
Beacon Lights

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*"When I call to remembrance the
unfeigned faith that is in thee, which
dwelt first in thy grandmother Lois,
and thy mother Eunice; and I am
persuaded that in thee also."*

II Timothy 1:5

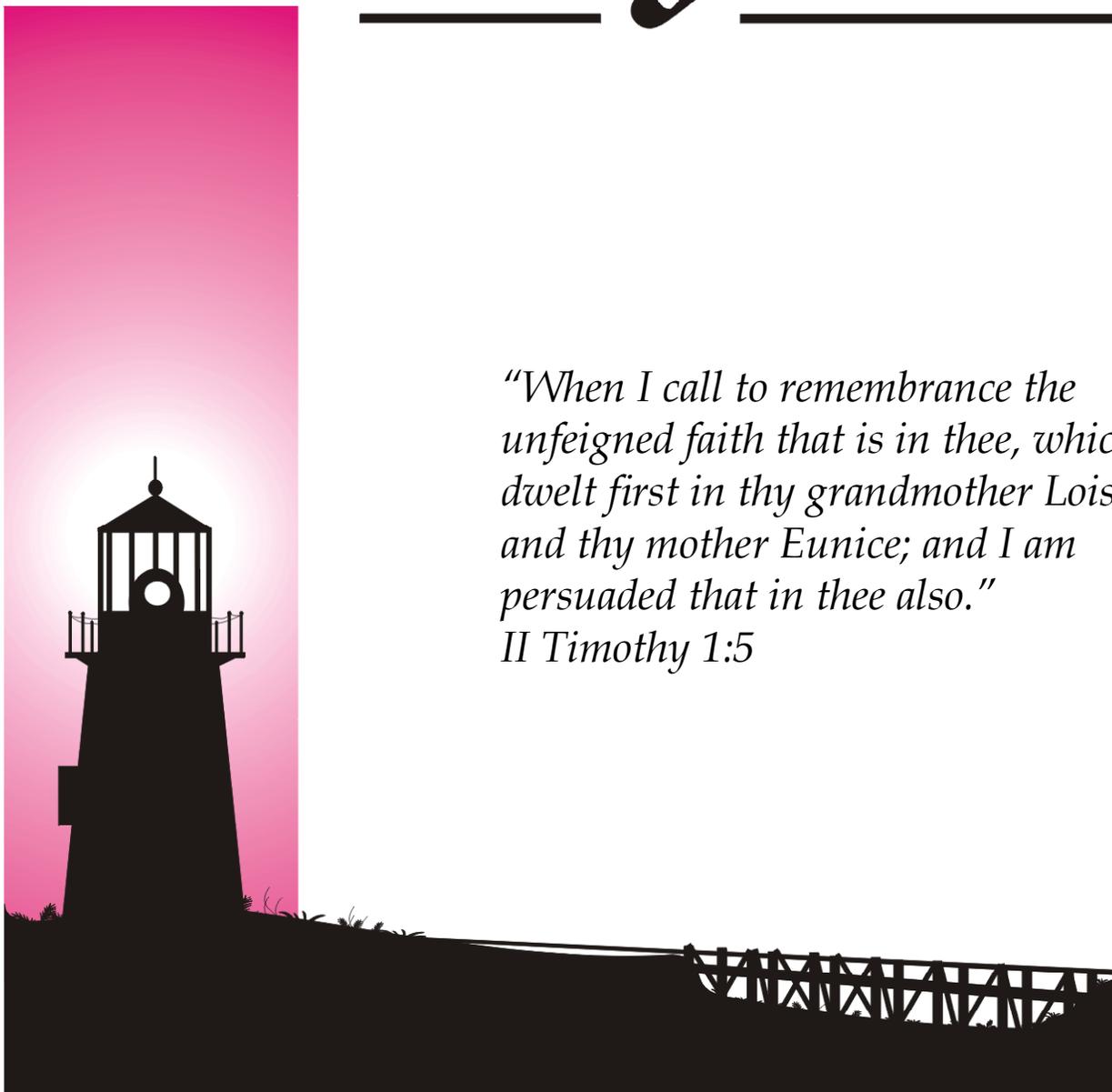


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More Education

by John Huizenga

Ahhh Summer! Time for a break from all the study. No more early morning treks to school, no more long days at school, no more homework. Catechism and society are finished. Finally, some time for myself; some time to relax, spend hours at the beach or pool to soak up the rays. Now I can stay up late, hang out with friends, spend hours and hours with video games, or perhaps work at a part time job. (After awhile, however, most would have to admit that boredom becomes a real problem.)

As we kick back for the summer, students in every other wealthy “Information Age” country are still sitting in school.

On average, in the United States, students attend school 180 days, in the UK 190 days and in Eastern Asia 208 days. It would appear to be no coincidence that Eastern Asian students generally perform well on international comparison tests. Many of the countries where students outscored ours have instructional calendars that are 3-4 weeks longer each year than that provided for American students.

In Germany and Japan, learning is serious business and “academic time” is rarely interrupted. In the United States, conversely, students can receive a high school diploma if they devote as little as 40 percent of their school time to core academic work. Estimated focused academic hours in mathematics, science, language and social studies during the final four years of schooling include: USA 1,462, Japan 3,190, France 3,285 and Germany 3,628. (<http://www.schoolmatch.com/articles/sp2005MAR.htm>)

Why do we take a three-month break from school? Has this been demonstrated to be the best way to prepare the next generation for their work and life in this world, or is the pattern a leftover remnant of a day when most school children were needed to help out on the farm? Unless American children have been gifted with superior abilities to absorb knowledge and are able to afford three months off and still surpass the people of other nations in skill and value in the workforce, we ought to take a serious look at the time spent on education.

Our flesh would like to do little else than enjoy what we want and desire. Children often need to be commanded and forced to complete their work and education. Eventually we realize that enjoying what one wants requires earning the money to pay for it. Although there are always exceptions, in the majority of cases, each level of college education that one receives increases your overall earning potential. A basic principle, then, in our society is that more learning results in more earning potential. And more earning potential increases the potential for satisfying our desires in life. Education has become the foundation and heart of our society. Too much time spent with learning and earning, however, reduces the amount of time one is able to enjoy the fruit of his labors, so we need some sort of balance.

Another factor to consider is our time and place in history. When the majority of people abandoned education at the 8th grade, then this majority seemed to be able to make a decent living at the earning potential that an 8th grade education afforded. As society and the world change, and more people gain higher levels of education, then it becomes more difficult for those at a lower level of education to adapt to life in this society and make a decent living.

Should we be sending our children to school longer under the highest caliber of education possible so that they have the best chance for a solid college education? As Christians, of course, we don't seek more money simply to satisfy our own desires, but we seek first the kingdom of God. The operation of the kingdom of God while it is manifest in this earthly life requires money, lots of it. We have schools and churches to build, ministers and teachers to pay, mission work to do, poor to care for, etc. God gives talents that require education for full development and use in the kingdom of God.

God gives talents that require education for full development and use in the kingdom of God.

