love God. We must only be concerned about what God thinks. *And fear not them which kill the body, but are not able to kill the soul: but rather fear him which is able to destroy both soul and body in hell* (Matthew 10:28).

Let us remember Daniel and what he did. Remember that he obeyed God. Remember that others could see that Daniel obeyed and loved God. Remember that Daniel was not afraid of what his enemies would do to him. And remember that God took care of Daniel. Be a godly witness. Be like Daniel.

D. Kleyn is a second year seminary student in the Protestant Reformed Seminary.

Coming to Christ in Singapore

by Fook Meng Chia

"For they themselves shew of us what manner of entering in we had unto you, and how ye turned to God from idols to serve the living and true God."The last part of this verse is a perfect description of what many Christians in Singapore have experienced. We are rescued out of heathen idolatry by the saving power of God.We come from a totally heathen culture and society. Unlike all of you, we are born and raised in a thoroughly heathen home. Our parents are either Buddhist or Taoists. Unlike you, we do not have the joy of attending Sunday school when we are young. We do not have the privilege of covenant instructions. Many of us do not even own a Bible until after our conversion. In fact, for the first seventeen years of my life, I never stepped into a Christian church.

But now after twelve years, I thank my God that I can be in a church testifying about the change, the conversion and transformation in my life because of the power of God's saving grace. Really I have no testimony to share. The testimony I have is really the testimony of God's gracious dealings in my life through the Lord Jesus Christ. I confess with the apostle Paul, that I am what I am only because of the grace of God.

I am the second youngest child in a family of 5 children. The first school I attended was a kindergarten that was run by the communists. There was of course no mention of God at all in the classroom. Instead we were taught to look to the state for care and protection.

When it was time that I go to primary (grade) school, my parents sent me to a Methodist mission school. The reason why I was in a mission school was not because my parents wanted me to have a Christian education. The only true reason was because the school was just directly across from where I was then staying.

On the first day of school, we were asked to close our eyes and pray, I did what I was told, except that instead of praying to Jehovah God, I directed my prayers to the pagan gods. I was praying that they may defeat the God of the Christian. I was just 7 years old, and already I was totally hostile against Christianity.

At about the same time, my mother brought me to the temple and dedicated me to 3 pagan gods. One is a monkey god, who is supposed to make me wise; the second is a god with a black face, who is suppose to make me just, and the third is a goddess of mercy, who is supposed to make me merciful. This act of dedicating children to pagan gods is still very widely practiced among the many Chinese in Singapore today.

Studying in a Methodist mission school exposed me to Christian songs, stories and the Christian Bible. Every Monday before school commenced, there was a chapel service with a short sermonette. I never bothered with the services, and some times I would even find excuses not to attend them.

When I was in my final year in secondary (high) school, I was suddenly attracted to the commitment of a particular group of Christians in class. Just before the final exams in the last year at secondary school, one of them came to me, and for the first time, someone actually opened the Bible to me and told me about my sins and the need to be saved. He invited me to pray with him, but I did not. But nonetheless, the message of sin and salvation was not erased out of my mind and conscience.

When exams were over, a group of us went

out to the beach on our bikes. It was an outing I will never forget. On our way back, we lost one of our friends. When we went to look for him, we could not find him. Instead, along the way we saw a pool of blood. Our friend met an accident and he died. More shocking to me, however, is the way the family received the tragedy. The family was very sad, but yet not hopeless. The brother told us that he was taken away to be with Jesus.

At first, I had to be very secretive about what I did at home as a new Christian. I even had to hide in the bathroom to read my Bible and to pray.

That was the first time I heard such a phrase, "taken to be with the Lord." This was the gospel to me that afternoon. It has never occurred to me that there is a hope beyond the sufferings of this life, and that hope is in Jesus.

The first thing I did the next day was to look for a book that explains to me about the Christian faith. So I went into a Christian book store but got instead a book about the last days. For the first time, I really came face to face with the Bible's teachings about hell and heaven, and Jesus and salvation. Before I could finish the book, I was already wanting to know about how to be saved. So I went to the library this time and got a copy of "How to be Borne Again" by Billy Graham. I do not endorse the book now, but that was the book that further challenged me to search more into my relationship with Christ.

A few months later, I went into college. In college, some of my Christian friends invited me to a gospel meeting. The message was very simply explained, and when the meeting was near to the end, hundreds responded to the preacher's invitation. I did not go forward to the "altar call". That night, however, in a small corner at the balcony outside my house, I struggled with the question of sin and forgiveness. Can God really forgive me my terrible sins? Can I trust Him to save me? Can I really have a new life? Can I really be made right with God? It was an intense mental, emotional and spiritual struggle for me. The Spirit finally irresistibly drew me to Christ Himself, and gave me the strength to believe in Him. In the quiet hours of the night, I prayed for the first time to the true and living God, and broke myself away from the bondage of idolatry.

Following that encounter was a new and fresh experience of Bible reading and church going. At first, I had to be very secretive about what I did at home as a new Christian. I even had to hide in the bathroom to read my Bible and to pray. When my parents found out they were extremely unhappy, especially my mum. She was angry that now I refused to take food offered to idols, and to offer prayers and incense to the pagan idols. My new relationship with God also affected my relationship with my brothers and sisters. I could not do the many worldly things we did together. Even until now my two elder brothers refuse to talk to me because we can never agree together. This is the price I paid for becoming a Christian. The words of Jesus that tell us that if any man come to me and hate not his father and mother, and wife and children and brethren and sisters, yea, and his own life also, he cannot be my disciple is especially a challenge to many of us in Singapore. My wife was almost kicked out of the house when she believed. One of my friends was locked inside her room for days, another was disowned by his parents, and another was made to march down the temple with her hands tied because her parents thought she was demon-possessed.

It took a while before my parents began to realize that my God changed me. He had made me a person who once was disobedient and aimless to a person who is now with a new and living hope. All Glory be to God!! My parents, my brothers and sisters are all still unbelievers. This is the case with many of us in Singapore. Many of us are first generation Christians. Our greatest desire is that God also will work a wonder of grace and save our parents from idols to the true and living God. This is our prayer. Amen.

Fook Meng, a member of Evangelical Reformed Church of Singapore, is living in the United States with his wife Lee Choo while he studies at the Protestant Reformed Seminary. Fook Meng is a first year seminary student and is preparing to be a minister in the ERCS. He and his wife currently attend Southwest Protestant Reformed Church.

Prayer and the Young Christian: The Scriptures Speak

by Hib Kuiper, Sr.

