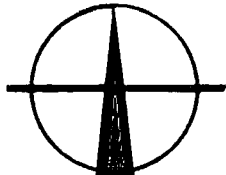


BEACON LIGHTS

*FOR PROTESTANT
REFORMED YOUTH*



February, 1974

*The Grace of God
Is In Courtesy*

*Satan Knows
Love When He
Sees It*



BEACON LIGHTS

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THE GRACE OF GOD IS IN COURTESY

It is evident wherever one looks today that there is a blatant disregard and lack of the most elementary forms of courtesy and good manners in the world around us.

Teenagers sass their parents, disrespect lawful authority, exhibit filthy language and hand-signs to passers-by. Only yesterday my little ones saw some of this crude behavior and wanted to know why those boys acted that way. They stand on the sidewalks and even in the streets and refuse to let pedestrians and automobiles pass. They are out to give anybody and everybody a difficult time. Everyone of you, I'm sure, could give many examples of similar incidents that have occurred in your own lives.

Even younger children today are just as discourteous as their older brothers and sisters. They have vile tongues spewing out all forms of wickedness and corruption. Their actions are impolite and inconsiderate. They demand the whole world but deserve a slap in the face or a warm behind. They pretend that the whole world owes them a living. "Thank you," "Pardon me," "excuse me," "please," never grace their tender — not so tender? — lips.

Finally, even grown-ups, who should be examples, are not the least inclined to be courteous. They openly backbite and gossip about others in front of their children — as if backbiting and gossiping aren't bad enough in themselves. They talk disparagingly about law officers, the President, congressmen, ministers, and teachers. They openly disrespect speed laws and civil laws showing no respect or courtesy to authority.

In the world, this lack of courtesy is due to the depravity and selfishness of man. They run their life on the theory that you don't need road manners if you drive a five ton truck.

Wicked man is completely "I" centered. "I need this," "I want that," "I'm going to get this," "I'm going to do that." They have no thought for the feelings or possessions of others and if these get in the way — too bad. They render evil for evil not only, but also evil for good. They cheat, they

lie, they steal, they violate all the commandments to attain their goals and objectives. One prime example of this is seen in the unreasonable law suits that are brought against individuals and companies in our civil courts. They experience no shame, remorse, or compassion as they push their weight around and make themselves heard.

Man lost the ability to be "God centered." In all of his life he is at enmity with God and with his neighbor. Since there is no love for God in him, neither does he have any love towards his neighbor. His hatred towards others is revealed in his disrespect towards them.

This is the world in which we live. Much, much more could be written and said. We must be careful that we are not carried along with the basic philosophy of the world in its headlong dash to destruction.

The apostle Peter writes, "Be ye all of one mind, having compassion one of another, love as brethren, be pitiful, be courteous: not rendering evil for evil, or railing for railing: but contrawise, blessing, knowing that ye are thereunto called, that ye should inherit a blessing" (I Peter 3:8-9). We must be ". . . holy in all manner of conversation (life) because it is written, Be ye holy, for I am holy" (I Peter 1:15-16). Paul in Romans 15:2 admonishes, "Let every one of us please his neighbor for his good to edification."

Courtesy is the desire and attempt to be thoughtful, polite, good mannered, considerate for the feelings, persons, and property of others and is rooted in love. "Charity suffereth long and is kind, charity envieth not; charity vaunteth not itself, is not puffed up. Doth not behave itself unseemly, seeketh not her own, is not easily provoked, thinketh no evil . . ." (I Cor. 13:4-5). When we love one another for Christ's sake, we show courtesy and respect toward each other. True righteous courtesy implies that we give of ourselves for the welfare and respect of others.

True courtesy can only result when pride and love for oneself is rooted out and re-

placed by a humble attitude and love for others. Thus, only a child of God can, in the ultimate sense of courtesy, be courteous.

We by nature are, however, no better than the world. We also have the "I" complex. Our teenagers, youngsters, and we as adults are no different than the world. We are, on occasion, not only inclined to show this disrespect towards each other and our neighbors on the street, but also towards God and towards His house. When we irreverently sleep during the service, let our minds wander off during the preaching of His Holy Word, think of material possessions and covet them during our prayers, unrighteously judge our brothers in the pews, our love for God comes into question.

If we truly loved one another for Christ's sake, we would have no gossiping and backbiting in our churches. If we truly loved our parents for Christ's sake, we would respect their authority and treat them courteously. When we walk a life of love we "guard our lips from speaking guile" and our tongue from strife. We "follow after the things that make for

peace, and things wherewith one may edify another" (Romans 14:19).

