

# BEACON LIGHTS

for

**PROTESTANT  
REFORMED YOUTH**

August - September 1966

*Convention in Retrospect*

*Thoughts on the Doctrine of Election*

*Helps for Bible Study on  
The Epistle of James*



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FOR PROTESTANT REFORMED YOUTH

VOLUME XXVI

AUGUST - SEPTEMBER 1966

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# Convention in Retrospect

by MARY KREGEL

The 1966 convention—a memory now, but for the Young People's Society of Southeast Church, as hosts, it meant months of planning, frustrations, and triumphs. The final preparations were made, and last minute ideas were approved of or scrapped; all that remained was to welcome the guests as they arrived.

Thursday night was registration night for all conventioners and lodging assignment night for the out-of-towners. Badges, booklets, and tickets were handed out, and many old acquaintances were renewed.

Friday morning everyone tried to get to the business meeting on time. There were a few latecomers, and a lot of yawns and sleepy eyes were in evidence. After final registration had been completed, everyone trooped upstairs for the official opening of the 1966 convention. The convention theme song was sung, the text was read, and prayer was offered. Our president then introduced the delegation from Redlands and the visitor from Lynden. This was the first time that either of these churches had been represented, and everyone was happy to have them share in the enjoyment of the convention.

After dealing with most of the business, the delegates and visitors were ready to "break the monotony of the business meeting" by listening to a speech by Prof. H. Hanko. Because Rev. Veldman was ill, the professor took care of both topics, "Faith of Our Fathers in the Old Testament," and "Faith of Our New Testament and Early Church Fathers." He showed us that despite the persecutions and hardships the church has continually faced, it has always remained faithful to the truth.

After the speech, a film was shown on the church from the time of Christ through the Reformation period.

Lunch having been eaten, we resumed the business meeting. A speech was given by Rev. G. Lubbers on "Faith of the Reformation Fathers until Today." He charged us to diligently study God's Word, because only then can we keep the faith. A special number was then rendered by Shirley Bouwkamp on the clarinet.

Friday evening was the night for the Inspirational Mass Meeting. Despite the fact that the photographer was late for the taking of the convention picture, everyone still smiled for him.

Rev. G. Lanting was the speaker for the Mass Meeting on the topic "The Seeds of Faith." He showed us that the implanting of the seeds of faith within the believers' hearts was the work of the Holy Spirit. An organ and piano duet was played by Mary and Ellen Kregel, and Mr. and Mrs. Cornelius Jonker sang "Perfect Peace," a song written by the late James Jonker.

Refreshments were served and impromptu performances were given by the various groups. These were very well done, and they included rhythm bands, book reviews, and short stories. (Who can forget Duane Gunnink's performance on the cymbals, or Pat Kamps' book review of "Little Red Riding Hood"?)

Saturday morning dawned bright and clear—a perfect day for an outing. After first assembling at Southeast Church for last-minute instructions, we left in rather packed cars.

We arrived at Jack and Jill Ranch where we registered and received our ranch

badges. There was a variety of activities, so everyone scattered in whatever direction he wanted to. Horseback riding was the choice of many young people, while others went swimming, paddle-boating, or row-boating. Tennis seemed to be the favorite sport of a few ministers, as they were seen wielding rackets.

A delicious lunch of chicken was served in the mess hall, after which Rev. D. Engelsma gave the second main speech on "The Growth of Faith." He showed us the prevalent errors of our times, especially the error of indifference to the teachings of the Word of God. He also told us that we can combat these errors only by studying and learning, thereby increasing our own faith.

The ranch hands set up archery and target shooting in the afternoon, and many tried their hands at them. Supper, which was served on the beach, was followed by a songfest led by Rev. Lubbers. After prayer, we all left for Grand Rapids.

Sunday morning was an opportunity for the out-of-towners to visit in one of the Grand Rapids churches. That afternoon, discussion groups met in Adams St. School. These were very well attended and were enjoyed by everyone present. The topics were under two headings, "Faith in Our Walk," and "Education." After discussing their topics for forty-five minutes, the groups met as a whole and summarized their discussions. This was the first year that discussions like this were really organized, and all the young people felt spiritually enriched by them.

After church services Sunday night, the conventioners gathered in First Church for the singspiration. Chuck Westra, who led the singing during that inspiring hour, began by saying that he was glad that he could stand up all night instead of sitting down as we had to, since we had gone horseback riding the day before. Special numbers were a vocal solo by DaVonna Miersma and a piano solo by Shirley Gritters.

The Monday morning rain didn't dampen the spirits of all those who turned out for the pancake breakfast at Douglas-Walker Park. After eating the delicious pancakes, everyone returned to Southeast Church for the completion of the business meeting. The delegates elected officers, and then it

was time for lunch. The afternoon began with the annual softball game between the East and the West. Both teams displayed some fine talent, but the game ended in a tie.

A debate was then held on the topic "Resolved: That young people should take more active part in mission work." It was an excellent debate, and the victory went to the negative. The five Westra girls sang for us while the judges made their decision.

Although time between the debate and the banquet was short, everyone managed to get to the Mayfield gym on time for the banquet. A good ham dinner was served and eaten. Rev. J. Kortering then spoke on "The Fruits of Faith." In this very practical speech, he told us that we should show our faith by how we act, and in everything we do.

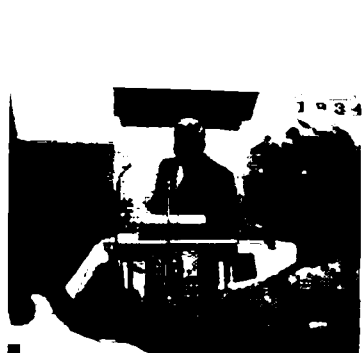
After the speech, Karl Van Oostenbrugge showed beautiful slides on "The Four Seasons." The new officers were presented, "God Be With You" was sung, and another convention was a memory.