This is a warm, enriching article that steps through six passages in the Bible through which guidance we see how the Bible speaks to us about our prayer lives.

I have accepted the challenge of writing on prayer and young people, not because I'm a minister of the Word or even have the ability to do this of myself, but because I have the love of young people at heart. Prayer is a subject that is very near to my heart - especially when it comes to young people.

By starting with Scriptural study, I find that there are many references relating to the subject. In the Bible concordance there are over ninety-nine references alone. Then too, you have the instruction given in the Heidelberg Catechism, Question and Answer 120-129 where it teaches the art and instruction of the Lord's prayer. The Lord's Prayer can be found in Matt. 6:9-13 and Luke 11:2-4. Also there are books written by Protestant Reformed ministers on the subject and instruction of prayer. More are available also by God-appointed men of other churches and denominations.

The very first time prayer is mentioned in Scripture is in Gen. 20:17, "So Abraham prayed unto God, and healed Abimelech, and his wife, and his maid-servants and they bare children." Loudly and clearly, this text speaks to single and married young people - the idea of bearing children must be made a matter of prayer.

The next passage to comment on is I Sam. 7:5. It reads as follows, "And Samuel said, Gather all Israel unto Mizpeh, and I will pray to the Lord for you." We see here that Samuel was praying as a mediator for Israel. That was his charge. Don't forget, young people, we have this same charge! If and when we see friends walking in a way of sin, we **must** pray for them. We **must** speak to them and do these things in love. It is impossible to pray for a way-faring child of God without love, nor is it possible to speak to them in hatred. Remember your charge.

Then in Psalm 5, the complete chapter is a prayer of David. David's life had been spent in much agony up to this point because of his enemies. Make a note as to whom he is addressing. My King. My God. There is no one else to whom he will direct his cry. We know that we are to direct our prayers to the King who has all power because He is God. Not only does He have such power, but He directs all things to His glory. I sometimes wonder if young people are conscious of the greatness of this God - this God to whom we are praying. I must confess that I do not always fully realize that this God to whom I pray

is my Savior. But, this is the most important aspect of any prayer.

Turn your attention to Psalm 55:16-17. "As for me, I will call upon God, and the Lord shall save me. Evening, morning, and noon will I pray and cry aloud, and He shall hear my voice." The Psalmist has three thoughts in mind here. First of all, he knows to whom he is supposed to direct His prayer. In the Lord's prayer, the proper address is "Our Father, . . ." David does the same thing. He directs his prayer as all his others. Like David, we can pray to none greater. We address God, the Creator, the Sustainer of the complete universe for one purpose. This too is the way we address Him in our prayer of morning, noon, and night. Pray - not only when we need something or when there is time, but **often.** Why? When we forget the need to pray, we lose everything, and I do mean everything.

In true prayer, we thank the Lord for **all** the blessings that we experience in this life and the life to come when we shall see God. Therefore, prayer is the act of thankfulness. Then we can pray and be comforted as David was, ". . . and He shall hear my voice."

Paging over to one more passage, we find such thanksgiving and comfort in I Thessalonians 5:17-18. "Pray without ceasing. In everything give thanks for this is the will of God in Jesus Christ concerning you." This does not imply that we absolutely must fold our hands, shut our eyes, and pray continually. Instead, it radiates life and hope. Our life must be a life of prayer. Our walk must be a walk of prayer. When the world sees **this**, they can tell by it: our life is sustained by Jesus Christ the Son of God. This kind of walk will be in harmony also with Genesis 20, I Samuel 7, Psalm 5, Psalm 55, I Thess. 5, and the confessions of our fathers.

So the Scriptures speak. They speak to each and every one of us about prayer. How **we** must pray. How **you** must pray. How **you** must bow before the living God of heaven and earth. Think about that and let this be a Christian admonition - in the love of Christ. So pray, and "abstain from all appearance of evil" (I Thess. 5:20).

This is my prayer for you young people. No - for us **all.**

Mr. Hib Kuiper, Sr. is a long-time member of the Hudsonville, MI PRC congregation.

BOOKS

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Reformed Education
by Prof. David Engelsma
- 86pp. - **$2.50**

Implications of Public Confession of Faith
by Abraham Kuyper
- 68pp. - **$2.50**

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by Rev. R. Harbach
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Jesus' Beauty Shining In You
by Rev. C. Haak and Rev. R. Van Overloop, Don Doezema and Marybeth Lubbers
- 187 pp. - **$6.50**

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Peer Pressure

by Rev. Mitchell Dick

INTRODUCTION

1. A dictionary defines peers as those persons who are "of the same rank, value, quality, ability, etc. . ."
   a. In what way are all of God's people peers of one another?
   b. How are teen-agers peers of one another?
2. "Peer pressure" is a common way to describe the influence that peers can and do have on one another.
   a. Such "pressure " or influence can be good or bad.
   b. Such peer pressure can be for the building up or destruction of souls!

I. A CLOSER LOOK AT PEER PRESSURE

A. The influence we have on one another as peers can and should be for each other's good.
   1. List at least five examples from Scripture of people who were good influences on their peers.
   2. Give at least five ways you are and can be a good influence on your peers.

B. Peer pressure can also be sinful.
   1. How can peer pressure be sinful?
      a. As to the <u>way</u> the pressure is applied? (Read Proverbs 1:10ff; Zechariah 4:6)
      b. As to <u>what</u> one is being pressured to do? (Discuss Romans 12:1, 2)
   2. Give examples of how peers pressure one another sinfully:
      a. With regard to::
         1) Clothing/appearance.
         2) Sports, music, television, movies, etc. . . .
         3) Talents (For example: if you are smarter than other people in the class do you feel pres sured to "play dumb" just to be liked?
         4) Friends/Dating
      b. What about right now: give some examples of peer pressure you see or feel at this convention. Are you putting this pressure on others?

II. VICTORY THROUGH FAITH OVER SINFUL PEER PRESSURE.

A. There are various principles or truths to remember when dealing with peer pressure.
   1. The believer seeks to please God first of all, and not people (Read Luke 12:31; II Corinthians 5:9; II Timothy 2:4).
      a. Pleasing God is our chief joy. How does knowing this help us resist peer pressure (cf. Genesis 39; Psalm 84:10; Hebrews 11:24-26)
      b. A good way to resist peer pressure is always to set before one's mind the difference between a peer and Almighty God, and peer "pressure" and the grace and love of God. How do you think being conscious of this difference will help?
   2. The believer has the right attitude about himself.
      a. What do you need to know about yourself in relation to God and to your peers if you are to resist going along with the crowd in sin? (cf. Matthew 22:37-40; Romans 8; I Corinthians 6:19, 20; 7:7; chapter 12)

b. How does the biblical truth of "contentment" relate here?