We must be courteous for Christ's sake. He came down to earth and revealed to us the greatest act of love and courtesy this world has ever known by giving Himself for our redemption. He became like us in all things, sin excepted. He experienced our frailties and infirmities, our trials and temptations, our anxieties and fears. He lived with our hatred and spite, our contempt and scorn, our thoughtlessness and disrespect. Yet His "courtesy" (love) toward us is everlasting, totally of grace. His kindness is more infinite than the universe. His thoughtfulness (for we are ever in His thoughts) toward us is greater than the deepest oceans. His gift of infinite mercy and salvation is beyond our comprehension.

An Englishman, Hilaire Belloc, contemplating the sublime value of courtesy once wrote:

*"Of courtesy — it is much less
Than courage of heart or holiness.
Yet in my walks it seems to me
That the Grace of God is in Courtesy."*

FEATURES

ENERGY CRISIS

KATHY KOOLE*

Not a truly unique idea is it? It seems that everything we do is connected with today's energy crisis. Turn on the radio, read the newspaper, listen to the people around you and everyone you hear has something to say about our lack of energy. My concern has little to do however with petroleum, heat or the electricity problem.

Have you ever considered the fact that the church today faces a real energy crisis? Scripture always is a reminder of the battle for the child of God. Church history also has constantly taught that the church thru the ages has struggled against the powers of darkness.

It seems strange that where battle is raging the soldier has left off his clothing

of armour, doesn't it? But you say the battle has wearied us and our strength is weakening or more boldly we can say that the battle has lessened. Now is the time in history when we can enjoy a bit of the victories won by those who have toiled before us. After all the church has reached a time when her warfare has waned and persecution is a thing of the past. Now is the time to save our energy for the day when real power is necessary. If we relax now we can rest up to be ready to take our weapons when the need becomes apparent.

Let us be assured however that the Devil doesn't wait until we are ready to be armed. He fires us with temptations and allurements when we are the least ready.

Further, if you think for a minute the Church has time to relax today consider a

*Kathy is a member of our Hope Church in Walker and also a member of their Sr. Young People's Society.

few things that present dangers to you and your young people today. Allow yourself to indulge in literature of any kind and you will learn all about adulterous sex. Sit in front of a television for about two programs and your knowledge of how a thief and murderer operates will increase at a surprising rate. If you let yourself be friends with anyone, you might find yourself agreeing with them that authority of state and government need cleaning up so let's rebel and picket. The list is endless and you know just how long that list is to you personally.

Since the way of least resistance is always the way nature follows we too find ourselves guilty of relaxation and generally flowing with the line of traffic. In this position we find the least criticism and most companionship.

Obvious enough it is to the child of God

that this line of traffic is not on the straight and narrow road, rather a finely decorated and tinsled highway that distracts us from looking further down the road to its utter destruction.

For the most godly person in the world it takes spiritual strength and energy to struggle to keep one's foot from dancing out of the path and along with the unrestrained steps of the world.

Note that if we exert energy to take up our Bibles and bend our knees in prayer each day we would find a lot more strength within us desiring to fight against our old natures and the world around. Even as an athlete finds himself able to endure and run with daily practice so also our spiritual running becomes easier as with proper spiritual practices we fortify these weakened human natures.

"A PRUDENT WIFE IS FROM THE LORD"

SUE TERPSTRA*

In these days of the Women's Liberation and Equal Rights movements there is probably no occupation more looked down upon by the world as that of the housewife. Even the adjectives usually placed before the name of the occupation — common, ordinary, "plain old," tell of its importance to many today. In magazines especially meant for the women of today's world, there is hardly an issue that passes by that has no story of what one woman has done to make her common, ordinary life as a "plain old" housewife more meaningful. Even the advertisements boast in loud print — "You've come a long way, Baby." Nowadays there is really no woman who has to lose out in the job market because she hasn't the intelligence to enter college. The day of the vocational school is here, and with it comes the offer to earn a high salary with more specialized and less difficult education. Women are encouraged more and more to pursue a career and climb the "ladder of success" right along with their male peers, and even in

*Sue is a member of our Hope Church in Walker. She attends Hope's Sr. Young People's Society.

some cases to fight them to the very end in order to obtain equal status with equal pay. And those who have made it to the top in business, medicine, and a host of other fields almost pity the women "stuck at home with a bunch of bawling kids."

Sometimes it almost seems as though we, too, go along with the feelings of the world toward this seemingly humble and unimportant occupation. Girls it seems are no longer praised for the virtues of the Christian mother, but are scanned for talents in the direction of the business world. In fact, an intelligent girl who decides to marry and raise a family instead of pursuing a career first and then working her family around it is almost considered foolish at times. Even women who are married and have children already seem to think that they are not useful enough in the position they have and seek outside interests. Those who have no small children at home anymore are persuaded to take jobs to "keep busy." Sometimes it really does seem that we, too, look down upon one of the most rewarding and blessed positions a woman could possibly gain.