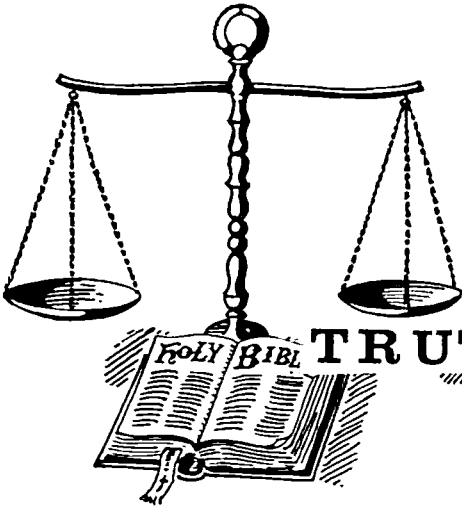
This convention was unique in that it was held over a weekend, which made it possible for many more young people to attend. Southeast's young people did an excellent job of planning a convention which would suit the tastes of young adults; this was evidenced in the way that all the conventioners eagerly participated in all planned activities. The young people also gained much spiritual enlightenment from the convention. The good attendance at the speeches and the thoughtful exchange of ideas at the discussions showed this very clearly. We can truly say as Protestant Reformed young people, "The Lord hath done great things for us, whereof we are glad."

The song "Perfect Peace," written by the late James Jonker (from First Church) has come from the press at last. If you are interested in obtaining a copy of this sheet music, please contact Mrs. H. C. Hoeksema, 1842 Plymouth Terrace, S. E., Grand Rapids. The price is fifty cents and the family has stipulated that the proceeds will go to the Prot. Ref. Scholarship Fund. If you wish to have this music mailed to your address, please enclose ten cents for postage and handling.









## TRUTH vs. ERROR

by REV. ROBERT C. HARBACH

### 16. THOUGHTS ON THE DOCTRINE OF ELECTION

#### 14. ITS RESISTANCE, cont'd

God is the only one with a sovereignly free will. Has He not the right to exert it as He pleases, to do what He will with His own, to predetermine the destiny of all His creatures? But proud, self-assertive, would-be autonomous man objects to this. By nature a rebel, he pickets the Lord carrying his little placard, "God is unfair!" This because God hath mercy on whom He will and whom He will He hardeneth. He reasons that God should create all men equal, and give everyone the same opportunities for life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness, as well as for salvation. It is partiality to show mercy to one and severity to another. What is the answer to this objection? This: "Nay, but, O man, who art thou that repliest against God? Shall the thing formed, say to Him that formed it, 'Why hast Thou made me thus? Hath not the Potter power over the clay, of the same lump, to make one vessel unto honor, and another unto dishonor?'" (Rom. 9:20f).

God's people may find the mystery of this difficulty made plainer when they understand that "God is light" as well as "God is love." He is a just God as well as a Saviour, holy as well as gracious. Both of these aspects of the truth are seen in predestination. In the election of His people, God reveals the riches of His grace. In the reprobation of the rest, God proves His holiness and justice.

Does God owe all men without exception eternal salvation? If so, then He must also owe them earthly prosperity. For argument from greater to lesser is conclusive. If God, to be perfectly just, must provide for the salvation of all men, so He is bound to make equal provision for man's material welfare. But do all men have equal spiritual and temporal opportunities? Not in this world where God is indisputable Sovereign. Does this, then, make Him unjust? Who will be as big a fool as the Devil to suggest it? But are not the providences of God inscrutable and mysterious? Unquestionably so. But these mysteries reveal not the injustice of the Almighty, but the superficiality of finite understanding. Take comfort in the biblical doctrines of predestination and providence, which reveal His infinite attributes of wisdom, power, holiness, justice, goodness, truth and love.

An unfailing perennial objection to God's election is that it destroys man's responsibility. If God foreordains whatsoever comes to pass, as the Westminster Confession puts it, if His decree fixes every event in history (Acts 2:22, 23; 4:27f) and settles the destiny of every man, then all human responsibility is destroyed and man becomes a stock (a log) and a (concrete) block. Therefore Arminians insist that man's will must be free to choose good or to choose evil, otherwise man's moral agency is destroyed. This is why modern prophets, like Billy Graham, and their duped followers conclude that man

ultimately, and not God, decides his eternal destiny. What is wrong with this objection is that it confuses responsibility and free will. It assumes that ability is the measure of responsibility. But there is no principle more erroneous. Man's responsibility was in no way diminished by the Fall. Responsibility remains, whatever man's ability or lack of it. Human responsibility is one thing, free will another. Man has as much responsibility as he ever had before the Fall, and more. But his will is not as free as it was before the Fall. Now the will of fallen man is free only in the direction of sin. Therefore human responsibility and free will are basically different. They are not to be confused. Fallen man suffers total moral impotency, and so a total moral and spiritual inability. Yet he is as fully responsible as sinless Adam was in the state of rectitude. The idea that his responsibility before God is only according to the ability he has as a totally depraved sinner is a philosophical dream. This means that the more wholly incapable of any good man becomes, the less responsible he becomes. But the law of God holds man responsible in every respect, in thought, word and deed, and that personally, perpetually and perfectly.

Another objection against the truth of predestination is that it precludes the use of God-ordained means. In fact, some who draw the wrong conclusions from this truth do assert that those chosen to salvation will be saved although they remain utterly ignorant of the Gospel, never see a Bible, never hear a preacher of the Word, nor hear the name of Christ.

This is an objection against, not the Reformed doctrine of predestination, but a strange conception of predestination, that is, a predestination of an end without any regard to means. This is a Mohammedan view of predestination. It is fatalism. It wrongly assumes that God fulfils His purposes without the use of instrumental means and secondary agencies. God has chosen the elect, not on the foresight of their faith, but *to* faith, *to* salvation, and *to* every saving good. Nevertheless, it still remains that God from the beginning hath so chosen you "*through* sanctification and belief of the truth" (II Thess. 2:13). Faith and sanctification of life are not conditions of salvation, since they are a very part of

salvation. But they are means unto final salvation. Our salvation is in three historical stages: its beginning (regeneration), its continuance (faith and sanctification), and its end (glorification).