3. The young Christian has the proper view of his parents.
   a. Often in pleasing peers we clash with our parents. Why is this so? Give some examples.
   b. How should we relate to our parents, even when they seem so "old-fashioned" or "strict"? (Read Exodus 20:12; Heidelberg Catechism, Q. 104; Proverbs 1:7-9)
4. Regarding other values:
   a. What is the Christian view of friendship? How can we tell which peers are our friends, and which are not? What is it to be a true friend? What is it to have a true friend?
   b. What is true strength? How will true strength show itself in reaction to peer pressure?

B. As we live by these principles we have victory through faith over sinful peer pressure and can our selves be a positive influence on others.

1. A few things to remember about LIVING by the principles of God's Word with regard to peer pres sure:
   a. Grow in the knowledge of the Bible! How do you do this?
   b. Take a stand on the truth - not on popular opinion! Be firmly resolved in your own mind about what is right and what you ought to do or not to do before the temptation of peers comes your way. Give some definite positions that you take or that you could take to help you to resist peer pressure.
   c. Pray to God! How can this help us with regard to peer pressure?
   d. If you are in a position among peers to lead them, lead them well! How can one be a good lead er?
   e. Believe this: God will give the victory with regard to peer pressure! How does God assure us of the victory?
2. Discuss some of the following situations or others from your experience:
   a. Someone asks you to go to a party where there will be alcohol.
   b. You feel that you will be left out, a "misfit" if you are not asked to the banquet.
   c. Everyone of the guys except you has the best name brand sneakers.
   d. You are taking a test and the person next to you asks for some of the answers.
   e. Your friends ask you to go out on Saturday night and your parents expect you to be home by 10 p.m.
   f. Some of the popular people in school have been to the latest movie. One of them asks you if you have seen it.

NOTES:

Watching Daily At My Gates

by Skip Hunter

July 1 — **Malachi 1:1-5** God loved Jacob, What a precious thought, for in loving Jacob He loves us. We believe that God has elected His people in the lines of continued generations. In the Old Dispensation that was mainly from the line of Jacob or Israel. The truth of the covenant in continued generations still holds today. We can take great comfort in that fact. We believe that our covenant God loves us as elect and saves us. Sing or read Psalter 166 especially stanzas 3-6.

July 2 — **Malachi 1:6-9** Do you honor all those who have authority over you? Do you keep the fifth commandment with respect to your parents and others that have rule over you? This is a tremendous calling for the child of God. Why must we obey those in authority over us? Why do we show respect for those kinds of people? We do this because by means of this obedience we show honor and respect for Him who has ordained all authority. We do it because God is our Father. Just as we show love to our earthly fathers, we must show love for our Heavenly Father. What a blessing we have to show our love for Jehovah by our obedience to those who are over us. Sing or read Psalter 304 especially stanzas 1, 6, and 7.

July 3 — **Malachi 1:10-14** Are you tired of attending church every week twice a Sunday? Do you wish you could do something else today? Do you think that a summer Sunday could be put to a better use? This was Israel's attitude after it returned from captivity. Malachi speaks strong words condemning this type of thinking. He does that for two reasons. First of all this was the very sin which caused them to be taken captive. Secondly, this attitude is a slap in the face of God who created the Sabbath for Himself. He has given us this day in which we rest from our daily labors and devote the whole day to Him. Furthermore, according to the Heidelberg Catechism, this day is to be used to prepare us for the eternal Sabbath. Will we be ready? Sing or read Psalter 109.

July 4 — **Malachi 2:1-5** As we think back upon the words of yesterday's sermon what are our thoughts? As we remember past lessons we have learned from God's word whether in school, catechism, or other Bible discussion; what do we remember? Have we laid these words to our hearts? Do we remember what we have heard and ponder them as we go about our lives in this world? As we ponder them do we put them into action? Are they more than just words or doctrines? That is what Malachi calls for the Levites and priests to do. That is our calling today even as we have been made priests by God. We must lay His words in our hearts and use them in our lives as we seek the new Jerusalem. Sing or read Psalter 215 especially stanzas 1, 2, and 4.

July 5 — **Malachi 2:6-10** Is God the God of all His people? Is there any characteristic of the elect that may cause a person to be different in the sight of God? Will God say to a person of a certain race that he will inhabit a different part of heaven? Of course not! All of the elect have God as their Father. That makes them all brothers and sisters in the Lord. How do we treat each other? Are we guilty of putting some down because of some "defect" in their makeup? If we are, then we profane the covenant of God. What a serious sin that is. Let us pray to our Heavenly Father for the grace to escape that sin. Sing or read Psalter 369.

July 6 — **Malachi 2:11-17** The Holy Spirit uses the beautiful bond of marriage and the awful sin of divorce to picture the relationship between His people and Him. The covenant which He has made with us is like the marriage between a man and a woman. But by our sins we have put Him away and have taken a new wife, namely, different gods. The ugly sin of divorce is pictured. In these verses God says that He hates divorce. He hates divorce even as He loves marriage. There are two truths which we must grasp. First we must cling to our husband, God. Secondly we must make marriages that last until only God breaks them by death. Sing or read Psalter 124 especially stanzas 1, 2, and 7-9.

July 7 — **Malachi 3:1-6** Are you ready for the Christ's coming? Israel of old was told to watch because God would send a messenger to announce the coming of Christ, and then Christ would appear suddenly to them. Christ in His second coming will come just as suddenly. We must watch the signs in the heavens, on the earth, and in the church. We must pray for this coming because this is Christ's will, even as He taught us to pray in the Lord's prayer. Are you watching? Are you waiting? Do you long for the day of Christ's return? Sing or read Psalter

390.

July 8 **Malachi 3:7-12** In two days we will again go to the house of God. One part of worship is that of bringing our offerings to the Lord. Will we like Israel of old bring the best of our increase? Will we bring our first-fruits? Israel was required to bring a tenth of that with which God had blessed them. We no longer have such a requirement. We must however give with a willing heart. We must never let the causes of the kingdom fail because of poor attitudes on our parts. There is a blessing in generous giving. That blessing is temporal as well as spiritual. Examine your giving habits, people of God, and give as you have been blessed. Sing or read Psalter 311.