Let us be careful here. We stand at the edge of great temptation, blindness, and deception. Education, money, prestige, power, security—that sounds good. I would like that, especially if I can have it in the name of the kingdom of God. We need to be careful. God warns us, “Love not the world, neither the things that are in the world. If any man love the world, the love of the Father is not in him. For all that is in the world, the lust of the flesh, and the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life, is not of the Father, but is of the world. And the world passeth away, and the lust thereof: but he that doeth the will of God abideth for ever” (1 John 2:15-17). God's word is full of such warnings. If we think we can piggyback our aspirations for education, money, prestige, power, and security in the name of the kingdom of God, we are doomed. Our survival as a church does not depend upon the wealth of its members, but rather on the grace of God alone.

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We do live in a world where an educated workforce is increasingly important. We also have greater opportunities for a college education. Of utmost importance to us as Christians, however, is the fact that we are pilgrims and strangers in this world. We belong to a different kingdom. Our time, energy, education, money, and life is wrapped up in an entirely different cause. Isn't it? Or are we having a hard time coming up with the money for church budget and other kingdom causes because it is all tied up in a college savings account? The devil would be delighted if our attention to the kingdom of God was pushed aside by worldly aspirations of education and wealth. “Wisdom is the principal thing; therefore get wisdom: and with all thy getting get understanding” (Proverbs 4:7). Every hour of education dedicated to our life on this earth ought to be balanced with an hour in the classroom of Christ. Sending our children to a Christian school is a good start, but we must pack in heavy reserves of instruction from Christ before they leave the sphere of the home.

Do we need more education? Most certainly, but I don't think we necessarily need longer school years or even more college degrees. Instead of filling three months of summer with mindless fun, take the opportunity to exercise your mind and talents with very practical work in the kingdom of God. Going to the convention is an excellent way to spend that time. During the school year, the pastors and teachers reduce a parent's work-load by giving sound biblical instruction to the children during the school day. Parents should not be lax in continuing that education during the summer months. During the walks or bike rides we take we can point out the marvel and beauty of God's creation. Taking a ride to view a beautiful sunset or to stand in awe as God's judgment on sin as displayed in the storm clouds above. Summer is a great time to increase our fellowship with saints and find opportunity to gather and encourage each other in our calling as brothers and sisters in the Lord. Summer is also a great time for us to

strengthen our own devotional time. Without the structure of a rigid school schedule we can possibly find time to spend an extra 5–10 minutes in prayer. Our children will learn an invaluable lesson by just seeing us make time to spend in reading God’s word and praying silently.

Pursue the development of your gifts and skills with a college education if you feel that is best, but before rushing out after all these opportunities and swallowing the intellectual feasts at college laden with the poisons of worldly philosophy, we need to answer some questions for ourselves. Do we desire that our sons grow up to be ministers, elders, or deacons in the church as much as we do that they have a good job? Do our daughters know that the highest calling for a women is to be a mother in Zion? And if God withholds children so that they do not have the work of raising their own children, are our daughters ready to give themselves to the work of the church in other areas? Do we make sure that when they are attending college they are also getting a good sound reformed education in church, bible study, and retreats when possible? Are they taking time to read the *Beacon Lights* or *Standard Bearer* or other Reformed books? When they are presented with opposition to godly views, are they confident in their knowledge to speak boldly with others about what they believe and know to be true? Do we stress to our children the need and importance of single individuals in the church to help relieve the earthly kingdom work so that the mothers and fathers of small children can take on the awesome responsibility of instructing the next generation of warriors?

Education for the people of God is a matter of life and death. But it is not the kind of education that gives us an economic edge in the world. Let us take heed to the warning of God to his people, “My people are destroyed for lack of knowledge: because thou hast rejected knowledge, I will also reject thee, that thou shalt be no priest to me: seeing thou hast forgotten the law of thy God, I will also forget thy children.” (Hosea 4:6) ❖

Creation Through the Spectacles of Scripture

Visited by Majesty on High

by Rev. Gerrit Vos

(Summary of a sermon preached in the Hudsonville Protestant Reformed Church the Sunday after a devastating tornado hit Hudsonville, Michigan on April 3, 1956.)

“Come, behold the works of the Lord, what desolations he hath made in the earth. Be still, and know that I am God: I will be exalted among the heathen, I will be exalted in the earth. The Lord of hosts is with us; the God of Jacob is our refuge. Selah.” (Psalm 46:8, 10, 11).

Our village received a very special visit by the Lord Christ.
It was a visit of the Majesty on High.

What we really received is a little foretaste of the end of the world.

Some of us went to heaven in the process of that visit. Others are in the hospital because of that visit. Some of us had a brush with death. All of us were deeply impressed by that visit.

God came to us, and he roared: I have never yet heard a voice such as we heard around supper time, Tuesday evening, April 3, 1956. It sounded as though a thousand express trains were traversing the sky.

His footsteps were seen; he walked from the southwest to the northeast, skirting our village: everyone was aware of his august presence.

And we were afraid: many cowered in the basement of their homes, while God ravaged their properties. He flung houses and barns far and wide. Such debris was mixed with black muck and the dust of the earth. He snuffed out the lives of some of us, broke the bones and the flesh of others: they were left moaning in his wake.

Oh yes, no one can dispute it: God walked among us; his Christ paid us a special visit; he left desolation, death, pain, and misery.

But also awe, the awe of the childlike fear of Jehovah.

One man said: My Jehovah was beautiful in his raging! And that man lost half of his worldly goods, and his life was in jeopardy.

Yes, I have seen him too.

His pathway through Hudsonville was about three or four city blocks from my dwelling.

But in it all is a terrible accusation.

We have paid attention to this little walk of God, a walk whose results are still among us in many ways. We have paid marked attention to that little walk. Both the good and the bad, the saints and the wicked, the church and the world have seen him, heard him, and marked his works. The blue-coats of the State Police are still among us, as are the members of the State Guard, or National Guard. Life has still not returned to its normal beat.

Everyone is still talking about that little walk of Jesus through Hudsonville, visiting us. He is constantly among us. From the time when Zacharias sang his song of salvation until now, Jesus and the God of our salvation has his march among us, and he always speaks, shouts, beckons, and calls to us his people.

Zacharias sang: The Dayspring from on high hath visited us!

And he is still with us.

He promised: And lo, I am with you alway!

And he kept his word.

Jesus is constantly walking through Hudsonville.

And he is constantly singing his song of the eternal Covenant of God's grace.

He sings that song as a lullaby at the cradle of the Covenant babies. He sings and he speaks of the everlasting love of God when we are very young and as we gather as little boys and girls in catechism and Christian schools. His speech and his works become plainer to us as we grow up. Oh, how wonderful is his voice from the pulpit Sunday after Sunday, year after year.

His song of the covenant: I love you so much that I died for you on the accursed tree.

And you can hear it in Hudsonville, both in the home

and from the pulpit.

And his footsteps drop with fatness. He leaves in his wake regeneration, conversion, faith, justification, and sanctification. But also glorification when Hudsonville's children go to heaven.

That Tuesday, he left in his wake a picture of the desolation of hell. After I saw it for the first time I grew very still. It was awful.

But when Jesus is conducting business as usual, he leaves in his wake the glories of the Christian, the blessings of salvation, and we are blest.

Now here is the terrible accusation: we can see Christ in his usual business day after day and night after night, year after year and lifetime after lifetime, and we stay calm and orderly.