The Bible speaks in many ways of the

blessedness of being a God-fearing wife and mother. Even Solomon, a man with many, many wives realized the worth of a virtuous woman, when he wrote the words of Proverbs 31: "Who can find a virtuous woman? for her price is far above rubies . . . Strength and honor are her clothing; and she shall rejoice in time to come. She openeth her mouth with wisdom; and in her tongue is the law of kindness. She looketh well to the ways of her household, and eateth not the bread of idleness. Her children arise up and call her blessed; her husband also, and he praiseth her. Many daughters have done virtuously, but thou excellest them all. Favour is deceitful and beauty is vain: but a woman that feareth the Lord, she shall be praised. Give her of the fruit of her hands; and let her own works praise her in the gates." Seldom today would a woman who finds her fulfill-

ment in the keeping of a household hear words of praise such as these, but now as never before, she deserves words such as these.

It is still true that God has given some women positions of a different nature in the church. Not all have been called to be wives and mothers, just as many women have not been called to become teachers and workers in other varying occupations. But when God calls women to be housewives, and mothers, who labor in the home, they must not be discouraged in this calling, as if it were a disgraceful occupation, and the "dead end" of the career girl's life, but rather encouraged to seek their fulfillment in the ways of the God-fearing woman who finds her usefulness in the raising of the Covenant seed and her business in the work of the Church.

LETTER FROM NEW ZEALAND

Young People, please read this letter from this 16 year old boy in New Zealand. He requests the BEACON LIGHTS, the magazine published by the Young People's Societies of the Protestant Reformed Churches. He also would like to write someone from our churches, therefore I would like to ask some young people to write him. He has already been sent the December and January issues of BEACON LIGHTS. To make sure that someone writes, please write or call me if you do so. The letter should be sent air mail or it takes too long to reach him.

Thank-you,
JIM V. O., Ed.

Anthony Vooyo
40 Wellington Road
Wainuiomata, New Zealand
17th January, 1974

Dear Sir:

I would like to receive a sample copy of the magazine BEACON LIGHTS which is published by the Young People's Societies of the Protestant Reformed Church. I am sure I will be pleased with it and that later I will subscribe to it. I am sixteen years old and attend Wainuiomata High School. I graduated last year, but will be attending the High School again this year. Later, maybe next year I plan to go to College and would like to go to a Christian College in the U.S.A. if it were possible. I would very much like one day to visit

America, maybe reside there. I enjoy writing to people and would like to have a penpal in America.

My father receives the *Standard Bearer*, and I also read and enjoy this fine magazine. We used to go to the Dutch Reformed Church here in Wainuiomata, but two years ago after a great and painful ordeal in this church, in which these churches in New Zealand and Australia fell further into apostasy, my family and a few others left the church. My father now receives tapes every week from the Protestant Reformed Churches in America (sermons as well as radio tapes) and together with another family we meet and listen to these tapes every Sunday.

It is summer in New Zealand now and we are in the middle of our holidays, actually on Saturday the 19th we will be leaving on our vacation which will be for two weeks. We will be camping at various spots up north, and I am hoping that I will be able to do some fishing. I trust that you have read my letter, and that you will send the sample magazine to me as soon as is possible. Hope to hear from you soon.

Yours sincerely in Christ,

ANTHONY VOOYS

ON GOING TO CHURCH

MRS. H. HOEKSEMA

*The devil came to church today,
I didn't see that he came in.
Right next to me — without delay —
He sat, with quite a friendly grin.
Before I had the time to pray
And ask the Lord to keep from sin
And way-ward thoughts that often stray,
He inched quite close and bumped my shin.*

*"Why do those slouchy people there
Attend this church? They just don't fit
With people of refinement rare;
See all the crudeness they emit!
Aren't Christians known by what they
wear?"
He asked. My prayer, e'er started, quit.
The service had — to my despair —
Begun before I uttered it.*

*I frowned and sternly turned my head
To listen and to make amends.
With strong soprano voice I led
The op'ning song. "That man there sends
The shivers down my back," he said.
"I only like a voice that blends,"
The devil whispered. And instead
Of praise, my soul with malice rends.*