God ordained to save His elect by means of faith and sanctification. To say that God's elect will be saved without the use of means whatsoever is absurd. We are not thinking of man's means, but God's means, the means He has ordained and commanded to be used. Abraham was ordained to be the father of many nations. Was he so ordained without the use of means? To say that he would be such a father apart from any means is like saying he would be, even if he had died in infancy. Hezekiah was ordained to live fifteen extra years, but could he have so lived without food or sleep? The decree of God was revealed to Joshua that he could conquer Jericho, but could this have been realized if Israel under their own fig tree had sat down with folded arms? No, because God had also ordained *how* the city was to be taken.

There are the heathen. Some of them God has ordained from all eternity to life and salvation. He has ordained that some of them shall call upon the name of the Lord. They have never heard the name of the Lord. But they shall call upon His name, and "whosoever shall call upon the name of the Lord shall be saved" (Rom. 10:13). Still, "how . . . shall they call on Him in whom they have not believed? and how shall they believe in Him whom they have not heard? and how shall they hear without a preacher? and how shall they preach, except they be sent?" (10:14f, ASV). God does deign to use the agency of human instruments, as preachers, and the preaching of the Gospel unto the salvation of His people. Does this make salvation dependent upon man? Not when it is all dependent upon *His* furnishing, setting forth, using and blessing, the means.

The Arminians who are undying in their resistance to this truth use certain pet Scripture texts against it, such as Prov. 1:24, 25; Isa. 65:2 and Matt. 23:37. Take the latter, for example. "O Jerusalem! Jerusalem! thou that killest the prophets, and stonest them that are sent unto thee, how often would I have gathered thy children together, even as a hen gathereth her chickens under her

wings, and ye would not!" This outcry of Christ's is said to be incompatible with Calvinism, since it shows plainly that the will of God can be resisted and the desire of Christ can be frustrated. Now such reasoning flies in the face of the heart of the Scripture truth that God is God. For a disappointed, defeated, thwarted, helpless God is not the God of truth. To prove that the decrees of God can fail is to prove that there is no God! The trouble is, the Arminians interpret this text most incorrectly. As John Gill wrote, ". . . this Scripture . . . they are ready to produce on every occasion against the doctrines of election and reprobation, particular redemption, and the irresistible power of God in conversion; and in favor of sufficient grace and of free will and power in man . . ." Notice what Christ does *not* say. He does not say, How often would I have gathered *you*, and ye would not. Nor, I would have gathered thy children, and *they* would not. He said, "I would have gathered thy *children*, and *ye* would not." The Lord does not teach here that it was His purpose to gather all mankind without exception, nor that he wanted to convert persons who would not be converted. We have here two wills, the will of Christ and the will of man. Christ wills *Yes*. Man wills *No*. Christ says, I would. Man says, I would not. The question is, which of these two wills shall have its way? for one or the other must be sovereign. Either "I would" must win out, and then "thy children" must be gathered, or "ye would not" must win out and they cannot be gathered. When the Lord says, "I would," can man's "I will not" stop Him? "Whatsoever the Lord pleased, that did He!"

### 15. ITS PROCLAMATION

Doctrinal preaching has all but died out in this generation. Even where the Heidelberg Catechism is still read from the pulpit, it is often used only as a spring board to digress into anecdotal orations. The Word of God is both doctrinal and practical. The Belgic Confession is doctrinal in emphasis. The Heidelberg Catechism is personal and practical in emphasis. Why then do some claim we need more experiential preaching, and not so much dry doctrine? In "holiness" circles, the cry is, "More of Christ, not theology." This is a foolish, dangerous out-

look. How can you test practical preaching as to whether it is sound, if it be divorced from the doctrine contained in Scripture? Without doctrine, there is no standard of judgment. The "Christ,-not-doctrine" philosophy is impossible. Christ cannot be known, understood, recognized and received unless He is preached. Without doctrine He cannot be preached.

Why is this great truth so widely omitted from the preaching in American pulpits? One reason is because of ministerial laziness. Most ministers do not care to spend much time in the study. When you discover the long list of Communist-front connections some "ministers" have, you know they rarely, if ever, make use of the study in the work of the church and the gospel. Real study is physically and mentally taxing. It takes painful effort to prepare a series of sermons on the doctrine of the church, than to present addresses on prayer, missions, and ecumenicism. Sound expositional preaching requires an intensive study of Scripture and hours of perusal of the older biblical works. Many ministers, if they do put in as much as eight hours a day of work, spend it in visiting, in laboring for the advancement of Socialism and in meditating on the golf course. They know nothing of "Give attendance to reading . . . take heed unto thyself and unto the doctrine: continue in them" (I T. 4:13, 16).

(To be continued, D.V.)

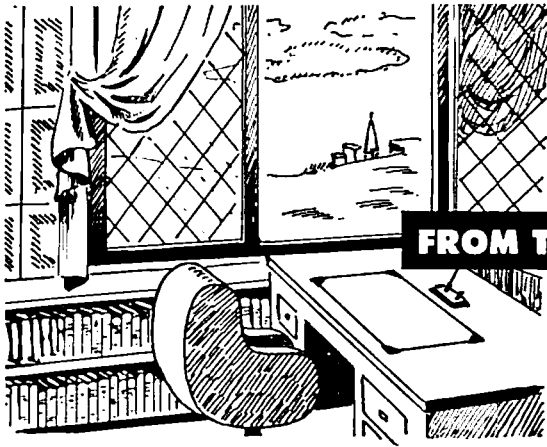
CONGRATULATIONS to Shirley Bouwkamp on being the first recipient of the Protestant Reformed Scholarship Fund. May God bless you in all you do, Shirley.