"How are things?"

"Oh, so so!"

After all, his daily and nightly walk through the village is much more beautiful than his special visit on that Tuesday, is it not?

Everyone wanted to get into Hudsonville. It took hundreds of special blue-coats and guardsmen to keep the crowds from hindering disaster cleanup. Last Sunday afternoon I had me a time getting out and getting back into my village.

But we do not need the cops on Sunday!

How easily we leave our place empty on Sunday during worship of God Who is in our very midst day and night!

How easily do we fall asleep during the service, skip the reading of God's Word after a meal, and a prayer or two?

That Tuesday he came and said: "This is the way of My final coming, when the heavens and the earth shall be destroyed by fire, tornado, and earthquake, and then the hearts of men shall fail them because of My terror!"

We heard it and paid attention. Oh, how we paid attention!

But, every waking and sleeping hour he is in our very midst and says: "I love you with an everlasting love, and all my endeavor is to get you with me in the new earth and the new heaven. I move the heavens and the earth and the depth of hell to get you away from the world, the devils and the powers of sin. I send angels and my Holy Spirit of grace who explains and applies my precious Word so that you may eat and drink spiritually and be satisfied. I am a flaming wall of fire around you and your children so that no harm may come near your dwelling. I suffer no man to do you wrong. I give men for thee and nations for thy salvation. Oh, I do love you and your seed

and I have unutterable salvation in store for you. Listen to me, my people: I, the eternal God am thy refuge, and underneath are the everlasting arms!"

That is what God, what Jesus, what the Spirit sayeth unto the churches.

And do we pay as close attention to it as to that Tuesday's tornado?

There is our accusation.

Yes, I do know that the tornado came so that the wicked will have no excuse in the day of his final coming.

I know, too, that this tornado came as a sign of his final coming so that the church might take courage and know that her deliverance is nigh.

But I also am persuaded that the tornado came to shake the church awake, to direct us to his more beautiful voice of the gospel, to remind us of his daily and nightly presence among us.

The church was crowded Sunday morning. And they tell me that such was the case in the other churches in our little village.

The tornado calls us to a rededication, to a consecration.

It did that to me.

We have given our answer to God's visit in our communal prayer.

And we tremble at his presence now.

For God says: "Be still, and know that I am God: I will be exalted among the heathen, I will be exalted in the earth."

God desires to be exalted. And, let us never forget it, he will be exalted. Therefore he walked through our town on a bias: on a line from the southwest to the northeast. And even the dogs saw him and trembled.

And he was exalted. Even by the reprobate, although they will not admit it. Some of them took time out to insult him: I saw a headline in a daily paper which called it a "brutal" tornado! It carries the proof with it that God was exalted. It was the wicked's answer to his footsteps. When God says in our hearts: I am God and there is no other God; then they say: There is no God!

Did you note that the daily papers did not connect the tornado with God and his Christ?

But we are still, Father!

We know that thou art God.

And we exalt thee, even while we cower in the southwest corner of our basements.

* * * * *

Yes, we are still.

And we are going to listen as never before. That is our promise to thee.

On our plea for grace to keep our promise.

And we are reassured, for thou continuest: "The Lord of hosts is with us; the God of Jacob is our refuge!"

God was seen for a few minutes.

He was clothed in black, the black swirls of dust, muck, trees, planks, and bodies of men and animals.

We saw him for a few minutes such as he will be seen again in the clouds of darkness of the final tempest, the final tornado of the last day, the Yom Jehovah.

But he is still with us in his dear Son.

He was in a hurry to come on Pentecost: the sound of a fiercely driven wind.

And he never left us.

He is so intimately close to us that the theologians are still fighting about the two natures of Christ. Oh, God is very close to man.

Do you realize that the sentence: "The Lord of Hosts is with us" is a name of Jesus?

Immanuel means: God with us. Well, for the name of God in the sentence, my text has: the Lord of Hosts.

He came well-nigh two thousand years ago, and united himself with man, and henceforth we are Zion, the city of God. His finger touched the earth; it was the greatest Tornado the world has ever seen. It was dark too. It was the Son of God dying on the accursed tree. There God embraced us with all our sin and guilt.

And then the tornadoes of God began to howl. It was an eternal tornado of wrath of almighty and holy God.

And when the tornado was over, it became still.

It was very still in the garden of Joseph.

The stillness of the peace of God that stole over and within the church of God.

That stillness shall last through all eternity.

That is our refuge.

The papers say: get to the basement. They even say and specify the exact corner which is safest: the southwest. Or under a table or a bed if you have no basement. I have no quarrel with the scientist. We must use the means.

But there is a refuge that is better, far better.

We hide in the shadow of the cross of our Jesus.

And all is well. Amen. Hallelujah! ❖

<http://www.prca.org/sermons/index.html>

From Dordt to Today— The Development of the Reformed Faith

by Rev. Herman Hanko

“In the beginning of the seventeenth century, Arminianism rose as a necessary and wholesome reaction against scholastic Calvinism, but was defeated in the Synod of Dordt, 1619, which adopted the five knotty canons of unconditional predestination, limited atonement, total depravity, irresistible grace, and the perseverance of the saints. The Bible gives us a theology which is more human than Calvinism, and more divine than Arminianism, and more Christian than either of them.”

“It was only a century after Martin Luther had nailed his theses on the door of the church at Wittenberg, and not even a hundred years since the undaunted Genevan Reformer (John Calvin) had flaunted Rome’s power, when the Arminian errors appeared not only sporadically, here and there, upon the scene of Dutch Calvinism, but threatened seriously to split both state and church wide open, and necessitated a National Synod, which should with bold strokes cut down the devils of heresy which assailed the precious heritage of the truth from their very ranks!”

Such are the contradictory opinions that have prevailed in the Reformed church world among historians and common laymen until the present day whenever the Arminian controversy of the 16th and 17th centuries is discussed.

The staff of *Beacon Lights* has requested a series of articles which deal with the development of the Reformed faith beginning with the Synod of Dordrecht and continuing through to the present day.

It can be said without contradiction that the development of the Reformed faith throughout this entire period has been, more than anything else, a development of the sovereign grace of God over against the vicious error of Arminian free-willism. This has not always been true in the Church.

In its earliest history, shortly after the times of the apostles, the truth of the trinity and the divinity of Christ

were the subjects of development and defense. Heresies of every conceivable kind arose which necessitated terrible battles for the defense of the faith, battles which lasted the better part of five centuries. The Reformation was a development of the truths of justification by faith, the authority of Holy Scripture and the priesthood of all believers over against the Roman Catholic lies of salvation by works, indulgences, the infallibility of tradition and the clergy, and the right of the church to forgive sins.

But, since Dordt, the greatest battles and, in fact, the only battles in which the Church has engaged have been the battles of the sovereign grace of God in the work of salvation over against the God-dishonoring and salvation-destroying errors of Arminianism. Though Arminianism was officially condemned by the Synod of Dordt, Arminianism marches on through the entire church world—Reformed and otherwise—with the most astonishing success, until it is almost impossible to find a place today where the truth of the sovereignty of God in salvation is steadfastly maintained and where the Calvinism of Calvin and the Synod of Dordt is honored and respected—yea, and even known.