July 9 **Malachi 3:13-18** What a testimony God has given us in verse 17. We are compared to jewels. A jewel is understood to be something precious. But it is also something beautiful. A sparkling ruby, emerald, sapphire is lovely to behold. A diamond is used as a symbol of love between a man and a woman. God calls us jewels. Now we know that we are not jewels of ourselves. Of ourselves we are like lumps of coal. We have the same chemical makeup as coal, but we until we have been transformed by God into a sparkling diamond, there is no beauty in us. We are jewels in God's sight; what a precious thought! Sing or read Psalter 396.

July 10 **Malachi 4** In the churches that many of us attend, the law will be read this morning. Do you remember the words? Do they have an impact upon your life day by day? That is the command of verse 4. We are commanded to remember those words and to live those words. We may not pick and choose which ones we will keep. May that never be our attitude. We must remember each law of God, meditate on each law of God, and live each law of God. May this be our prayer today and every day, since it is only by God's grace that we can remember the law to do it. Sing or read Psalter 334.

July 11 **II Peter 1:1-7** What wonderful words we find in verse 3! Here we read that our God has given us all things necessary for life and godliness. In other portions of Scripture we are called to live a life of godliness. Here we find that it is possible because our God has given to us what is necessary. We have what is necessary because He has revealed to us the knowledge of Himself. This is a great comfort for us because we realize that we do not have to live such a life out of our own selves. We know that if that was the case we would fail. Thanks be to God who has given us all things for our lives on this earth and also the promise of glory. Sing or read Psalter 365.

July 12 **II Peter 1:8-15** Here in these verses we find that the apostle Peter is emphasizing the fact that he has been ordained to teach the church the things of the kingdom of Christ. He does not want to be found negligent in this work by God. He is careful to use the opportunity that God has given him to teach the elect. What about us! Are we careful to use the opportunities to speak of things of the kingdom to others? Parents, are you instructing your children daily? Officebearers, are you zealous in the callings that you have? Young people, are you examples in your speech to those younger than you? Let us take the opportunities and use the time that God has given us on this earth to teach those around us about the things of the kingdom. Sing or read Psalter 372.

July 13 **II Peter 1:16-21** How do you read the Bible, people of God? Do you consider it of no more importance than a best seller? How does it compare with theological books of which you may have read? The answer is quite simple as given by verses 20-21. First of all Scripture is not of private interpretation. Secondly, Scripture is not conceived by man. Finally, Scripture is inspired by God. When you read the Bible, pray for the Spirit to illumine your heart and mind with that Word of God. This Word is sure; this Word is a lamp in a dark place. Use that Scripture so that you do not fall in this life. Sing or read Psalter 337.

July 14 **Psalm 25:1-6** Here we have a prayer of David. Notice that he begins by calling upon the name of the Lord. He does this in the way of trusting in God and asking that he may show this trust even in the face of enemies. He then asks that God leads him upon the paths of truth. He knows that he cannot do this of himself for he asks God to teach him. Finally he beseeches the lovingkindness of his and our Heavenly Father. We need to make this our prayer as well. It does not matter in what station or calling God has placed us. We need to put complete trust in Him from whom all blessings flow. Let us make this our prayer. Sing or read Psalter 64 especially stanzas 1 and 2.

July 15 **Psalm 25:7-14** Sins of youth seem insignificant at the time. We brush them away as a piece of dust. Parents excuse them as the folly of youth. However here David prays for the forgiveness from almighty God for the commission of such sins. He does not treat them lightly. He sees their seriousness and wishes for forgiveness for them. He realizes that before the good God they are despised and wishes to have them blotted out. He then asks that good God to teach him the right way. Do we treat the sins of youth too lightly? We need to read verse eleven again if we do. Thankfully we can pray to God through Christ's name for the forgiveness of sins. Let us approach the throne of grace often and pray first of all for forgiveness and secondly that God will lead us on the path that leads to heaven. Sing or read Psalter 67.

July 16 **Psalm 25:15-22** Are your eyes toward the Lord, people of God? We have many cares and concerns in this life. Some of us grieve inwardly over troubles caused by sin or a lack of self-confidence in the abilities God has given us. Others feel the enemies of God closing in around them and despair. Some have been placed in difficult situations in order that their faith may be tested and strengthened. David realized many of these situations. David learned that his hope was in Jehovah. Is that our experience? Is that our hope? Is that our prayer? Sing or read Psalter 62.

July 17 **John 1:1-9** What is light? Have you ever considered what it would be like to be either blind or to have no light at all? I am sure it would be quite unsettling at first and quite distressing. Spiritually, by nature, that is what we are like. We are blind - groping our way from place to place. We are lost in the basement with the windows sealed and the electricity turned off. We would stay this way as well except that God in His love for His people sent Christ who is the true Light into the world to light our paths. Let us use the Light even as it is revealed in the Word as we walk through this valley of the shadow of death. Sing or read Psalter 78.

July 18 **John 1:10-18** Do you believe that Christ is the eternal Son of God? There are those who do not confess this truth even though we find it in this chapter of the inspired Word of God. What an awful thing that is to deny the divinity of Christ! When you deny His Sonship, you deny your salvation; and you are left hopeless in this life and in the life to come. If we say we believe in Christ, we have a responsibility to see what the Bible tells us about Christ. Then we must always be ready to speak about Him to others. God declared that Christ was His Son to the world when He was on the earth. By faith we can see that He declares that to us as well. Sing or read Psalter 302.

July 19 **John 1:19-28** John the Baptist was sent to this world for a very important purpose. He was to herald the king. He had to proclaim that the king was coming and that the people were to make ready for His coming. There are several lessons that we can learn from this portion of Scripture. First of all, Christ is coming again. Are we listening to the messages that He sends out? Are we making ready for His coming? Secondly, we see John carrying out his work in absolute humility before his Lord. John had a great following; he gave it all up to Christ. Finally, we must see the greatness of Christ is more than that of any man no matter how great he may seem. Sing or read Psalter 155 especially stanzas 2-4.

July 20 **John 1:29-34** The Spirit descended upon Christ. What a comfort that is for us! Even as John bore witness to the fact, we can have the assurance that God blessed the work of Christ as He suffered for our salvation. That Spirit sustained Jesus through all the trials of His three and one-half years on this wicked earth. He promised us through the apostles that He would send the same Spirit to comfort and sustain us during our lives in this wicked world. Do you pray that Christ will give you a full measure of that Spirit? Do you pray that the Spirit be not quenched by your actions? What a comfort to know that Christ upholds us by the same Spirit that upheld him in all His hellish trials. Sing or read Psalter 389 especially stanzas 1, 5, and 6.