THE FEDERATION BOARD

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Please send all articles and contributions to the editor's new address:

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## FROM THE PASTOR'S STUDY

REV. G. VAN BAREN

### "MA, MOVIES ARE LEGAL NOW!"

The complete decision I do not have. I am waiting to receive this. But a report was written in the magazine *Christianity Today* on the decisions taken at the last synod of the Christian Reformed Church. One decision as reported there struck me — and I thought that you young people would also want to know of it. I'll quote it.

"After long holding a standoffish position against Hollywood movies, the synod adopted an extensive, positive document on 'The Church and the Film Arts.' It asserts, 'If our Christian witness is to have relevance and redemptive value in modern society, it is necessary for us to make the meaningful distinction between the film arts as art forms, which are to be judged as legitimate media of culture,' and as 'products, which are in each instance to be subjected to the moral judgment of the Christian community.' The report also declares that 'although the film arts as a cultural medium is largely under secular control, its products are no more secular than . . . the daily newspaper, the radio, or the literature of our western world, and can be used similarly for cultural edification.'

"One delegate asserted that the adoption of this document was a clear sign that C.R.C. has really changed. Another delegate was overheard calling home, 'Ma, movies are legal now.'"

One could wish that Rev. R. Veldman, pastor of the Oak Lawn, Ill. Christian Reformed Church, could have been present at

that meeting of synod. He surely would have warned them strongly, as he did in his pamphlet, "The Movie," concerning the taking of such a decision. He could have told them, as he did in the pamphlet, "Many simply crave sin and the pleasures of the world, though they know very well that it is abominable in God's sight. But the movies feed that corruption and hasten the decay, with the result that interest in the things of God's kingdom decreases and Scripture study, prayer, catechism work and society life suffer accordingly. The ultimate result is the death of the church, historically. The two, church and movie, cannot exist side by side. In the measure the one becomes popular the other is doomed. The church today is evidence for this truth. God's people must know this, in order that they may take a firm stand against this manifestation of the kingdom of darkness; turn, if need be, from this sinful way and walk unswervingly in the way of the living God." (Incidentally, this pamphlet is yet available. All our young people ought to read and study it.)

One receives the impression from the report in *Christianity Today* that the Christian Reformed Church has finally grown up. I recalled the story, as I read the above report, of the young boy who was learning to ride his bicycle. To impress mother, he came around the block saying, "Look ma, no hands;" then later, "Look ma, no feet." Then came the last sad appearance of the

boy who said, "Look ma, no teeth!" So the C.R.C. has grown up. It can now take its place among the many other churches which have a like stand. Its delegates can call home, "Look, ma, movies are legal now." And they can tell "ma" more too soon: "Look, ma, Christ died for all men now; and, God didn't create the world in six literal days as Genesis teaches; etc." Then finally the day comes when the same delegate must call home, "Ma, we have no more church!"

But my concern with the decision of the C.R.C. on the movies is the effect it will have on you, our young people. You can not help but get the impression that if our "mother" denomination has changed its stand on the movies, maybe we ought to also. And, because the sinful thoughts of this flesh enter our minds too, the idea can come to mind: "Here's a church to which one can belong — and still be called 'Reformed,' yet where one won't be 'bugged' about movie attendance all of the time."

The Protestant Reformed Churches yet stand opposed to movie attendance. And their reasons are as cogent as ever. We are not opposed to the invention itself. We are not opposed to pictures which present motion. We are opposed to dramatic presentations which are shown in the "movies." And you, young people, must hold fast to that position — not from compulsion but from conviction. In brief, these are the principal objections we have:

I. Movies are dramatizations. These of necessity must be portrayals of man's sin or his goodness. Usually, of course, man's sins form the central theme of the movie: adultery, murder, theft. These are the subjects which men find most entertaining. Movie advertisements prove this. But if the sin itself is displeasing to God, can He be pleased in the dramatization of sin? The Belgic Confession emphasizes in Article 37, "All men shall give an account of every idle word they have spoken, which the world only counts amusement and jest. . . ."

Equally impossible is it to portray the good. Can corrupt natural man pretend the righteous walk of Moses? of Luther? It is gross hypocrisy for one of this world to pretend, for our entertainment, that he is one of God's saints. The goodness of the saints seldom becomes the theme of the movies of the world — but when it is, this

is more revolting even than its presentation of the world's iniquities.

II. The movies definitely mold the morals and standards, the ideas and attitudes of men. This is particularly true for the youth who come under the influence of the movie. It is simply a fact that there is either conscious or unconscious imitation of what is presented in the movie. Drinking, for instance, is presented as common-place and acceptable in good society. Man's ideas of divorce and remarriage are set forth with all of its human logic. Gross materialism underlies the actions presented. The songs of this world are sung — in ways which invite imitation. Dancing is shown as part of a "normal" person's life. Man's thoughts on sex are clearly set forth. His love-making is portrayed as a standard for youth to imitate. And one could go on. A person might argue that the Christian can view what the world presents in its movies — finding therein his entertainment, but at the same time rejecting that which is contrary to his confession. But the fact remains that the constant repetition of the sins of mankind as "normal" makes its impression upon anyone who places himself under such instruction. A constant dropping of water eventually wears away stone itself. So a constant attack upon the principles of the law of God gradually erodes the value of that law in the mind of man. No child of God may willingly place himself in such circumstances where he knows this takes place.

III. The movies are produced by corporations whose sole intent is to earn money. Its actors and actresses for the most part are admittedly godless and immoral. Yet these latter are admired and imitated by their fans. Their dress, their speech, their songs become the norm of young people. It is a shame when within the church one sees imitators of the world rather than imitators of Christ. Yet this is one of the results of movie attendance.