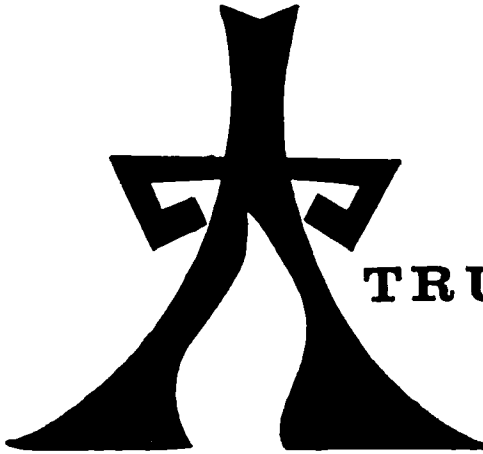
*"You've heard God's law before," he smiled.
"It wouldn't hurt you if you planned
The talk you'll give that wayward child
In Sunday School. I understand.
The Lord will, too . . . How can that mild
Young girl wear clothes like that?" I fanned
My face in haste, for he beguiled
Me into missing God's commands.*

*I resolutely closed my eyes
And told the devil now to leave
My troubled soul alone. "I prize
The pastor's prayer, a rare reprieve
From earth-bound thoughts I should
despise,"
I said. The devil sneered. "Believe
Me, other people's sins comprise
Far greater scope of guilt. Don't grieve."*

*I roused. The sermon had begun.
From now on I would listen well.
He nudged. "That tot is having fun.
His mother can't control him well.
She doesn't know how it is done;
His father's dozing, I can tell.
For shame!" he cried. "Why don't you shun
Those folk who let their child rebel?"*

*In consternation then I cried,
"You made me miss the preacher's text!
Move over. YOU I can't abide."
"All right," he said, "but I'm perplexed.
Your preacher finds big words to hide
The fact he's not prepared. What next?
He's gaining weight. Why don't you chide
Him sometime soon?" . . . My soul was vexed.*

*"AMEN," the preacher said "You spoiled
My worship service. How I hate
Your evil grin!" He jeered, "I foiled
Your plan to worship so sedate;
You needn't have become embroiled
In all the things whereof I prate.
I found you easily despoiled."
'Twas true. Cleanse, Lord, with mercy great.*



TRUTH vs. ERROR

REV. ROBT. C. HARBACH

Dr. Skill

Christiana's eldest son, Matthew, took sick one day, adding to the burdens of his widowed mother. Matthew's father was no more there to watch over and warn his son against the temptations of young manhood. It was not easy for Christiana to be both father and mother to her son. Actually, she doted on him, and to the extent that she could neither see nor suspect any evil in him. But for a long time running he had been exposing himself to many dangers. Now he lay terribly sick. Dr. Skill was called in, and he could see that his patient "had been tampering" with his daily and "nothing but wholesome" diet. His little brother, Samuel, innocently gave him away when he recalled how, in passing Beelzebub's orchard, they had looked at the fruit which hangs over the wall of the estate. Unknown to them, they were looking at "the vine of Sodom," "of the fields of Gomorrah." Then it was that Matthew had pulled down some of the fruit and eaten it.

Many a Matthew has slipped unobtrusively (trespassed) into a *librarium erotica*, there to be taken unawares with a deathly sickness. For, as Dr. Skill had warned, "Many had died thereof." But had poor Matthew never been warned of such subtle dangers? Was he so naive and ignorant of the ways of the world? It could not be, for he had the Book of Proverbs and the first three chapters of Genesis, which

alone are warning enough. But there he was laid up with the *Grippe*. The doctor said his sickness was hamartiagenic (from the NT *hamartos*) sin-engendered, and that he had been tampering with what could kill him, unless he got it off his conscience and out of his heart immediately. So Dr. Skill opened his satchel and bottles to make a potion, which, however, proved to be too weak. It was made in a solution of the blood of a goat, the ashes of a heifer, some hyssop juice and a sprinkle of bitter herbs. This had no effect. Then the doctor produced a medicine really "to the purpose." Using strange terms, as physicians always do, he said this was essence of *ex carne et sanguine Christi*. The prescription, neatly typed out by the apothecary, read, "Fasting, take three pills three times daily, with a promise or two, in half a quarter of a pint of the tears of repentance." This alone made Matthew well and put him back on his feet again. This alone is proof of God's love. "Unto Him that loved us and washed us from our sins in His own blood" (Rev. 1:5). "The heathen might trace God by acts of bounty rather than acts of vengeance. But . . . thou canst not say, God giveth me riches, therefore He loveth me; or sendeth me poverty therefore He hateth me. No, He may give these things to His enemies, and deny them to His friends. But you may undoubtedly conclude, He loveth me, for He hath washed me from my sins.

Clear this once, and you have a full and concluding proof of God's special love to you" (Thomas Manton).