July 21 **John 1:35-42** Jesus called twelve men who are described as disciples to work with Him throughout His life on this earth. These men followed Him and learned to do the work of the kingdom. We have this calling as well. First we who are elect of God must follow Christ. We must follow Him by our words, thoughts, and actions. We learn to do this by the Word He has given us. Then we must also do the work He has set for each of us in His kingdom. Each of us has the calling to be a disciple of Christ. All of our work differs as we make up the one body of Christ. Are you following? Are you doing the work? Sing or read Psalter 408.

July 22 **John 1:43-51** Can it be said of us that we are Christians in whom is found no guile? Like most of the disciples, we do not know very much of Nathanael. But we have the words of verse 47. What a powerful testimony to be said by Christ about mere man. Again I ask the question. Can this testimony be said about us? A person with no guile will live a life of love toward God and his neighbor. A person with no guile will have speech salted with grace. A person with no guile will live a life full of the works of the Spirit. There is but one way that this testimony can be said of any man. That way is if that man is seen through the blood of Christ. Let us be guileless in thanksgiving for the great gift of salvation. Sing or read Psalter 13 especially stanzas 1, 2, 5, and 7.

July 23 **Genesis 18:1-8** In these verses we have an expression of Christian hospitality. The writer to the Hebrews uses it as an example for us to follow in the thirteenth chapter. What is our response when strangers enter our church to worship with us? Do we welcome them in the bond of Christian fellowship even as Christ has welcomed us into the covenant? Do we make sure their earthly needs are supplied on the day of rest in which God commands that the strangers within our gates do no work? Abraham prepared a feast for these men not knowing that he was not only entertaining angels but also the Old Testament manifestation of the Christ. Let us show our Christian hospitality to all those brought on our doorstep. Sing or read Psalter 27.

July 24 **Genesis 18:9-15** Is anything too hard for Jehovah? This was the question with which the angels caused Sarah to stop in her lack of faith. Christ, too, rebuked His disciples with much the same words. What about us? Do we sometimes believe that God can not help us from our troubles? Do we think our financial

situation is hopeless and we make decisions that are not based on seeking the kingdom of heaven first? Are we burdened with cares and loneliness from which we see no way of escape? God's blessed words to us are, "Is anything too hard for Jehovah?" What a wonderful comfort He has given us with these words! Sing or read Psalter 29.

July 25 — **Genesis 18:16-22** What a testimony Jehovah makes about Abraham to us! Abraham is shown as the parent that we should all desire to be. We must command our children to walk in the ways of the Lord. We must show them that justice and judgment are God's alone. We must do this constantly even when to say nothing seems far easier. Abraham was blessed because God saw him walking in the way that He commanded. Do we walk in those ways as parents? Do we diligently command our children in the way that they should go? Children and young people, do you see your parents' responsibilities in this matter, and do you honor and love them even as they carry out this task? God will be pleased with those parents who bring up their children in His fear, and He will be pleased with those children who walk in His fear. Sing or read Psalter 357.

July 26 — **Genesis 18:23-33** Here we see Abraham bringing his nephew Lot's needs before Jehovah. Lot had strayed from the right path and was living in wicked Sodom. But yet Abraham interceded for his relative and pleaded with the Lord for his life. Sometimes our friends or family walk in ways that are not pleasing to Jehovah. What must we do about it? Of course we must warn them that the way they go will have bad consequences both in this life and maybe in the life to come. Then, we must get on our knees and pray without ceasing for the soul of that one. We must ask God to deliver that one from evil and temptation so that he is not destroyed. We know that this is pleasing to God as the New Testament testimony about Lot was that he was righteous. Let us remember our erring brothers and sisters in prayer often, and remember that "there but for the grace of God go I." Sing or read Psalter 201 especially stanzas 1, 6, and 7.

July 27 — **Philippians 2:1-11** Jesus Christ! What a name! A name that is far above all names on this earth! Do we confess this name often? We have many opportunities to do so, you know. We can do this within our families as we gather for devotions or as we fellowship together at meal times. We can confess the name of Christ with fellow believers as we worship together, socialize together, or meet together to discuss the Bible. We can confess the name of Christ in the world as we go about our daily lives. In our work we often have this opportunity. Do we make the most of It? Do people hear the reverence that we give Christ's name? Do we esteem it highly in our conversations? Let us cherish that name and let us bow before it. Sing or read Psalter 352.

July 28 — **Phillppians 2:12-18** People of God, do you feel that the exercise of faith in your lives is in vain? Young people, do you feel that it is fruitless to deny yourselves the pleasures of the world for the sake of Christ? Parents, are you having trouble seeing the worth of maintaining good Christian schools for your children? Officebearers, do sometimes despair of the work that you do? Paul easily could have felt this despair in his life. Physically he had it hard. He gave up much, it seems, for the work of the kingdom and the honor of God's name; but yet he said it was not in vain seeing the reward that would be his. Our work is not in vain if it is founded upon the words of life found in Christ. Let this be our hope as we daily strive to glorify God and do His work in the kingdom. Sing or read Psalter 359.

July 29 — **Philippians 2:19-30** In these verses Paul commends certain of his fellowlaborers to the Phillppians. They are commended for two reasons. First of all they were likeminded with Paul toward the work of the kingdom. Timothy and Epaphroditus were zealous to carry out God's will for them and the gospel. Then they were commended because they had made personal sacrifice to do this work. Epaphroditus had become terribly sick and would have died except for God's mercy toward him. Do we have this kind of zeal for the work of the Lord? Are we willing to sacrifice our comfort for the God of the gospel? Let us strive so that we can hear the beautiful words, "Well done, thou good and faithful servant, enter into the joy of your Lord." Sing or read Psalter 248 especially stanzas 1-4.

July 30 — **Psalm 66:1-10** It is fitting for us to consider this Psalm on the day of preparation for the Sabbath. In this Psalm David commands us to worship God. He especially points out the aspect of singing. Do we sing the songs of Zion with great joy? Does every one know it? Why must we sing? We sing in worship to God because He is the great God, His power is boundless, and He holds our salvation in His hands. He tries us as metal is purified by fire. What a blessing to know that our impurities will be taken away before we join the church triumphant in heaven. Prepare today and worship tomorrow with gladness and great joy. Sing or read Psalter 173.

July 31 — **Psalm 66:11-20** If we were privileged to attend worship services today, did we go with great joy? Did we sing in a way that the angels rejoiced over our singing? Were our offerings given cheerfully? Did we listen attentively to the Word of God? Are we prepared to make known the great things He has done for us? We know that our God listens to our prayers, songs, and worship. Was He pleased today? Did we truly bless the Lord today? Let us pray for this ability even as we worship today and every day. Sing or read Psalter 174.