IV. Finally, it could be pointed out that the theme of the movie usually involves specific sins — most often, adultery. Movies are appealing because of their entertaining use of transgressions of God's law. But one can also question the themes of the "good" movies. One of these, "The Sound of Music," has been given five academy awards

for excellence. Many of the church have also praised the same film. Strange, isn't it, when world and church can unite in praise of a movie? Supposedly it is good because of the absence of presentations of gross transgressions of God's law. But is its

theme to God's glory and in harmony with His law?

Do not be deceived, young people. Movies may be legal now in the C.R.C., but they are not in our churches. Pray to God that we may stand firm in this position.



# CRITIQUE

by ROSALYN REITSMA

## IN REPLY

I feel that Rosalyn Reitsma in her article entitled "Chalk Line" has approached an apparent problem, but with fallacious evidence. Admittedly there is a gradual crumbling of the religious wall, therefore subjecting us more and more to the immediate world, but is this due to the influence of artists such as Hemingway and Michelangelo, or our own individual complacency about setting up standards? I mean the complacency of efforts in developing the potential sense of responsibility within young children about their own lives. Inevitably we are faced with reality if we read books and see paintings or not.

Responsibility should be encouraged in setting up standards in relation to the evaluation of the world and its products. If Hemingway and Michelangelo are breaking down systems that we are supposedly setting up then the power of what they have to offer should be the question.

Among the artistic world it is understood that a work should not be judged by the artist's personal life. Hemingway's book *The Old Man and the Sea*, illustrates a point of optimism and meaning in life which is a direct reversal of his personal life which ends in suicide as R. Reitsma pointed out. The "old man" fights the masses for his individuality and finds his

satisfaction in the struggle with the fish. The tourists judge the outcome on material gains and therefore, upon seeing the skeleton of the fish judge the trip to be futile. Hemingway states in the novel that man can be destroyed but not defeated. It is in enduring that the old man finds durance. Is this the futility of life that R. Reitsma refers to? Is she judging on material gains?

In an autobiography by Hemingway there would possibly be the pessimism and futility of life, but is this a basis to exclude from one's reading list a book which prods one on to know himself and choose that life which has the most meaning for him? Is not that why you as a reader are even a subscriber to the *Beacon Lights*? You enjoy the articles and they give you a deeper meaning for your life through the questions it may ask and answer.

Also, Michelangelo's paintings are the subject under scrutiny, not the painter's personal life. Does not God often produce great things through the world? Michelangelo strove to portray in a statue the very magnificence of life that God has endowed on humanity. Is art less beautiful and less worthy because an un-Christian person has produced it? I beg to differ. Art is art, greatness is greatness, and reality is reality.

The standards that we set up in ourselves

and help to develop in others will cause the wall to continue crumbling or to be reconstructed.

Respectfully submitted,  
SHERYL VELTING

Before beginning my defense of the position I assumed in the article, "A Chalk Line Drawn," I would like to thank Miss Velting for the interest she expressed. It is through healthy discussion and interest that our *Beacon Lights* will continue to thrive as an expression of Protestant Reformed opinion. I would also like to state that the opinions which follow are in brief, so that our young people will find it easier to understand and read them. However, if further elucidation is desired, it can be had upon request.

### THE WALL

What is art? This question has plagued Godly man since the distinction between what is beauty and what is ugliness first existed. In the early days of the earth, there was no question as to what was art: It was simply what God made beautiful in man's eyes. However, as time continued on its journey toward eternity, the issue, the answer to the question, became clouded. The Greeks came with their pagan ideas of beauty, the Romans came, but there is no evidence recorded that the Christian community followed or accepted these heathen standards of beauty. Came the Renaissance, however, and the Christian community of that day was swallowed up in the "new" standards, which, as evidenced by the name were not new, but simply a re-birth of what had been before. From that day to this, there has been increasing difficulty in distinguishing between what is true art and what is merely the beauty or art of heathen man. It is this distinction which I maintain, unequivocally, to be part of the wall between the Church and the world. It is this distinction which makes the wall a strong buttress against evil, while it is the blurring of the distinction, the confusing of true art with the art of the world which turns this buttress into a mere chalk line.

What, then, is true art? I noted the definition as I saw it, in the form of a question in the article "A Chalk Line Drawn." At that time I stated:

Isn't art basically the true expression of God's world, arising from the heart of a child of God to His glory?

This, I feel, is the only definition of true art acceptable to the Christian: That art is the glory of God expressed by God, through His Child, unto Himself. Anything which does not emerge from God unto Himself, that is, to His glory, is sin. Therefore, I maintain that sinful man is unable to produce true art because the Spirit of God is not in him.

I do not intend to imply, however, that sinful, i.e. unregenerate, man works to the detracting of God's glory. On the contrary, all things do ultimately work to the glory of God since all things are under His control. Nevertheless, sinful man cannot produce art because his goal is man's glory, not God's and he has not the Spirit of God in him.

What difference, then, can the Spirit make? In brief it is this: Without the sensory perception of the Spirit, man cannot see God in the world, though God be all around him, and not seeing God, he cannot see beauty, for he can see but dim reflections of the Source of beauty. As the branch cannot bear fruit without the vine, neither can man bear fruit without God (John 15:4). Art is art only if God is there.

Consequently, men like Hemingway who are, by walk and by declaration, men without the Spirit of God in them, cannot produce true art. Therefore, I cannot help but disagree with the position that an artistic work can be judged apart from the artist's life.

In the first place, the artistic world being just what it is — the world — can be no criterion of judgment for the Christian.

Secondly, the product can be no better than the producer. If the Spirit of God is obviously not present in the man, how can it be present in the expressions of that man? Can an evil tree produce good fruit? (Matt. 7:15-20)

Without God, the "artist" cannot produce true art, without God his works (like Hemingway's and Michelangelo) can be no more than expressions of sin, of futility. Life, success, satisfaction are void without God.

Yes, art is art, but only if God is there.

### II.

The subject of greatness is also under scrutiny with Miss Velting's question: "Does

not God often produce great things through the world?"

In reply to this question, I would like to state that this depends on one's definition of greatness.