The fruit of Beelzebub's orchard — there is no fruit that sits so painfully on the stomach as this fruit! Trouble is, Beelzebub's orchard is so harmless-looking that it is not recognized for what it is. There is the modern university, the "fine arts" college — recognize Beelzebub's orchard? The same vines are intertwined around the magazine stand and the "browse-a-bit" store. (Remember the man with the muck rake?) There is that expensive pile of "rock-n-roll" records — fruit "plashed" from B.O. (Beelzebub's orchard). What are "rock" fans listening to? Some of it is put in ballad form, as a piece called "Ticket," which has a girl singing, "He said that living with me was bringing him down — yeh-eh-eh! He would never be free when I was around." Digging behind the song, you find it is "a love song of today about a groupie." The devil's B.O., it is hoped, is enough to turn you sickish green.

But how inexcusable it was for Matthew so to have become a sick man. For he had the advantage of the combined ministries of Evangelist, Help, Goodwill, Interpreter, that of the four shepherds, Knowledge, Watchful, Experience and Sincere, as well as the competent Dr. Skill. Today these pastors are looked upon in the church community as belonging only in the pulpit. They are put down as not having the ability to deal with the complex problems of their people. There they must defer and refer these "special cases" to outside highly specialized professional help. But the servants of the Lord above noted know human nature, the inclinations of their people, the sins they are in most danger of, the temptations most liable to. Though plain men, with not much in the way of genius, they do, with long hours of study, with some experience, with life-long expert reading and research, with solemn, awful, sleepless interest, come to fitness to advise and counsel in matters of the soul. How often they could truthfully say to an aching Matthew, I warned you of it! I told you plainly many have died eating of that delicious, but deleterious fruit.

So, good biblical counsel will advise that when sin against conscience and heart

leave one guilt-ridden, depressed and broken down, nothing will set matters right but frank admission of sin, and prompt applications of the prescription of the Great Physician and His appointed preparations. Richard Baxter counsels *The Reformed Pastor*: "We must be ready to give advice to those that come to us with cases of conscience . . . A minister is not only for public preaching, but to be a known counsellor for their souls, as the lawyer for their estates, and the physician for their bodies . . . And because the people are grown unacquainted with this office of the ministry, and their own necessity and duty therein, it belongs to us to acquaint them herewith in such cases and to press them publicly to come to us for advice in such cases of great concernment to their souls. We must not only be willing of the trouble, but draw it upon ourselves by inviting them hereto. What abundance of good we might do, could we but bring our people to this!" (John Knox Press, Richmond, Va., 1956, p. 52.) It was Paul who said, "And I myself also am persuaded of you, my brethren, that ye also are full of goodness, filled with all knowledge, able also to admonish one another" (Rom. 15:14), and Calvin, commenting on this says, "The Romans (Christians) who were abundantly endowed with kindness and skill in giving advice, were fully enabled, according to Paul, to exhort and encourage each other

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without receiving assistance from any other quarter."

This also is appropriate: "From a master to an apprentice, when leaving his service and entering into life for himself 'I have endeavored to warn and counsel you against those evils which your inexperienced eye was exposed to, and direct and encourage you in the principle . . . which . . . lay the foundation for a happy and useful life Watch over the natural appetites of the body. Let not those senses which were designed to administer innocent pleasures become incentives to sin. The sensitive affections have so far overpowered reason and conscience in man, that the Scripture can find no word more fit to describe his fallen state . . . than *flesh*; and, believe me, it requires all the assistance that piety and reason can afford, to keep them in due subordination. Be chaste and virtuous, not only in converse and behavior, but in the dispositions of your mind. Indulge in no lascivious thoughts or looks, and run not unnecessarily into temptations thereunto. You know how great a flame the fire of lust indulged may kindle. Observe the injunctions which our Lord and Savior has given concerning the government of the eyes (see Matt. 5:28), and imitate the wise example of Job (31:1) and David (Psalm 119:37) Be also sober and temperate in the use of diet and drink. Every degree is excessive . . . which renders you indisposed to action and exercise of body and mind. Particularly, let no company engage you to exceed the bounds of reason A peremptory refusal or two at first will ever free you from their solicitations, but easy compliance will encourage

their repeated assaults upon your . . . virtue." (Quoted by Arthur W. Pink, who omitted a credit line, furnishing only the date, Nov. 1752.)