There are other battles being fought today—battles against Modernism, Barthianism, Roman Catholicism, Communism, etc. But these errors are fought where the principle and leaven of Arminianism has already worked through the Church. And, because the church may have yet strength in part to fight against Modernism, but has capitulated to Arminianism, the battle is really lost. But where the truth of Calvin and the Canons of Dordt is maintained, not Modernism and Communism constitute threats, but Arminianism is the enemy to be resisted unwaveringly.

Yet, in a sense, the conflict between Arminianism and Calvinism (or, more correctly, Arminianism and Scriptural theology) is age old—a conflict that has persisted from Paradise. Arminianism is but another manifestation

of man's pride—a pride that caused our first parents to fall; a pride that continuously seeks salvation by works; a pride that comes to its most refined expression in Arminianism. Pride lies at the root of all sin. Pride leads men to rebel against God, deny his glory and seek glory for man “For by grace,” says Paul, “are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God: Not of works, lest any man should boast” (Eph. 2:8, 9). But by works men have always tried to save themselves. Already in Israel there were those who, in the wanderings in the desert, insisted that the whole congregation was holy altogether apart from the sacrifice of Aaron and the intercession of Moses. (Cf. Num. 16:3). The Pharisees of Jesus' day were no exception. It is not strange then that this basic error should develop into the Pelagianism of the early church, the work-righteousness of Roman Catholicism, the Arminianism of the 16th and 17th centuries, and the thorough-going Arminianism of our present day. It may be that an Arminian will object and insist that he maintains salvation by faith only; but by making faith man's work he makes faith a work and denies what Scripture means by salvation by faith alone.

If such a series of articles as this needs any justification, the following may be noted:

1) There are many today who claim to stand in the tradition of Calvin and the Synod of Dordt; but who deny the very genius of the Genevan Reformer and the very heart of the Canons. Their teachings are wholly irreconcilable with the truth we confess as Protestant Reformed Churches—we who claim also to stand in this same tradition. Who stands in the line of Geneva and Dordt then? This is not only a question which needs answering, but the answer which we claim needs an intelligent defense.

2) The cry is made today, also within Reformed circles, that Dordt is outdated inasmuch as the Calvinism of that great Synod is no longer a Calvinism applicable to our modern times. “Either discard the Canons, revise the Canons or ignore the Canons; but let's not leave them the way they are. We need something else.” To this cry we must give answer that it is a lie. But why? Thus these articles.

3) To deal with the history of the Reformed faith is to deal with the history of the Protestant Reformed Churches. If one is to be a faithful member of the Protestant Reformed Churches, and, in this way, of the church of Jesus Christ, one must know history. This is true even in any country where a man expects to be a loyal and good citizen. Good citizenship demands a knowledge

of the history of the country along with a knowledge of the principles on which his country stands. Far more true is this of the church. The history of the church is the history of the kingdom of heaven in which we have our citizenship. To be a faithful citizen of the kingdom of heaven (while here on earth) requires that we know this history of that kingdom as that history has unfolded in the church—and indeed, in our own. A knowledge of the eternal and unchangeable truths and principles upon which that kingdom is founded and which the church confesses is essential to our own responsible “citizenship” in the kingdom. An awareness of the battles fought by those who have gone before us, the “strategy” they employed, is necessary for us to know that we may fight the battles of today. That which our spiritual forebears believed, confessed, fought for and died for is our heritage, entrusted to our care which we must also believe, confess, and if need be, die for. Their steadfastness in trouble, faithfulness in suffering, dauntless courage against the attacks of the enemy can only inspire within us the same loyalty and utmost consecration to the truth which inspired them. A generation which ignores, or worse, despises, her past is a generation that enters the battle without weapons or training—a generation helpless on the battlefields of Christ's kingdom.

4) If any justification for this series appearing in *Beacon Lights* is needed, it only need be said that our young people form the church of tomorrow and will have to take their place when it is time for the generation of today to depart. And tomorrow is, to all appearances, a troublous day—more troublous perhaps than any that have preceded it; for we stand in the end of the ages, and the days are evil. To know what our fathers taught yesterday, what the church believes today, will enable you of tomorrow to carry on this great heritage of the truth in the days that remain. ❖

Reprinted from the 1963 June July issue of Beacon Lights.

Our Father Cares

*At times like this when we have trials to bear,
Let's turn to His Word and find comfort there.
There is no burden which He does not share.
Our Father cares.*

*Our Father has called us to be His own.
He has given faith—changed hearts of stone,
And has sent His Son our sins to atone.
Our Father cares.*

*Throughout life's journey He is by our side;
By His council He will continually guide.
And sustain in temptation when we are tried.
Our Father cares.*

*If in dark times we might despair of His grace,
We will seek Him in prayer—our doubts He'll erase
And our spirits renew that our mouths may show praise.
Our Father cares.*

*When we walk in faith and in courage bold
For His everlasting arms doth uphold.
Unto Him be the praise and glory untold.
Oh yes! Our Father cares.*

Author Unknown

Watching Daily At My Gates

The Song of Zion

A Psalter-Psalm Devotional of Praise to Our Sovereign, Covenant God

(Reprinted from June, 2000)

by Skip Hunter

June 4 Read Psalm 139:1-12

Psalm 139:1-3 A well-known truth is “God is everywhere!” What is our reaction to such a profound statement? Do we, like David, comprehend the whole of its meaning? Do we want to know its meaning? There are three ways in which we can respond to this statement. We can shrug our shoulders and say, “So what?” and go on our merry way doing what we want to do. We can become afraid and act as if God is this terrible potentate waiting to snuff out our lives without warning. Or we can take comfort in the fact that God is everywhere. Yes, we live in holy awe before him, but we have the blessed comfort that he is with us in all things. God is God and there is none else. Let us find comfort in that statement and live a life pleasing to his ever-seeing eye. Sing Psalters 382:1 and 384:1.

June 5 Read II Samuel 2:1-12

Psalm 139:4-6 Even every word is known of God before we speak it! People of God, do you understand what that means? Even our thoughts are under his knowledge. We may not be careless with our thoughts or words, much less our deeds, for they are in God’s hand. When David truly understood the meaning of this idea, he was speechless. This knowledge was more that he could comprehend in his finite mind. He knew that God was greater than he was and that he could never be like God. What about us? How do we consider God? Do we try to be as gods? That is what Satan tempted Eve with. Do we try to take away from the glory of God by our daily life? Or do we confess our utter lowliness before his face and say “O God, how great Thou art!” Let us remember that we are creatures and he is the Creator. Let us do this now in prayer and in our daily life. Sing Psalters 382:2 and 384:2.

June 6 Read Jonah 1:1-10

Psalm 139:7-8 Running from God. Have you ever tried it? In our reading for today we have one of the most famous accounts of one running from God. Jonah had to learn the hard way that this was not a wise thing to do. Through the storm, the sailor’s questions, and the fish, he was taught that to run from God was fruitless. God sometimes must teach us that lesson. We like to run or hide from God. Sometimes our actions are such that we wish them to be hid from the all-seeing One. God, however, will teach us that we cannot run or hide from him. Then as Jonah did we must relish the thought of entering

into God’s presence. Are we looking forward to the Sabbath? Sing Psalter 382:3.