If we were to state that greatness would mean notoriety or being of such power as to stand above the WORLD around it, I would say yes, God does produce great things through the world.

However, I do not feel that this can be the Christian's basis for a definition of greatness. As in art we look to the Source of beauty for a definition, so in greatness we must look to the Source of greatness. Many things are great in the eyes of a sinful world which could not be classified as great or good in the eyes of God. Sinful man thought Christ's crucifixion was a deed of greatness, so much so that he even took His blood upon himself and his children were he wrong. But by no means can the child of God construe this as greatness. Greatness and goodness can be equated. Christ says in Matthew twenty, verses twenty-five and twenty-six: "Ye know that the princes of the Gentiles exercise dominion over them, and they that are great exercise authority upon them. But it shall not be so among you; but whosoever will be great among you, let him be your minister." In other words, greatness comes not in the power or strength we have, but, rather, in how we serve.

Greatness in the eyes of God is, therefore, not the greatness of the world, but the manifestation of His Spirit in the works of His children.

Upon this definition the question can only be answered: No, God does not produce great things through the world.

Greatness is greatness only if God is there.

### III.

Just as greatness is greatness only if God is there, so it is with reality. Reality, the only reality, is God. God has two revelations: The revelation found in His spoken Word, and the revelation found in the visual world. Actually, these two revelations are really one, for we cannot see the reality of things except for the light of His revelation spoken in His Word through the Spirit in us. We are unable nor should we seek

to be able, to see reality except through the eyes of the Spirit, for in seeking reality we are seeking God's revelation to us in things.

However, God also uses the reality of evil to speak to us. The lesson of an evil world we cannot ignore, nor should we attempt to escape from it. The reality of evil is placed before us as a message and as a test too, and it is our concern to know it and search it for what God is saying to us through it. As discerning Christians, it is our duty to know our enemy, the world, and know him well. It is our duty AS CHRISTIANS. What I mean to say, is that we cannot hope to hear the message of God through the world, we cannot hope to stand the test of evil, or to combat this evil unless we are totally committed to God. As was stated in the article under consideration:

With total commitment as God as our base, we can go forward to study the world, even to read some of its literature and study its art. But we must ever remain alert, discerning students, always watching, lest we fall into temptation. For as long as possible, we must remain under the guidance of those older, wiser, and stronger than we are, and we must be prepared to avoid temptation whenever necessary. Reality is reality only if God is there.

### IV.

Reality is reality, greatness is greatness, and art is art, but only when God is there. The source of beauty, goodness and truth is God, and it can only be in, through and unto Him that we find true art, greatness, and reality.

In the world around us today is much evil which we should not ignore. It is through thorough knowledge of our enemy, coupled with a firm base on the truth that we build our wall. But knowledge does not imply compromise. We cannot use the standards of the world to judge our esthetic life any more than we can use these standards to judge our religious life. In using these standards we draw, and then ultimately erase, the chalk line between what is called church and what is called world. For there is a chalk line drawn between church and world, but between the true Church and the world there must be an impregnable wall, and we must build it.

R. REITSMA

# Epistle of JAMES

REV. ROBERT D. DECKER

## Chapter One

### INTRODUCTORY COMMENTS:

As many of the readers no doubt realize it has been alleged that the book under our consideration for the coming society season stands in conflict with the rest of the New Testament, especially with the Epistles of Paul. James, it is said, teaches that a man is justified by works. The Apostle Paul, on the other hand, teaches with no little emphasis that justification is by faith, "Therefore by the deeds of the law shall no flesh be justified in his sight: . . ." (Romans 3:20a).

This view is not restricted to those outside of the pale of Orthodox Christianity. Even the great Reformer, Martin Luther, seriously questioned the place of this Epistle in the Canon of Holy Writ, and once referred to it as an "Epistle of Straw."

However, that this beautiful Epistle belongs in the Canon cannot be gainsaid. It has its own unique message and fits into the whole of the message of the Scriptures. Not does James contradict Paul on the doctrine of Justification. What John R. W. Stott writes on page 106 of his book, *Basic Introduction To The New Testament* is to the point: "The Holy Spirit uses Paul to stress the faith which results in works and James to stress the works which result from faith." The Epistle of James is concerned with the manifestation of faith in the life of the Christian. From beginning to end it is a cutting, burning admonition to the children of God to be not merely hearers of the word but *doers* of the word.

With this in mind let us turn our attention to the text of the Word of God in James 1. The following is not intended to be an exhaustive interpretation of the first chapter, but merely a brief summary of the main ideas. It is hoped that it will serve to stimulate discussion, rather than stifle it.

### BRIEF EXPLANATION OF JAMES 1:

Vs. 1. The writer (or better the human

instrument) introduces himself as: "James, a servant of God and of the Lord Jesus Christ." Who is this James? There are three men mentioned by this name in the New Testament. They are: 1) James the son of Zebedee (and brother of John), one of the twelve disciples. That he was the man used by the Holy Spirit to write this letter is doubtful since he was beheaded by Herod (cf. Acts 12:1-2); 2) James, the son of Alphaeus also one of the twelve (cf. Mk. 3:18); and 3) James, the brother of the Lord (cf. Matt. 13:55, Mk. 6:3 and many other passages). Which one of the three is the James mentioned in vs. one is unknown. The question is: Is it important or necessary that we know the identity of the human instrument?

The epistle is directed to: "the twelve tribes which are scattered abroad." Three interpretations have been given to this. The twelve tribes are said by some to refer to unconverted Jews. Others maintain that the reference is to Christians in general, both Jews and Gentiles. While others say it refers to Jewish Christians. This latter is undoubtedly the correct interpretation for the writer certainly addresses believers as is plain throughout the epistle. Already in verse 2 they are called "My brethren." That the ones addressed are Jews seems obvious from the term "twelve tribes."