And then this good counsel to another Matthew is a must. "Where you are, you see more of the glittering vanities of this world in a day than we do in an age, and are grown more and more in love with them or dead and dying to them. I hope dead and dying to them, for they are poor things, and perish in the using. Be sincere and humble, and choice in your company, always either getting good or doing good. Your acquaintance, I doubt not, increaseth abroad, and accordingly your watch must be 'He that walketh with wise men shall be wise' Your improvement is our joy. Be sincere and serious, clothed with humility, always abounding in the work of the Lord; and when you have done all, be saying, 'I am an unprofitable servant.' It was good advice of a moral philosopher, 'In your converse with men, distrust.' But I must add, 'In everything towards God, believe.' Expect temptation and a snare at every turn, and walk accordingly. We have a good cause, a vanquished enemy, a good second, an extraordinary joy. For he that overcomes need not desire to be more happy than the second and third chapters of the Revelation speaks him to be. I would have you redeem time, for, hearing the Word in season and out of season, your other studies will prosper, never the worse, especially if you could return immediately from it to the closet again, without cooling diversions (occurring) by the way." (Written by Philip Henry to his son, Matthew Henry, the famous commentator.)

CONTRIBUTION

Satan Knows Love When He Sees It

PETER A. HOEKSTRA*

And Satan came to visit the sons of men and asked them, "why do you loathe your young?"

And they said to him, "We do not loathe

our young, we love them. Do we not give them everything that they want? Do we not send them to schools where is found the latest in equipment and supplies and where they are given unlimited opportunities, instead of to a small Christian school? Do we not allow them to dress in the latest

*Peter is a member of our Southeast Church. He teaches Junior High at Adams Street Christian.

fashions of the designers? Do we not allow them to discuss freely with us 'what is wrong with doing this or that'? Do we not aid their maturing process by allowing them to argue with us? Do we not have them become more rounded in their education by watching good movies with them? Do we not allow them to go unsupervised to sporting events? Do we not teach them responsibility by giving them a large allowance and let them do with it what they wish? Do we not teach them how to get the most out of the government so life is made more easy for them? When they get into trouble at school, do we not take their defenseless side against the teachers? Do we not show them how to make life more bearable by giving wild parties? Do we not make it possible for them to have a car so that they can enjoy a little privacy away from us to do what they want to do? Do we not stop bothering them about whether or not they have learned their catechism? Do we not praise them for a good choir performance or program even if they

just mouth the words and not sing with heartfelt expression? Do we not show them that we can much better prepare ourselves for the Kingdom by attending sports events rather than societies, conferences, or studying? Do we not teach them how to choose between the lesser of two evils, for example, going to a movie instead of parking? Do we not leave home so they can have the entire house alone for a few hours? Do we not allow them to listen to the music they want to listen to? Do we not refrain from censoring their reading materials? Do we not allow them to have the friends they want? Do we not teach them that by using birth control they can provide for their children as well as or maybe better than we did for them? Do we not show them how to amass earthly goods by having both parents work? Do we not allow them to direct their own lives? Don't we? We do all or most of these things. We love our children."

And Satan answered them, "Why do you loathe your young?"

FUTURE PROTESTANT REFORMED TEACHERS AND MINISTERS

The Scholarship Fund Committee is again offering scholarships this year. An essay of 300 words written on the topic "How to Combat Erroneous Teachings in College" is required along with a record of high school and/or college grades, and a recommendation from your consistory. The scholarships are applicable to tuition only. If you are interested in an application contact:

GLEND A DOEZEMA
4419 E. Leonard St.
Grand Rapids, Mich. 49506
Phone 949-3261

Applications must be in by May 1, 1974.



FROM THE PASTOR'S STUDY

By REV. G. LUBBERS

"PRAYER NECESSARY FOR CHRISTIANS?"

Heidelberg Catechism, 116, 117

Strange Question!

Prayer necessary for Christians?

It is not the way the Heidelberg Catechism asks the question. Had you already noticed that it is different? How well are you instructed in Questions 116, 117 of the Heidelberg Catechism? Take a chair, and come a little closer, and open you Psalter and read Lord's Day XLV.

No, it is not a question at all whether Christians are in need of prayer. A pinch of salt like the song, "Standing in the need of Prayer" will not help you much to understand this deep spiritual problem and reality! What we need is the deep, basic instruction of the Scriptures as briefly summed up in the Catechism on this point. This Catechism has stood the test of the ages: its instruction on this point is rock-bottom like Gibraltar.

Yes, a strange way to put the question: Prayer necessary for Christians? Why is this so strange? For the simple reason that the spiritual nature of the reborn Christian is such that to be a Christian and not to pray is impossible. It is true

that we can in a limited sense ask "Is prayer necessary?" You can ask this as an academic question. But in the deep spiritual sense you can not leave this an open question; it is not really a question open for debate. And above all this is not a question which we debate with unbelievers. We do not cast this question in the open forum of public opinion, in a certain *vox populi, vox Dei*.

For prayer is a holy art which is taught us by grace! We breathe because we are alive. We breathe in order to continue living. Thus also we pray because we are reborn in the Lord; however, we also pray in order to have more life and the gifts of the Holy Spirit.