June 7 Read Jonah 1:11-17

Psalm 139:9-10 Yesterday’s meditation talked about running and hiding from God. We saw that this is a fruitless activity. In verse 10 we see that God does not let us despair when we fall from the sense of his mercy. His loving hand is with us. He will not let us fall even when the way is rough and full of pitfalls. Like Jonah we will feel the loving hand of the Father. Like Jonah we must give thanks to God for his goodness. What better way is there to give thanks than to attend worship. This we can do today. This we must do. Let us go up to God’s house and say with Jonah, “Salvation is of the Lord.” Sing Psalters 382:4 and 384:3.

June 8 Read Psalm 139:1-12

Psalm 139:11-12 As creatures we see the light and darkness as opposites. And they are. Our Creator has given them to us as pictures of the antithesis that he has placed between good and evil. But when we use the darkness to cover up our clandestine activities, it is not a cover from God. He can see us no matter what the time of day or night. This is not because he has exceptional eyesight. Or because he has abilities to sense what is happening no matter what the time of day. God knows all because he is God. He knows each of our activities because he has ordained them in his sovereign will. This is both a warning and a comfort for us. It is a warning not to depend on night to hide our sin. It is a comfort that he sees and cares for us all the time. Sing Psalters 382:5 and 384:4.

June 9 Read Psalm 139:13-24

Psalm 139:13-14 “Fearfully and wonderfully made!” Every time that I consider the meaning of these words, I am filled with awe. To see the birth of a child, to look at each of its parts, and to know that God has directed each cell to be where it is is an awesome thing. To understand how a young child learns how to talk is past my feeble understanding. Birth and growth are truly a miracle wrought by God. Our response to such wonder must be praise to the Creator. We can know by the knowledge of faith that God has made us by his power. For that knowledge we must give thanks daily. Do we acknowledge that we are fearfully and wonderfully made? If so, let us praise God; if not, let us ask him to open our eyes in this matter. Sing

Psalter 383:1.

June 10 Read Jeremiah 1:1-8

Psalm 139:15-16 Yesterday we spent some time looking at the physical aspects of growth and development and how they are all ordained in God's council. In today's verses we see that not only our bodies are ordained by God, but also the activities carried out by these bodies. Jeremiah learned that as he was called by God to be a prophet in Judah before the captivity. God has for us a plan for our lives. It is our duty to learn that way as he reveals it to us day by day. Each day we must pray for eyes to see that which God has ordained for us. Then we must also pray for the grace to accept the way we must go daily, and in our whole life. Let these ideas be constantly before us as we live our lives. Young people, as you seek the path that God has for you, remember to seek the path that he has ordained before you were even born. Sing Psalter 383:2.

June 11 Read Romans 11:26-36

Psalm 139:17-18 After being amazed about our beginnings, we now are amazed at God's greatness. The Psalmist expresses his wonder at how God cares for him. We, too, must do this daily. Even when we sleep, God's providential care is over us. His ways are past finding out. In math we sometimes use the terms infinite and infinity to describe some numbers. These are actually only very weak pictures of God who is truly infinite. Not only are his thoughts numberless they are precious. There is nothing on this earth that can compare with them. Let us consider our God and see how great he is in all his ways. Sing Psalter 383:3.

June 12 Read Job 21:7-18

Psalm 139:19-22 These verses are sometimes misquoted, misinterpreted, or misused. They do not give the child of God *carte blanche* permission to hate anyone. We may only hate, and these we must, those who hate God. Are we grieved with those who rise up against God in their actions? Do we reprimand those who take his name in vain? Do we talk to our neighbor about his desecration of the Sabbath? It seems as if David completely loses his train of thought when he pens these words. Nothing can be farther from the truth. First of all we must remember that it is the Holy Spirit who inspired David. Secondly we must know that we cannot appreciate God's wonders and surround ourselves with those who hate him. Let us glorify God by hating his enemies. Sing Psalter 383:4.

June 13 Read Psalm 139:13-24

Psalm 139:23-24 This Psalm is ended with a beautiful prayer. After saying that he will hate those who hate God, David asks God to search him so that he can do this. We cannot hate anyone without having our own hearts examined by the mighty God to see what is in there. Sadly we know that we have all kinds of sin hidden in our hearts. We must pray for God's grace to root that sin out of our lives and to walk in his everlasting ways. We cannot walk that way by ourselves. We need his fatherly hand to lead us upon each step of that path. Ask God to search your hearts, people of God, and listen to him when he tells you what he finds. Only in this way will

we be able to praise him with our whole being. Sing Psalters 383:5 and 384:5.

June 14 Read Psalm 140:1-13

Psalm 140:1-5 This first section of the Psalm is David's prayer for deliverance. Once again we can see that David did not have an easy life. He was beset on all sides by enemies. Sometimes the enemies were within Israel and even his family such as Saul or David's own sons. Sometimes they were without Israel such as the tribes around his beloved country. David knew that his only hope was to turn to God. Do we know this? As we go to church today, will one subject of our prayer be deliverance from our enemies? Will we pray to be kept from those who hate us because we are the chosen ones of God? Think about these things, people of God. It seems easy to live now but what about in the days before our Lord returns. Are we ready? Are our children and young people ready? Sing Psalter 385:1.

June 15 Read Hebrews 10:19-21

Psalm 140:6-8 After bringing his plea for deliverance to God, David now gives the ground for such a plea. That ground is that God was his God. Is this our confidence? Many of our children have just finished another year of school. Did we stop to give thanks for another year of covenant education if we were so blessed to provide our children with that kind of education? Did we give thanks for help for our children who had to be educated in schools where little if any was taught from the Bible? We do have enemies. And these enemies may be seeking to destroy our children. Let us constantly bring the needs of our covenant children to God even as they are surrounded by enemies. Sing Psalters 385:2.

June 16 Read Psalm 140:1-13

Psalm 140:9-13 The first three verses of today's texts are imprecatory in nature; that is, they ask God to bring vengeance upon his enemies. These are not popular thoughts in today's "love everybody" world. To ask that God would bring evil is not the stuff you find in most churches and upon the lips of most who say they are Christians. Do we pray such things? David did and we must follow his example. The last two verses are words of thanksgiving for deliverance. David knew that God cared for his afflicted children. We can know this as well. Let us study this prayer and make it a model for our daily prayers unto our heavenly Father. Sing Psalter 385:3.

June 17 Read Psalm 141:1-10

Psalm 141:1 In reading the salutation to this prayer of David we get a sense of urgency from the words. David wishes for God to hear him and to answer him speedily. This is not a vain hope on David's part. God will answer us. Sometimes his time is different than our time, but always his time is best. Do we cry unto God when we are in distress? I mean, do we pray daily because daily we are in distress because of our sins? David was not praying out of desperation and we should not either. Rather our prayers should be based on the wonderful knowledge that Christ is at God's right hand making intercession for us. Let us pray and let us pray often. Sing Psalter 386:1.