*Verses 2-4.* In these verses the Christian is admonished to count it all joy when he falls into divers temptations. There are many temptations in the world. There is the Devil (and his host) who directly tempts God's people. There are the allurements of the world, its pleasure and treasure. Besides, there is our own sinful flesh. The Christian is told that when he finds himself in the midst of these various temptations he must not rebel, be sad, but count it all joy. What is joyful about being in the midst of temptation?

The answer is given in vs. 3: "Knowing

this . . . The reason why we must deem it all joy to be tempted is because the trying of our faith works patience. Patience is that virtue of the Christian according to which he is able to endure suffering for Christ's sake (cf. Rom. 5:3-5, 1 Peter 1:6). Moreover, we must allow patience to have her perfect work. In the midst of suffering temptations the believer is exhorted to be strong. Patience must work in such a way that the child of God stands perfectly in the midst of temptations. The purpose being: "that ye may be perfect and entire wanting nothing." What is it to be perfect? Entire? Wanting (or lacking in) nothing? How is this possible? Positively, we are called to stand always in the service of God, never yielding to the temptations.

*Verses 5-8.* "If any of you lack wisdom . . ." Does James mean to imply that some of us have wisdom and therefore do not need to pray for it? Or would you say that we all lack wisdom and must pray for it? Wisdom in the Bible is that which causes the Christian not only to know the way of truth, but also, to walk in that way (cf. Matthew 7:24-27, Matthew 25:1-13).

We must ask "God who giveth to all men liberally and upbraideth not . . ." Does this mean God gives to all men head for head? Or, is this all men limited to a certain class of men? Notice too that God is the only source of wisdom. God gives liberally, i.e., freely and abundantly. And He gives without reproach.

James then explains how we must ask for that wisdom. In faith and without wavering is the only way. What does Jesus teach us about praying in faith in Mark 11:20-26? The wavering one is said to be double minded. He must not think that he will receive anything from the Lord. He is unstable in all his ways. He wants to be considered a Christian and outwardly he appears very pious. But he's double minded and unstable. He also likes the world and doesn't want to suffer for Christ's sake. James says that man must not fool himself into thinking the Lord will hear his prayer.

*Verses 9-11.* In the light of what we read in James 2:5-7 and 5:1-6 how must we view the rich in verse 10? In this connection notice that the term "brother" is only applied to the poor. We have a con-

trast here between the ungodly rich and the righteous poor. The poor is he who has little or nothing of the things of this world. He has reason to rejoice in that he is spiritually rich. He is exalted.

While the rich who has power, treasures in abundance, honor and glory of men is compared to the flower of the grass which passes away under the burning heat of the sun. With all of his riches he perishes. Do you think that James means to tell us that no rich man can enter the kingdom of heaven? What does Jesus say about this in Luke 12:16-21?

#### *Verses 12-15*

As in verse two, James once more speaks of temptations. From our point of view there is not much blessedness in temptations. They are painful. But James tells us that the blessedness of the man who endures them is that he shall receive the crown of life. In Revelation 2:10 we read of this same thing. Life undoubtedly means eternal life. It is given to "them that love him." What do you suppose the Bible means when it calls life a crown? When will we receive this crown? Is there a sense in which we already possess that crown?

In verse 13 James warns us not to blame God for the temptations. Why is it impossible that God should ever tempt anyone? Positively, we are told in verses 14 and 15 that temptations come from a man's own lust. Lust conceives and brings forth sin and sin inevitably brings death. What is meant by lust? Death?

#### *Verses 16-18*

When James writes: "Do not err . . ." do you think he has reference to the preceding discourse on temptation or to what follows concerning the source of "every good and perfect gift"? The answer is not easy. Probably the idea is that James says: "don't be mistaken, God doesn't tempt anyone but God only gives good and perfect gifts." Notice how James addresses the readers as "beloved brethren." Compare this to the address in Chapter 4 verse 4a.

That the good and perfect gift comes from above means not simply that it is from heaven, but that it is not earthly. It is heavenly and spiritual. What does the Bible mean when it calls God the Father of lights? (cf. 1 John 1:5). How does the text

emphasize the virtues of God, His eternity and immutability.

Verse 18 refers to regeneration. But does this text support the view of mediate regeneration? If not in what sense is regeneration referred to here? Notice that the text emphasizes we are begotten by the will of God (cf. John 1:13) and that too with the word of truth. All of the emphasis falls on the fact that it is only by the will of God that we are regenerated and only through His Word of truth that we become conscious of this work of Grace in us.

The purpose is that we should be a kind of firstfruits of his creatures. What are firstfruits (cf. Lev. 23:10 and 17)? How are the children of God a "kind of firstfruits of his creatures"?

#### Verses 19-27

In the concluding nine verses of this first chapter the writer outlines the practical implications of the truth that we are a kind of firstfruits of his creatures, begotten by the will of God with the word of truth. Christians must be listeners, i.e., they must not speak too quickly. And by all means we must be slow to wrath because the wrath of man never works the righteousness of God.

Our calling to put off all filthiness. All corruption in the moral and spiritual sense must be put off. And we must get rid of our superfluity of naughtiness (evil is a better translation for naughtiness). The calling of the child of God is to fight against that old evil nature of sin that is in him.

And too that must be done in the sphere of humility for we must "in meekness receive the engrafted (implanted) word." The idea here is that the Christian who has the

Word of God implanted in his heart must always grow in the knowledge and consciousness of that word. That word is powerful, able to save our souls.

For that reason we must not be mere hearers of the word but doers. A mere hearer of the word deceives himself. If our attitude is that we think we can be saved by hearing the word we are only fooling ourselves. Then we are like the man who looks into the mirror and goes away promptly forgetting what manner of man he was. The word means nothing to the hearer.

But the doer of the word looks into the perfect law of liberty and remains there, "continueth therein." What is the law of liberty? Can you find proof in the Bible that this means the whole word of God as we have it in the Scriptures? Surely this cannot mean the law of the 10 commandments only. But the whole gospel is meant from the viewpoint of its being the expression of the perfect will of God. Liberty is to be in harmony with God's will—that is the liberty wherewith Christ hath made us free!