Prayer is a holy art; it is the secret of the Lord to His people.

It is the art of those who are taught of God to pray.

From the heart!

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There is a reason for the holy must of the Christian's praying!

The Heidelberg Catechism asks the ques-

tion: Why is prayer necessary for Christians?

It is assumed that prayer is a must, a necessity. You know, youthful readers, that the word "necessity" means "cannot cease." Oh, you didn't? Well, look it up in your Dictionary — in that large Dictionary. Now, isn't that something? Why cannot a Christian stop praying? Why do God's own elect cry unto God day and night, all through their pilgrimage days upon earth? What is the secret of that prayer-life? Do you know the secret in your own life, dear reader? Have you ever asked the Lord Jesus to teach you to pray before you recited the "Lord's Prayer"? Jesus' disciples asked this mercy of the Lord: Lord teach us to pray as John did to his disciples! If you are a reborn child you will yet do that very thing some day, when you learn to ask, seek and knock without ceasing and with hearty sighing of your soul. You will then say with a Jacob at Peniel: Lord, I will not let Thee go except Thou bless me!

Firstly, you will then learn that the chief expression of gratitude to God for having saved you from so great a death unto such a wonderful salvation is prayer. Yes, you will then also learn more and more that one cannot really express his heart in prayer if it is not a heart which loves the Law of God. Only when one has learned profoundly to put off the Old Man of sin, and to put on the New Man in Christ, will one be able to speak of the chief part. When we have the lesser expression of the keeping of the commandments, as practical life of thanksgiving, will we revel in the chief part of thankfulness which is expressed in prayer.

Yes, that is the secret of prayer.

It is from the heart, to be certain. However, it is from a profoundly thankful heart.

Secondly, only those who ask in prayer with hearty sighing receive from the Lord more grace, richer gifts of forgiveness and sanctification and sweet peace and blessed consolation. Those who have receive more! The Lord grants more grace of the Holy Ghost only to those who ask for this grace and are sincerely thankful for the Lord's former mercies to them.

Yes, prayer is a holy must!

For all Christians, young and old.
Amen!

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There are no pre-requisites for prayer. You do not need to do any kind of work-religion before you can pray!

Now, you did not notice this did you? You did not notice the difference between requisites and pre-requisites. If you did not, you are like many other Christians who never really saw this difference.

Briefly stated: a pre-requisite is something you must do or have *before* you can pray. This is clear from a brief look at that large Dictionary. But *requisite* is some quality which *belongs* to the very thing itself. The translation "belongs to" would be far better when we read the original German, "Wass gehort su." The Holland translation follows the German!

What must be the spiritual qualifications of the man who is praying in such a way that God is pleased with his prayer and hears and answers him?

A good question!

It is also a blessed and necessary self-examination of our own act of approaching the throne of grace

Really the three things which are necessary for a true prayer, which belong to the spiritual fibre and fabric of such a prayer are the same three elements which are necessary too for self-examination before we come to the Supper of the Lord.

Three requisites, three "what-belongs to" prayer.

Yes, this is thankfulness. It means that from the heart we pray to the only true God as He has revealed Himself in His word in the face of Jesus Christ, as the God of all grace and glory. Yes, it must be from the heart that we pray. It must not be mere lip service, a people that honors God with their lips but whose heart is far from God. It must not be a sham, hypocritical prayer to be seen of men, but it must be to the Father which seeth in secret and who will reward openly.

Such is requisite, the first!

However, we must also deeply and profoundly know our needs when we come to the throne of grace and to the mercy-seat. This must be emphasized. Had you noticed that this is taught in Question 117? Oh, do look it up, read it carefully, prayer-

fully and memorize it so that you will remember it when you rise at midnight to seek God's face! Ah, these needs are for both body and soul, and they ever vary with the circumstances. But they are ever very real against Satan, world and our flesh. Be not deceived by the wiles of the Devil. They will be very real, sometimes desperately real, even up to the very portals of heaven ere we breathe our last breath.

Such is requisite, the second!

And we must also believe that God is faithful and just. He will not hear us

for our worthiness sake, but only for His mercy and truth's sake. He will hear us for Christ's sake! That we must believe when we pray. It is the ground of all our prayers; it is looking unto Jesus who has entered into the holy place before us as the forerunner.

The requisites of true prayer!

The anchor within the holy place. The anchor holds.

Let the angry surges roll. Our frail little bark is tempest swept.

God is faithful and just in Christ.

Amen and Amen!

