

The Spring Retreat

Marvin Kamps

As most of our readers know, the young people of the Protestant Reformed Churches from the Grand Rapids area gathered together at Camp Rogers for the spring Retreat. Camp Rogers is located approximately 20 miles northeast of Grand Rapids near Bostwick Lake. If memory serves me correctly, on April 10 and 11 there were about ninety of our covenant young people there for this "Retreat." The purpose of these Retreats, it is assumed, is to provide *Christian* fellowship and *spiritual* edification for our young people. For what other purpose could warrant its existence? These young people were assembled to accomplish that purpose. Their parents expected that every means available would be employed to accomplish this objective. It was their God-given parental right to expect this of us as covenant young people, and the Christ appointed office bearers of our churches expected this of us. And not only they, but God Himself demanded this of us. God, Who has spiritually called us to manifest the life of Christ given us as His regenerated children, demands: "Be ye holy in all manner of conversation; Because it is written "Be ye holy: for I am holy."

To one degree or another we failed! Miserably! And why did we fail? Because we did not employ every means possible to accomplish our purpose for gathering as covenant people.

Here is what we did. Very properly, we began our Spring Retreat with prayer. One of the young men from the Federation Board led us in prayer, asking for the blessing of God; for His race that we might do everything to His glory and honor...etc. But immediately after we stood before the majestic throne of God earnestly seeking His grace and blessing – three young men, two strumming electric guitars and the other playing an accordion, began to make rock and roll music. First of all they played a song entitled "Wipe Out" followed by the singing of some hillbilly love songs. We all sang some of the following songs: "Five Hundred Miles," "High Barbaree," "Puff the Magic Dragon," "Where Have All the Flowers Gone" and others. All this was employed, I take it, as a means to stimulate Christian fellowship. Or was it a means to our spiritual edification, to our spiritual enrichment? And not only that but it was to receive the blessing of our Holy God and Father in Heaven. And did it proceed from His grace and Spirit? Nonsense! After much rationalizing, I still cannot make myself believe that that rock and roll type music could have been a means to stimulate Christian fellowship, or be a means to our edification. I do not think that God was well pleased with us.

Maybe you sense the incongruity, the spiritual inconsistency of it all. First to pray as covenant young people for the grace and blessing of God, and then to immediately begin singing these songs. And to have done that in the name of, and representing the Protestant Reformed Churches. Really we represented the cause of Christ Jesus our Lord. It certainly is a cause for shame and humility on our part. We didn't create the proper spiritual atmosphere for the Retreat. We should have begun as we closed the Retreat, with the singing of some hymns and psalter numbers. Then we would have at least attempted properly to create the right atmosphere for the entire Retreat. If we had done something like that the whole Retreat, which had several good aspects, would have had a unifying spiritual character.

I have one other negative criticism to make. Our time was on the whole rather poorly used. If we were to achieve our objectives at the Retreat we had to work at it, and that required time. All day Saturday, except for two one-hour sessions of group discussions, was spent playing volley ball, football or just aimlessly wandering about the camp grounds. I am not

condemning the sports activities as such because I recognize the need for something through which the young people can release their boundless energy. But there is no need to spend the greater part of the day at such activities. To make these Retreats a success we will have to utilize our time somewhat better with events a little more closely related to the purpose of having a Retreat.

I have said all I care to say about the Spring Retreat of 1970. But what about the Retreats of the future? Are we going to continue and probably increase the amount of time singing secular songs and listening to guitar music at the Retreat? I hope not. And if you do, you will have destroyed the Retreats. We must strive to provide better outings, i.e., spiritually better outings. What can we do to provide better Retreats?

In the first place, I would suggest that the Federation Board must seek the advice and approval of its advisors and youth coordinator for whatever activities are to take place at the Retreats. This has not always been done in the past. The Federation Board has done much for which it can be commended. But I think it can do a better job if it were compelled to gain the approval of its advisors in all its activities. Secondly, it seems to me that the individual societies have not established good contact with its Federation Board. Each young people's society should be well informed in advance of what the Federation Board has programmed for these Retreats.

In conclusion, let us not look around for someone to blame for past faults and short comings of previous Retreats; but let us as covenant young people, as societies working with the Federation Board and its advisors, attempt to provide a much better Retreat next time the Lord willing.

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