June 18 Read II Chronicles 30:13-27

Psalm 141:2 Israel of old had set times in which they were commanded to pray. These set times were to guide them toward Christ. Sometimes they strayed from these times and had to be brought back to see the right way. Hezekiah was used by God to bring them back to a true worship of Jehovah. The Passover Feast recounted in this chapter shows us a right way of worship. Are we truly thankful for deliverance from sin and Satan? Do we show it in our daily worship of Jehovah? Let us pray not out of custom or superstition but rather out of a heart turned to God the Giver of all good. Sing Psalter 386:2 and 3.

June 19 Read James 3:1-12

Psalm 141:3-4 David's first petition in this prayer is that God help him to keep his mouth from all evil. As we read in James, the tongue is an unruly member of our body. It can only be tamed by the grace of God. Children, do you ask God to help you choose your words carefully? When you talk about other children, what do you say about them? Do you think God is pleased by your words to and about your friends? Young people, what about the words that come from your mouths? Are they acceptable to your heavenly Father, or does filth spew out of your lips like sewage from a broken pipe? Parents, what about us? What do our children hear from our mouths? Are we good examples? God's gift of speech is a good thing. How are we using it? To God's glory or to Satan's? Sing Psalter 386:4.

June 20 Read Matthew 16:21-28

Psalm 141:5 Are we willing to be rebuked or reprimanded by a fellow believer? Are we willing to listen and to make whatever correction may be necessary in our lives? Young people, if you have recently made confession of faith, you promised that you would place yourself under the discipline of the elders if it became necessary. We need to realize that rebuke is for our profit and is good for us. God uses these words in a way that will help us. Peter must have smarted at Christ's words, but later he must have realized that they were for his good as he preached the gospel. Let us hear our neighbor when he rebukes us and let us ask God to open our hearts to such words of rebuke spoken in love. Sing Psalter 386:5.

June 21 Read Jeremiah 29:4-14

Psalm 141:6 At first glance David seems to be exulting in the overthrow of his enemies. He seems to be looking for revenge. We can understand this because how often have we exulted over the downfall of someone we envied? Looking closer at this verse in the context of the whole Psalm and the whole of Scripture, we can realize that David is jealous only for God's cause. This is much different than exulting over the downfall of some rival. Let our words today as we attend church be sweet in God's ears, and he will be pleased with us. Sing Psalter 386:6.

June 22 Read Psalm 25:12-22

Psalm 141:7-8 Once again we see the perilous place that David and the children of Israel were in. Looking at verse

seven there seems to be no hope for them. But because David has tasted the goodness of the Lord he can say the words of verse eight. Are our eyes upon the Lord? Do we look to him no matter what the trials of this life? Some of us may have health problems which seem insurmountable. Others of us are afflicted by those on the job. Others may be in financial difficulties. In each and any circumstance our eyes must be upon the Lord, for he will lead us on the path of life. The path will ultimately lead to our heavenly home. Notice, that is David's last thought. He is not concerned about his physical body's end; he prays that his soul be not left destitute. Is that our prayer now? Tomorrow? Forever? Sing Psalter 386:7.

June 23 Read Psalm 141:1-10

Psalm 141:9-10 In the final verses of this Psalm David prays that he may not fall into the temptations of the wicked. Of course, these temptations are orchestrated by Satan against the child of God. This is also one of the petitions of the Lord's prayer: "Lead us not into temptation but deliver us from evil." The last part of that petition can also be read "deliver us from the evil one." This must be a constant part of the prayer of the believer. Notice, David also prays that the wicked fall into the traps set for him. This is also proper as we saw at the end of the last Psalm. Let us make these petitions part of our own prayers, and let us pray that God will hear us. Sing Psalter 386:8.

June 24 Read Psalm 142:1-7

Psalm 142:1-2 Once again we have a Psalm which is a prayer of David. This prayer appears to have been written when he was fleeing from Saul and hiding in a cave. The surroundings were dark and dismal. The situation almost intolerable. David did what every child of God must do when faced with difficulty. He goes to God in prayer. Young people, have you made this your habit? Have you learned to pour out your needs to God in prayer? Do you study the Bible so that you know how to pray and for what to pray? Prayer takes preparation. The best preparation is found in the pages of God's Word. There is no trouble too small to bring before our God. Pour out your hearts before him and he will hear you. Sing Psalters 387:1 and 388:1.

June 25 Read I Samuel 22:1-2; 20-23

Psalm 142:3 David had just received the news that Saul had slaughtered the family of the high priest. Even though we know that this was ordained by God because of the sin of Eli and his sons, David felt responsible for what had happened. He felt he owed Abithar as much as he could give him. Doeg's evil was a trap for David. David knew what to do. He turned to God in prayer. If David would have relied on his own strength, he knew it would have been hopeless. We, too, must learn to rely only on our heavenly Father even when it seems hopeless in our eyes. To do otherwise will bring much trouble. Sing Psalter 387:2.

June 26 Read Mark 14:43-53

Psalm 142:4 After looking within himself for help, David now looks to see if any man could help. He had a cave full of men maybe as many as four hundred. He saw none to help

him. Notice that last line: "...no man cared for my soul." Not only did David have no one to help him physically, he saw that spiritually there was no help to be found on this earth. In this way David is a type of Christ as we saw him in our reading for today. We must never look for salvation on this earth. Christ is our salvation, and he is in heaven. This is a comfort, is it not, people of God? We know the weaknesses of men. Even if they wanted to, they could not care for our souls. We must place our trust in our heavenly Father who has sent to us his Son to die on the cross. We can realize the fact of David's predicament in this life. We may look around us but there will be none to care for our soul. None but Christ who loved us so much he gave his life for us. Sing Psalters 387:3 and 388:2.

June 27 Read Lamentations 3:22-32

Psalm 142:5 After looking around him for help, David turns to the Lord. No, God was not a last resort here. God was David's sure aid. He knows that man could not help him. He definitely knew that he could do nothing in his own strength. Therefore he cries unto God for aid. Jeremiah had had the same experience as he prophesied in Judah's last days. He was convinced that help came only from Jehovah. Is this our experience, people of God? Do we confess that our help can only come from him who made heaven and earth? Let us confess this daily, and more importantly, let us live out of that confession. God is our refuge both now and in eternity. Sing Psalters 387:4 and 388:3.

June 28 Read Psalm 116:1-9

Psalm 142:6-7a Even in David's woe he remembers God. First of all, he remembers that God can help him. This is evident from his requests. They are made in confidence. What about us; do we have and do we exhibit the confidence to ask God for help when we are in trouble? Do we even remember to pray? Are our prayers such that they come from a true and living faith? These are no prayers in a foxhole. These are the prayers of one who is used to praying at all times. This takes practice, people of God. We must be praying as Daniel did—morning, noon, and evening. The last part of today's verses speaks of the reason why David wants deliverance. He does not want this for himself. He wants deliverance in order that he may praise God's name. Do we think of that when we pray for help? Sing Psalters 387:5 and 388:4.

June 29 Read Psalm 142:1-7

Psalm 142:7b David's second reason for deliverance is that he thinks of God's church. The church will gather around him. Why? To praise David? Because they are so relieved for his safety? NO! NO! NO! Oh, these thoughts may enter some minds, but these are not David's thoughts. He realizes that his deliverance will cause the church to praise God. Think of the church in the New Testament when Peter and John, and then Peter again, were delivered. They offered prayers of thanks to God! Let us remember that. Our churches may not glory in what they have accomplished. They must glory in what God has accomplished! Let us pray for the grace to put all thoughts of pride from our hearts. Let us pray for the grace to glorify God

in all circumstances of life. Sing Psalters 387:6 and 388:5.