Devotion to the Church

by Rev. Barry Gritters

Conventioneers: Please read through the discussion outlines carefully before the convention. It will be helpful to spend a Sunday afternoon or evening studying the subjects. In this way, the discussion will be interesting and profitable for you. Have some answers written out ahead of time. In this outline, the questions are concentrated in the last half, in II, III, and IV. I pray you will enjoy the convention!

INTRODUCTION

A. DEVOTION TO THE CHURCH IS HEARTFELT LOVE FOR THE CHURCH

1. Definitions
   a. Devotion is ardent love, or affection.
   b. To devote means to center one's attention to.
   c. A devotee is an eager follower, supporter, or enthusiast.
2. Thus, one who is devoted to the church has a heart characterized by ardent (warm) love for the church, but who expresses that love by eager, zealous, and biblical support for the church. Are you devoted to the church? That's the question we want to discuss.

B. THE CHURCH IS THE BODY OF JESUS CHRIST.

1. God's church is not a building, but the people, the members.
2. The Bible does not speak about God's people "going to church" but "going to worship God". It would be helpful for us to think that way, too. (Should the signs on the property in front of our sanctuaries say "Meeting Place of . . . Protestant Reformed Church"?)

C. BY THE CHURCH, WE MEAN THE CHURCH UNIVERSAL THAT IS MANIFESTED IN LOCAL CONGREGATIONS.

1. Sometimes people say they love the church, are devoted to the church, but mean something far different from what we speak here.
   a. They say they love the church universal, that is, the invisible body of Christ in the world.
   b. But they have no interest in a local congregation, no desire to promote her.
2. The Bible teaches that devotion to the church means devotion to a local congregation.
   a. I Corinthians 12:27 says to the church at Corinth: "Now ye are the body of Christ. . . ." It doesn't say, "Ye are part of. . . ." The local congregation at Corinth was considered the "body of Christ."
   b. Our Reformed confessions make clear that our confession of the church is a confession of the body of Christ as it is visible in local congregations. See Belgic Confession, article 28.
   c. If we are devoted to the church, we will be devoted to a local congregation.

DEVOTION TO THE CHURCH

I. The Devotion We Have:

A. IS MODELED AFTER THE DEVOTION OF GOD'S PEOPLE IN OLD AND NEW TESTAMENTS.

1. Psalm 48:2-6, 12, 13. Psalm 84. Psalm 132. The OT tabernacle and temple were pictures of God's church (see Ephesians 2:19-22.)
2. Ephesians 1:15; Phil 4:1; Col. 1:4; I Thess 2:8; I Pet. 1:22,. 2:17; I John 3:14, 5:2.
3. Is our love for God's church like their love?

B. IS ROOTED IN OUR LOVE FOR GOD

1. God loves the church!

a. Read Deut. 32:10, Isaiah 62:3, Malachi 3:17, Acts 20:28, Ephesians 5:25. See how God loves the Church!

b. In Eternity: God loved the Church in eternity, choosing each of us for our special place. In time: His love was so great, He sent His Son to die for the Church in time. Forever: He gives His Spirit to sanctify the Church, preserves her forever.

2. If God loves her well, we should love her well, too!

C. IS A MANIFESTATION OF OUR FAITH IN JESUS CHRIST

1. Faith is union with Jesus, embracing Jesus, finding all our needs, joy, riches, in Him.

2. If we love Jesus, we will show that by loving His body, the Church, giving ourselves to the cause of the Church. If we have no devotion to the church, a real question must arise: Do we have faith in Jesus Christ?

3. Jesus made that point clear in many passages. Two important ones are Matthew 25:31-46 and John 21:15-17.

II. Our Devotion To The Church Is Shown:

A. REALLY, BY LETTING THE LIFE OF THE CHURCH BE THE CENTER OF OUR LIFE

1. We may talk specifically and practically about how our devotion to the church is shown. But the heart of it is this: Where is your heart? Is the welfare of the church you chief joy, the delight of your heart?

2. Discuss how Psalm 137:5, 6 apply to you.

B. IF THE CHURCH IS THE CENTER OF OUR LIFE, OUR CHIEF JOY, THEN:

1. We will have membership in a faithful, local congregation.

a. Why is church membership important? Show what is unbiblical in this comment: "I love God's church, but I don't want to be a member."

b. What place does confession of faith have in our church membership?

2. We will faithfully attend the public worship service of the church.

a. Does this mean being in church twice on Sunday? What about visiting other churches?

b. Does preparation for church on Saturday evening have a bearing on how I give myself to worship on Sunday morning?

3. We will submit to the instruction and rule of the church.

a. This is the third question we answer in confession of faith ("Will you submit to church govern ment, and . . . to church discipline?)

b. Does devotion mean blind submission to the church's instruction?

4. We will be committed to the truth the church teaches.

a. This is the first question of confession of faith ("Do you acknowledge the doctrine . . . taught here in this Christian church to be the true and complete doctrine of salvation?")

b. The church is the pillar and ground of the truth I Tim. 3:15).

c. Our confessions (the Three Forms) are the expression of that truth. How much do you know the confessions? Is this important? Explain your answer.

5. We will love the members of the church.

a. Loving the members of the church is our duty, according to the whole of the Bible. This is what the communion of saints is, according to the Heidelberg Catechism, LD 21, and I Corinthians 12:14-27, especially vs. 25. We show that care for the members in many ways.

b. One, fundamental say is that we heed the calling of Hebrews 10:24, 25. I suggest spending a good portion of your discussion with this passage, asking some important questions:

1) Should we "provoke" each other?

2) What does it mean to "consider one another"?

3) When do the members of your church come together to exhort and provoke each other to love and good works?

4) What place does society life play in this? How does society (Bible study, Young People's, etc.) combine two essential elements of our lives - devotion to God's Word and devotion to God's people?

5) What does it mean if someone says. "I don't need the other members?" Or, "The other members don't need me?"
6) The apostle Paul saw that some in the church were forsaking the assemblings together. This leads to the next section:

III. Threats to our Devotion to the Church

A. THE DEVIL OBVIOUSLY WANTS US TO DEVOTE OURSELVES TO OTHER THINGS BESIDES GOD'S CHURCH

1. The devil hates the church, rails against her, would rip her to shreds if he could.
2. One way of harming the church is by splintering the members.

B. WHAT ARE SOME THREATS THAT YOU SEE TO OUR DEVOTION TO THE CHURCH?

1. Let each discussion group member be prepared to explain two things that pull him away from devoting himself to God's church.
2. Be prepared to discuss methods to resist these threats.