Finally in verses 26 and 27 James talks about the pure and undefiled religion. The man who gives the religious appearance but who cannot bridle his tongue deceives his heart and his religion is vain. Pure and undefiled religion is seen positively in visiting fatherless and widows. And it is seen negatively in keeping ourselves unspotted from the world. Thus is religion manifest in the life of the Christian. Does James here lend support to those who teach a social gospel? Would you say that the *essence* of all true religion consists in not talking too much and in helping orphans and widows, i.e., working for social improvement and a better world?

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## Book Reviews

### The Soul of Prayer

by P. T. FORSYTH. Published by William B. Eerdmans Company, Grand Rapids, Michigan. 92 pages. Paperback, price \$1.45.

P. T. Forsyth is an English Congregationalist preacher-theologian. He was born in Aberdeen, Scotland in 1848. His education ranges from the University of Aberdeen to the University of Gottingen to New College, Hampstead, London.

In this profound little book Forsyth views all life as a continuous prayer. But this life of prayer usually goes in the wrong direction, God only can make it proceed in the right direction. Forsyth divides his thoughts on the life of prayer—the soul of prayer—into seven meditations: The Inwardness of Prayer, The Naturalness of Prayer, The Moral Reactions of Prayer, The Timeliness of Prayer, The Ceaselessness of Prayer, The

Vicariousness of Prayer, and The Insistency of Prayer.

Although this book is not the easiest to read and understand, it would do anyone well to read this book to re-evaluate your own life of prayer.

### **Five Minutes With The Master**

by R. E. O. WHITE. Published by William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company. 1966. 372 pages. Price \$3.95.

R. E. O. White, a Scottish Baptist minister and lecturer, widely known for his devotional studies has penned another. His previous works included *Beneath the Cross of Jesus*; *The Stranger of Galilee*; and *The Upward Calling*.

This little book is meant to be "A year's

meditation in the company of Christ." Five Minutes With the Master is, therefore, divided into fifty-two weeks with seven meditations per week. Although White's style is pithy, it is lucid and simple, and although his language is modern, he calls on men from almost every age to speak for him. Here are just a few: Hilaire Belloc (1870-1953); Edward Dowden (1843-1913); Francis Thompson (1859-1907); Charles Wesley (1707-1788); Sir Thomas Browne (1635-1682); and George Herbert (1593-1633). He gleans from a wide variety of writers and thinkers, but his best gleanings are from God's precious Word. For this reason this book is highly recommended for young people. God forbid, however, that only five minutes a day is spent reading and studying God's Word!

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## **OPEN FORUM**

Dear Mark,

Your writing of the "Open Forum" in the June-July issue of *Beacon Lights* was very well written, and the subject was very interesting. I may not have much to say, but a little is always welcomed. I understand.

I believe we should continue on the same scale we now have with regard to what day Young People's meetings should be held. I suggest this, because if we should change, it would make problems for some of us simply because in our modern working day we have day and night shifts. I, for one, was on a night shift which started at

4 p.m. and ended at 2 a.m. Some young people wouldn't be able to make it, so for this reason I think our meetings should stay on Sunday.

Also, I feel Sunday afternoons should be used for church-related meetings such as these to avoid this "Well, there's nothing to do, I guess I'll go to bed" sort of thing. Because, then, too, I have my doubts if our young people even care to stay awake for our Reformed Witness Hour programs. So, seeing this is in church connection, it should stay on the Sabbath day.

Your brother in Christ Jesus,

PFC ROGER KAMPHUIS

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# **NEWS**

## **from, for, and about our churches**

GEORGIA HENDRICKS

### **GENERAL**

On August 7 the Young People's Societies of Doon, Hull, and Edgerton held a combined meeting in Doon. Seminarian Dale Kuiper led the Bible discussion.

Our Doon Church held its church picnic on August 5.

On August 10 the Ladies' Circle held a Home Talent Program.

Our church building in Forbes, S.D., has recently been struck by a tornado.

Seminarian Dale Kuiper has been preaching in our Dakota churches this summer.

The Ladies' Auxiliary of our South Holland church held a picnic in the South Holland Park on July 13.

An outing for all Sunday School children

(continued on next page)

## EDUCATION

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### NEWS

of our Holland church was held on August 6 at the home of E. Camminga.

Rev. and Mrs. Engelsma spent a three week vacation in Grand Rapids where he also gave one of the speeches at the convention.

Mrs. F. Serr has given our Loveland Church a new organ as a gift.

### BIRTHS

A daughter was born to Mr. and Mrs. Gerald Lubbers. (Hudsonville)

A son was born to Mr. and Mrs. Gerald VanDenTop. (Dooan)

A daughter was born to Mr. and Mrs. C. Nymeyer. (South Holland)

A son was born to Mr. and Mrs. G. Van Baren. (First)

### DEATHS

On August 10 Mr. P. Ipema passed into his eternal rest.

### MEMBERSHIP

Dismissal papers were sent to Mrs. Betty Curtis upon her request.

The membership papers of Miss Hulda J. Kuiper have been transferred to our Loveland Church.

The membership papers of Mr. Milt Alsum (Oak Land) have been transferred to our Loveland Church.

### OUR SICK

Mrs. John Blankespoor made a remarkable recovery and is back on his feet.

Miss LaJean Klein suffered a recurrence of her illness.

Mr. Egbert Holleman was taken to the Ingalls Memorial Hospital for observation and to determine future treatment.

Mr. B. Windemuller entered Blodgett Hospital for removal of the steel support-pin located in his ankle.

Mr. S. DeVries continues to recuperate at Rest Haven and his condition shows no improvement.

Mrs. H. Heemstra has returned to her home and is making good progress.

Hollis Heemstra suffered a slight set-back, but all is fine.