June 30 Read Psalm 143

Psalm 143:1-2 Once again we consider a prayer of David. We should use these prayers to help us to know for what to pray. In these opening verses David declares himself to be a sinner. He realizes that he cannot go to God on his own merits. It is only through the righteousness and faithfulness of God that he dare approach his throne of grace. He knows that because of his sin he deserves eternal judgment. What about us? Do we know how to pray this way? Do we come to God's throne like the Pharisee or like the Publican? Do we ask God to be merciful unto us the sinner? Let us make these words ours, and let us daily come before God's throne of grace asking for his help in time of need. Sing Psalters 389:1 and 390:1.

July 1 Read I Samuel 23:13-18

Psalm 143:3-4 Is it too much for you, people of God? Are you so much in despair that you do not know which way to turn? Has the death of a loved one left you feeling lost, miserable, or despondent? Do you face sickness day in and day out? There is only one thing that we can do. We must cast all of our cares upon Jehovah. David felt this way as he was being chased by his enemies. He thought he could take it no longer. But then he went to God in prayer. This is what we must do. We have been saying this over and over the last few weeks. But it is true. It bears repeating. Pray, people of God. Pray often. He will hear us and will care for us in the way that is best. Sing Psalter 389:2.

July 2 Read Deuteronomy 32:7-14

Psalm 143:5-6 Do you like to reminisce on the past? Do you like to think about past happenings of your family? David did too. He saw this to be a good thing. His reminiscing was about God's doings however. He was not talking about past glorious victories in battles. He was not thinking about beating Goliath or the bear and lion. He was thinking about what God had done for him. In doing so he found rest and comfort for his soul. God has done great things for us as well. He has given to us salvation. What a wonderful thing to reminisce upon! Let us do it often, and let us be comforted by such remembering even as David was. Sing Psalters 389:3 and 390:2.

July 3 Read Matthew 14:22-36

Psalm 143:7-8 Was it a long night last night? Was there something in your life that caused you not to sleep last night? For the people of God we may rest assured that whatever bothers us, it will not be a lack of the lovingkindness of God. Those mercies are sure every morning, as Jeremiah testified. After a long night the disciples were glad to see Jesus. Peter had to learn about Christ's mercies even as he sank into the Sea of Galilee. The distressed in Galilee were touched by that mercy even as Christ healed them that morning. Let us lift our souls to God knowing that he will see us through the long nights unto the glorious morning in heaven. Sing Psalters 389:4 and 391:1.

The Antithesis and Witnessing

by Prof. Herman Hanko

I have been asked to write a few articles on the antithesis, following the article of Rev. Eriks, who introduced the subject. I have chosen to write this article on the importance of the antithesis for Christian witnessing. That the people of God, including young people, are called to be witnesses goes without saying. Scripture is clear on this and points to our witnessing as being an important part of the life of the child of God. That witnessing is a part of the antithesis is something to which we have not given much thought and an idea we might, as a matter of fact, find surprising.

I appeal in my defense of this topic to I Peter 3:15, a text which also is a strong hook on which I intend to hang most of what I say. The text reads: “But sanctify the Lord God in your hearts: and be ready always to give an answer to every man that asketh you a reason of the hope that is in you with meekness and fear.”

That this text is rooted in the antithesis is proved by two separate points. The first is that Peter, under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, writes this letter to those whom he calls “strangers” in 1:1 and as “pilgrims and strangers” in 2:11. Now a pilgrim and stranger is one who is forced to live in a foreign land for a while, because his home is in another place. He has no understanding of the language of the land in which he sojourns; the customs of that people are foreign to him; no one knows him and he knows no one; he is a foreigner.

The life of a spiritual stranger in the world is the antithesis in the life of a child of God. He lives in heaven where his home is. He speaks a heavenly language and lives according to the “customs” of those who are citizens of the kingdom of heaven. He is on a journey towards his home, a home that John Bunyan, in his “Pilgrim’s Progress,” called “The Celestial City,” but is also our Father’s house of many mansions (John 14:2). The pilgrim sings “This world is not my home; I’m only passing through.” Or, perhaps, “I am a stranger here, dependent on Thy grace, a pilgrim, as my fathers were, with no abiding place.”

I Peter 3:15 is a rule of the kingdom of heaven for the way in which Christians ought to witness. They are witnessing, therefore, as a part of their antithetical life

in the world.

The second clue in the text that Peter is talking about the antithesis when he lays down this fundamental rule for witnessing is the first line in the text: “Sanctify the Lord God in your hearts.” In spite of the startling character of the admonition, Peter presents that admonition as the only way in which it is possible for one to witness and abide by the rule of witnessing that Peter lays down here. Without going into detail on the meaning of this surprising admonition, it is clear that Peter cannot mean that we must make God holy in our hearts, for God is holy in himself; and, worse, we are wicked. But Peter does mean that the holiness of God must become manifest in all our lives, if we are to witness to Christ. We are to listen to Peter’s admonition in 1:15: “But as he which hath called you is holy, so be ye holy in all manner of conversation (“conversation” meaning “all one’s activities”).

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Christ.

Thus witnessing has to do with the antithesis because an antithetical life is a holy life. If, therefore, Peter says that we must be holy in order to witness, witnessing is an important part of an antithetical life. That seems clear enough. A sinful man does not live an antithetical life; but a sinful man cannot witness either.

One more point needs to be made before I actually get at this matter of witnessing. That point is this: an antithetical life does not only include one’s manner of life (one’s “life-style,” if you wish); it includes also the confession of the truth that we love as Christian young people, and as Protestant Reformed young people. God has created an antithesis between the truth and the lie.

The devil promotes the lie, and if one would look about him in the world today, a world full of lies, one would almost conclude that the devil has won. The lie

is preached and taught in 99% of the world's churches and in 99% of the schools. The lie is sometimes blatant and sometimes subtle; but it is always the lie. The truth on the other hand is found in Scripture and in Scripture alone. We can discover no other source of truth than the Holy Bible, God's inspired word of truth.

...the holiness that witnessing demands is a holiness that arises out of a knowledge and love for the truth.

It is interesting and something never to forget that the holiness that witnessing demands is a holiness that arises out of a knowledge and love for the truth. What a man believes has everything in the world to do with how he lives. If he believes in evolutionism, a mother's fetus is a blob of tissue that can be destroyed without compunction. If a man believes that God has not given man a code of conduct in the ten commandments, homosexuality is a perfectly legitimate alternate life-style.

A Christian witness is, therefore, far more than the sometimes frantic activity of going around, cornering people and asking them if they are saved, or if they have received Christ into their hearts. It is far more than handing out tracts of one sort or another with bland and hopelessly watered-down advertisements of one's church.

While one must indeed witness to all the truth, in a nutshell the truth is simply this: "In all this sin-driven and vile world where God is denied and Christ is mocked, we shout as loud as we can for all to hear that God is the sovereign of the creation and Christ is King! And we serve the Lord Christ!"