IV. Conclusion: Now, let each member be prepared to suggest two methods to promote devotion to the church.

A. First, how can you personally promote devotion to the church in your life.

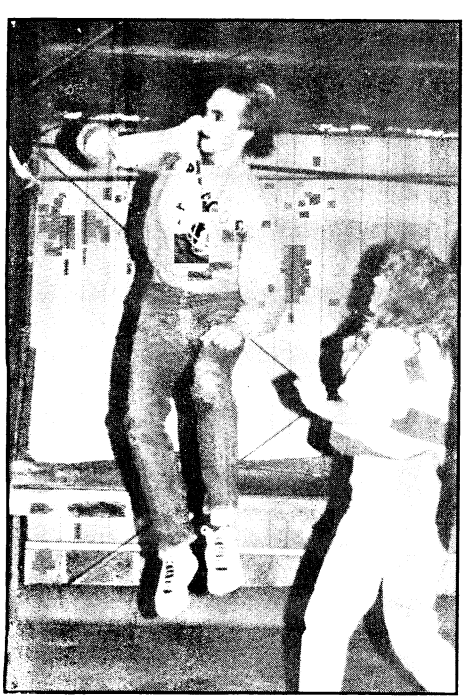
B. Second, how can your YP Society promote active membership in and zeal for the church?

NOTES:

Christian Liberty and Fun

in the mountains of Colorado

by Marla Van Baren



Above: All the retreaters in front of Long's Peak
Left: Bob Bos spikes one home

Sleeping bags, pillows, and suitcases were stowed, the engines started, and the caravan headed for Covenant Heights in Estes Park, Colorado - the 1994 Young Adults' Spring Retreat had begun. The young adults of Loveland, Colorado were joined by people from Michigan, Illinois, Iowa, Washington and Canada for a total of 33 to enjoy some fellowship and fun March 28-30.

The theme of this year's retreat was Christian liberty. Rev. R. Cammenga spoke Monday night on "The Glorious Liberty of the Children of God - Positive Setting Forth of the Truth of Christian Liberty". A few members of the Loveland church braved the snow to attend this lecture and share refreshments and games afterward. Tuesday evening brought dryer roads and more people to hear Rev. C. Terpstra of South Holland, Illinois deliver his spectorage, "Preserving Our Liberty in Christ - The Threats to Christian Liberty of Legalism and License". Afterwards, there was a hot dog roast for everyone in the gym where they also played some volleyball.

Tuesday morning was devoted to discussion groups focusing on whether or not smoking and drinking were found in the area of Christian Liberty. Some viewed smoking as wrong while others kept in the adiaphora of Christian Liberty as long as done in moderation - how many cigarettes a day is moderate, anyway?

The retreaters spent some time in downtown Estes Park and went bowling. Our Canadian friends tried to adapt to the 10 pins - they're used to aiming at 5, eh. The group took an afternoon to play in the snow. Some went horseback riding while others trekked around Bear Lake on snowshoes. Rev. Terpstra vividly remembered his snowshoe trip of last year's retreat and returned a few favors this year. He made sure to stay even with new attackers this time.

In between the activities and good meals provided by Covenant Heights (it really is good food), time was spent playing rook, jenga, other games, and of course nerts - do we even need to mention it?

Snowshoeing at Bear Lake

Rev. Cammenga spoke on "The Christian Liberty of the Children of God"

The retreat was rated a success again, with the main complaint being that it's too short. Therefore, an extra day may be added next year. Hope to see you there! Thanks to everyone who made this a great retreat!

Musical interlude provided by George Bodbyl

Playing rook

Bolsec and God's "Tyranny"

by Jeffery M. Kalsbeek

All throughout the history of the world, beginning already with Adam and Eve, man has desired to be as God. Man has always wanted to have merit in himself, apart from God. Examples of this run throughout history. The Jewish leaders in Jesus' day wanted their own works to be worth something. Another example is the church in Rome at the time of the Reformation, who fell into works righteousness. The Reformation helped to once again point God's people to salvation in Christ alone. But soon after, man once again showed that he wanted a place of honor before God, and it is at this point in history, the 16th Century, that Jerome Bolsec, denier of eternal predestination, takes his place.

Jerome Bolsec was a native of Paris and became a monk in the Roman Catholic Church. Some time after the Reformation, he joined the movement. He had to flee the persecution of Rome, and being spared by a wealthy duchess, went on to be married and start a new career in medicine. A few years later he moved to Geneva, Switzerland, a city where there happened to be an embattled preacher named John Calvin.

Before finding out more about Bolsec, it is necessary to know a few things about the church of this age, in order to get a true perspective of this history. First, the Reformation did not spread by a few believers setting up a church in their city, but instead, the ranking officials from a city such as Geneva, would declare the whole city to be part of the Reformation. Then also, all the citizens of that city were to conform to that decision. So the magistrates controlled things, and there was no "separation of church and state" as we have today in our country. Second, the Reformation in Switzerland was just in its beginning stages, at this time in history (1550's). At this time, John Calvin was busy attempting to organize the church where there was much confusion. An example of this was that Calvin was only now setting up a form of church government (minister, elder, and deacon). Reformation ministers, in their preaching, were just starting to clarify the churches' doctrines and how they stood on certain issues. It was in this Geneva that Jerome Bolsec came.

Being a former monk, Bolsec was interested in theological discussions, and often participated in a meeting of pastors, held weekly in the city. It was at one of these meetings that Bolsec stood up and made his true beliefs known, going so far as to accuse Calvin of being "opposed to revealed truth" when speaking of the doctrine of predestination. Predestination speaks of God's electing some, and reprobating others, even before the world began, apart from any influence from man.

Against this, was Bolsec who proposed a view which was popular in Reformation Europe and which was, in fact, already condemned by Martin Luther, but which had only started to filter into Switzerland. Bolsec asserted that every individual person is "free" to accept or reject God's "offer" of salvation given to all people. In fact, said he, God was a "tyrant" if He would condemn some to hell even before they had a chance to prove themselves. This is how Bolsec denied eternal predestination. If we have a "free will" (are able without God's help) to accept a salvation which God "offers" to us, then our salvation or damnation is

left up to us, and was not planned (predestination) by God before the world began. So here we see, that though the Reformation showed that man's works were nothing, and faith was needed, now man wanted to take credit for that very faith, taking away honor which is rightly God's alone.