CURRENT EVENTS AND COMMENTS

BERTHA DEN HARTOG

Really trying to come up with an inclusive, conclusive comment about the events that currently seem to be besieging us seems almost impossible. We could view Watergate and very literally shake our heads in horror. Who's to blame really doesn't seem to matter much anymore, we just stare at the amount of grimy blame that's been just below the surface all along. Optimists may glorify our government in that it redeems itself by allowing the grease to surface but we wonder at our naivete because we thought the gold paint meant there was something more than ugly tin underneath. We've been had and there really isn't any denying it, so do we just lament our state or join the general mudslinging for whatever satisfaction; or what?

Winter isn't exactly bright with promise and even though the white page of the New Year has just emerged we find a lot of suspicious smudges on it already. There's the gas shortage, the energy crisis and in short our spirits seem ready to burn out. Of course we could rub our hands with glee because the ultimate destruction we have spoken of so often, seems at last to have overtaken us; but somehow the satisfaction leaves us with a sour taste in our mouths.

We are Christians, in the world but not of it. We are a separate people, a light shining in the darkness that cannot be snuffed out. Our Christianity raises us above the mire here below and we find that we

can rejoice and be exceeding glad in the face of persecution. In the prevailing desperation and disillusionment we have Paul's words echoing "I have learned in whatsoever state I am therein to be content."

Yet, is that all there is, our own personal comfort? Have we forgotten that a city set on a hill cannot be hid. In our apathy as a nation we share the blame of Watergate. As Christians we must investigate our own lives to insure that the double standards and superficial morality haven't also become the salve for our consciences. The present state of affairs is not a sudden unexpected development; it is merely an overflow of dirt, dirt that we've allowed to persist perhaps because it has also pervaded our lives.

What can we as Christians conclude and learn from all of this. We must realize that the corruption involves us more than we like to think, we are after all products of the environment that we have allowed to perpetuate. We would do well to investigate whether our spiritual lives are built on sandy foundation lest the winds destroy us as well. Most of all we must let our light shine before men, not smugly for sin is something our own lives are also redundant in, but unwaveringly and undiluted. We must daily recommit our lives going beyond material concerns to the pattern of our Savior. Then and only then will there be an end to bleakness and an ultimate cause for rejoicing.

NEWS

from, for, and about our churches

JEANNE KARSEMEYER

From our Loveland Church:

Rev. and Mrs. D. Engelsma were blessed with the birth of a daughter, Cara Elizabeth.

The Young People's Society sponsored a Singspiration on February 1 to raise money for the convention.

From our First Church:

The membership papers of Mr. and Mrs. David Korhohn were transferred to our Faith Church in Jenison.

Mr. and Mrs. Itze Vander Veen and their three baptized children, Ida, Ralph, and Randall, have been received as members from the Beverly Christian Reformed Church of Grand Rapids.

Mr. Paul Young and Miss Linda Bylsma were united in marriage on Friday, January 11.

Mr. Ray Talsma and Miss Nancy Talsma were joined in holy matrimony on February 1.

Membership papers of Mr. and Mrs. Terry Velting and daughter Victoria Lynn have been transferred to our Faith Church.

From our Hope, Walker Church:

A baptismal certificate of dismissal has been sent to Michael Heyboer at his request.

Mr. and Mrs. John M. Huizena were blessed with a son, William Scott.

Mr. and Mrs. Don Lotterman and three baptized children were received as members, coming from our Southwest Church.

From our South Holland Church:

Mrs. Arthur Boer (nee Eleanor Huyser) has been received as a member in full communion. She comes from the Beaver

Dam Reformed Church of Zeeland, Michigan.

Gysbert Van Baren and Joanne Stonwic were united in marriage on February 8 in our church.

From our Hull Church:

Mr. Jim Jansma and Miss Barb Meyer were joined in holy matrimony on December 28.

From our Holland Church:

Mr. and Mrs. E. Kortering were blessed with a daughter on December 15.

Mr. and Mrs. Robert Windemuller received from the Lord a daughter.

An Inspirational meeting for all the societies, sponsored by the Men's Society, was held on Monday evening, January 7. Seminarian J. Slopsema spoke at the meeting; a social hour followed.

From our Hudsonville Church:

Mr. and Mrs. Ed Miedema were blessed with a son, Rodney Lee, on January 29.

A Beacon Lights singspiration was held after the evening service of February 3. Special numbers were a saxophone solo by Bruce Lubbers, and a vocal duet by Sid and Scott Miedema.

From our Doon Church:

Mr. Wesely De Groot and Hester Van Den Top were united in the holy bonds of marriage.

Mr. and Mrs. Bob Blankespoor, Mr. and Mrs. Howard Bonestroo, and Mr. and Mrs. Warren Boon were all blessed with infants.

MR & MRS JOHN ZANDSTRA JR.
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