Because of his statements, the officials imprisoned Bolsec and put him on trial for heresy. As Bolsec defended himself, the city council was at a loss. His arguments were actually quite convincing and he even claimed that other churches in Switzerland believed as he. One argument was the wickedness of Sodom and Gommorrah. Since, according to eternal predestination, these cities did only that which God ordained, why would God's wrath be kindled against them? He implied that God was the author of sin and questioned His righteousness. Because of the council's indecision, other churches in Switzerland were sought for help. But this was no help at all, for the majority of the churches, still unlearned in this "difficult doctrine" advised leniency and saw room for both views. Calvin, seeing God's very honor at stake, instructed the people of Geneva and uncovered the truth which the Church now has today. Calvin showed the people such passages as Eph. 1:4, 5 and Rom. 8:29, 30 to prove to them God's sovereignty in salvation. He also explained to them that all people are guilty apart from Christ. So then, when God determined to save some, from the terrible judgment they deserve, He is gracious and merciful, and certainly no "tyrant". I don't know how Bolsec could have continued to question God's predestination, His election and reprobation taking place before the world began, and the question of God's fairness, after being shown Romans 9, especially verses 11 - 24. It seems so clear, as evidently it now was to the magistrates of Geneva, for they proceeded to banish Bolsec from Geneva.

"According as he that chosen us in him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and without blame before him in love: having predestinated us unto the adoption of children by Jesus Christ to himself, according to the good please of his will. . . "

The immediate result of this controversy, was even more ridicule and scorn by many, even in the church world, against Calvin. The end result however was summed up by another reformer, Beza. "All that Satan gained by these discussions was, that this article of the Christian religion, which was formerly most obscure, became clear and transparent." This statement also shows that God was controlling these events and directing them for the advancement of His Kingdom.

Even in our own day, this truth of predestination is keeping God's people safe from Satan's clutches, for the vast majority of the so called "church world" today teaches this same "free will" and "well meant offer" (For a closer look at how Bolsec's beliefs have continued in history, look up the Nov. 15, 1993 issue of the Standard Bearer. Volume 70, pages 77 - 79). It has been remarked, that those churches and individuals who no longer speak of God's reprobation and wrath against the world and sin, concentrate more on the "good things" about God. We who preach and talk of God's hatred of men and all sin are more pessimistic. How offensive such talk must be to God. It seems as though such people, in actuality, don't desire a God who has justifiable hatred.

The uncovering of this doctrine has also been used to keep God's people from seeing themselves as the source of their faith and instead, seeing God as the author of every part of their salvation. For, God's children as well as the children of this world are all the same by nature. We all want to hold something before our sovereign Creator and say, "Thou are great, but I am worthy too!" And, if left in sin, all would eventually deny God completely. How humbling this is. Man is nothing, not even able to recognize his need. God must receive all the glory.

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Jeffery Kalsbeek is a member of Hope Protestant Reformed Church. He and his wife have two sons. Jeff works for Kalsbeek Plumbing.

Five English Reformers

Reviewed by
Sharon Kleyn

Ryle, J. C.
Five English Reformers
The Banner of Truth Trust, 1981
149 pps.

Five English Reformers was written in 1890 by J. C. Ryle, a member of the Church of England. Ryle felt compelled to respond to a movement in the Church of England at that time to bring the Church of England back to the Roman Catholic Church, from whom she had broken at the time of the Reformation. There were disputes in the church over the use of vestments, candles, and ceremonies, but more importantly over the bodily presence of Christ in the Lord's Supper. Understandably there were some opposed to these and J. C. Ryle was one of them. In this book he appeals to history to support his cause and takes us back to the time of the Reformation, to that time when many men were willing to give up their life rather than agree to these doctrines and practices of Rome.

Ryle tells of the life of 5 such men: John Hooper, Rowland Taylor, Hugh Latimer, John Bradford, and Nicholas Ridley. All of these men lived in the early 1500's and, therefore, during the time of the Reformation. They were all Protestant bishops or ministers who strove ardently to promote the truths of the Reformation. Several of them had opportunities to flee from England in order to escape persecution, but they chose instead to stand bravely and to fight for the truth. All of these men were also given many chances to recant, but rather than deny their Lord they suffered interrogation, imprisonment, and burning. All of them, because of their faith, were burned at the stake in 1555 during the reign of "Bloody" Mary of England. Even though they faced and bore a painful death, their faith remained strong and sure to the end. This is reflected in the incidents recorded by the witnesses to their deaths. John Bradford, for example, is quoted as saying to the brother with whom he shared the stake, "Be of good comfort, brother, for we shall have a merry supper with the Lord tonight."

The examples these men set for us in how they lived and died should urge us to a more zealous and godly life. Because of this, I would strongly recommend this book for young people, for especially you struggle with all the temptations of this world. The author deals more with the lives of these men than with the doctrinal issues and therefore the book is easy and interesting reading. After reading of the death of each of these men, examine the strength of your convictions and ask yourself this question: "Would I be ready so to die for the things which I believe?" By God's grace, if we ever have to, we will. Let us prepare ourselves, by study and prayer, for such a possible death.

"LITTLE LIGHTS"

. . . let it shine!

"Paths"

by Connie Meyer

"Turn left here, then right at the next street, and then two blocks after that is Rosedale Street," the smiling clerk said.

"Thank you," Carrie and Debby mumbled as they walked away from the gas station. They still weren't quite sure of the way though.

Carrie and Debby were cousins, and they were staying with their grandmother to help her get settled into her new apartment. But now they realized that they were not as familiar with this part of town as they had thought.

"Did he say to turn right after the next street, or after the next two blocks?" asked Carrie.

"I think we have to turn right at this intersection," Debby replied as they neared the corner. "But this street doesn't look very familiar to me either. Oh, how could we get lost just coming back from the grocery store? This bag is getting heavy too, would you mind carrying it for awhile Carrie?"

"No problem," Carrie answered as she took the groceries, although she wasn't as light hearted as she tried to sound.

"I wish we'd asked Grandma to draw us a map before we left," said Debby.

"Me too," agreed Carrie.

Finally the girls came to the street marked "Rosedale," and after looking both directions, they shouted with relief as they spotted their grandmother's apartment building. Excitedly they began to run.

"My, what took you girls so long?" Grandma asked as they came in.

Sheepishly they told her about their getting lost on the way home.

"Well, I'm glad you asked for directions. If you had turned the wrong way, there are some dangerous streets you could have gone down.

"Hm, in a way this reminds me of one of my favorite verses, "Grandma continued. 'In all thy ways acknowledge Him, and He shall direct thy paths,' Proverbs 3:6. You needed directions to my apartment just now, but we all need God's direction all the time."

Connie Meyer is a member of Hope Prot. Ref. Church

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