That is witnessing.

* * * * *

One more point has to be made about witnessing before we look at I Peter 3:15.

I refer to the fact that Scripture makes clear that our witnessing has a certain divine power about it that is similar to and even identical with the preaching of the gospel. This is clear from Matthew 5:16 where Jesus says to citizens of the kingdom of heaven: "Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father which is in heaven." Peter says the same thing in I Peter 2:12: "Having your conversation honest among the Gentiles: that, whereas they speak against you as evildoers, they may by your good works, which they shall behold, glorify God in the day of visitation."

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Both these texts emphatically assert that God uses our good works to save others. It seems to me to be clear that when one to whom we witness glorifies God, he is saved and acknowledges God as the God of his salvation. The Heidelberg Catechism supports this interpretation when it gives as one of the reasons for doing good works that "by our godly conversation others may be gained to Christ" (Lord's Day 32, Q&A 86).

We must, however, continue our discussion of this subject in the next issue of *Beacon Lights*. ❖

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Our Young People's Federation

The Ideal Convention

by Agatha Lubbers

Ideals! I have ideals. You have ideals. Yes, I believe we all have some ideals. Some think of the ideal car. Others think of the ideal vacation. Still others think of

the ideal job. Yet how many think of the "ideal convention?" This, however, is the topic of my article.

We hope you have thought of the convention to be

held this year. Maybe you haven't thought of the "ideal convention" and maybe you have, but you have at least thought of *the* convention.

Not only the host committee and the Federation Board should be thinking of putting on the best convention yet but we should also be thinking about ways of making our convention really ideal.

Let us suppose that you have thought of an ideal convention. You thought about the weather? Possibly you thought about the banquet? You thought about the business meetings? You thought of the home in which you stayed if you were "from out of town?" You thought of the new friends—"friend" you would meet? You thought about the speeches? You thought about the theme? You thought about the outing? You thought about the programs? Ah, yes, there are so many things to think of in thinking about an "ideal convention."

To have an "ideal convention" all things have to be ideal. It's wonderful if the weather is just right—and it usually is. It's wonderful too, if the programs are well prepared—and we aren't often disappointed. God has given us talents which we are to use and we therefore should not neglect the use of them. The selection of the food is rarely a disappointment to young people with spacious appetites. How about those business meetings? Are they always as well attended as they could be? I know that voting can sometimes be drab and uninteresting, but isn't that necessary too in order that the Federation of which we are a part can be properly run. You're interested in that aren't you? We can't surely have that "ideal convention" if the business meetings are not properly attended. Not only do we have to attend but we should all try according to the measure of our ability to contribute to the discussion. Along with the business meetings are usually some sort of program. At the "ideal convention" we'll all want to stay and enjoy those programs for which some have prepared themselves. It is a great gift when we are able to listen as well as perform, to the honor and glory of God.

The wonderful thing of our young people's conventions and that also makes them ideal lies in the fact that it is here that we have fellowship with young people who are one with us in the faith. It is here that we make new acquaintances and renew old acquaintances and have the

opportunity of rejoicing in our youth with those of Protestant Reformed persuasion. Many miles may separate us during the year but yet we are never distant because we are united in the faith. During convention time not only are we united in the faith but we are also united in the sense that we are not separated by distance. Haven't you noticed though, that sometimes we don't mingle and acquaint ourselves as we should. We stay in groups and with those whom we always associate with from our own societies and churches. It seems to me that it is part of the idea of the ideal convention that we also as much as possible try to mingle with others so that our unity may be physical as well as spiritual. Remember too that you might meet that "friend" and not just make new acquaintances. More than one have found their life's partner in this way.

The ideal convention is always equipped with an interesting topic and a theme that is fitting to the needs of those who attend a convention. I think that is true of this year's theme. Not many of us know all the implications of the theme "The Gospel of the Promise;" and yet it is very important that we do know these things. Therefore we must have topics and subtopics which bring out all these points so that our young people may go home and may be able to say that they had a "good time"—a few days of spiritual refreshment. We as young people need this too. This should not be reserved for the days when we become older but we should realize that life is very serious and that we need the pure milk of the Word when we are in the prime of our life. When we are in the robust years of our life we often forget this and often do not even fully realize this. Therefore the speeches delivered by our ministers devoted to the proclamation of gospel, should hold a very prominent place in our convention activities. Apart from the Word of God, we as covenant young people are never satisfied.

If we truly seek to walk in the good works which God has before ordained that we should walk in, we will be satisfied. Then we will have a truly ideal convention. Yes, our convention will not simply be an ideal as an ideality but it will be ideal as a true reality. ❖

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Federation Board Nominations

by Emily Dykstra

This year's Young People's Convention is in sight as summer is just around the corner. At the convention, the delegates of each Young People's Society will be electing the new officers that were nominated by the Board of the Federation of Protestant Reformed Young Peoples Societies (Fed. Board). Those who are elected will take up their position at the end of the summer.

Because the Fed. Board meets monthly, it is necessary that all its members be from the West Michigan churches. Regrettably, that means that few of the young people from the west know the people nominated. For that reason, the Fed. Board wishes to introduce the nominees to all the societies.

The nominees for the office of vice president are Joshua Engelsma and Ryan Barnhill. Josh is nineteen years old and is a student at Calvin College. He attends Hope Protestant Reformed Church. Josh hopes to increase the awareness of and interest in the activities of the Fed. Board and to generate increased participation among our young people.

Ryan Barnhill is a member of Hudsonville Protestant Reformed Church. At nineteen years old, he works at Topcraft Metal Products and attends Grand Valley State University. His goal for the Fed. Board is to ensure that there is an ever-growing possibility for young people to be involved in with various activities, putting special focus on the convention.

The two nominees for vice secretary are Emily Kuiper and Rebecca Koole. Emily Kuiper is a nineteen year old student at Davenport University. She goes to Southeast Protestant Reformed Church. She would like to have more interaction between the young people of the individual Protestant Reformed Churches through different activities held by the Fed. Board or by invitation of Young People's Societies.

Rebecca Koole is an eighteen year old who attends Hope Protestant Reformed Church. While attending Davenport University full time, she also works at Motman's Greenhouses and Orchards. She hopes to continue the Fed. Board's work in keeping the Young People's Societies organized and united. She also wants to promote the spiritual growth of the young people during each society year through annual mass meetings and singspirations,

and encourage leadership among the young people.

One of the nominees for vice treasurer is Blake Wieringa. Blake, at twenty years old, attends Georgetown Protestant Reformed Church and is a student at Calvin College. He would like to bring the Fed. Board to the next level by helping them get things done effectively and efficiently.

Ben Rau is the other nominee for vice treasurer. He is nineteen years old. He is a member of Hope Protestant Reformed Church and is a pallet worker. He wants to assist in the oversight of the Young People's Federation.

The two nominees for the office of Youth Coordinator are Joel Langerak and Carl Kalsbeek. Joel is thirty-three years old and is a member of Hope Protestant Reformed Church. He is a production manager at Royal Technologies Corp in Hudsonville.

Carl Kalsbeek, at thirty-two, attends Faith Protestant Reformed Church. He is a plumber. He would like to help in the planning of events and activities for the young people to promote a Christian unity in the denomination for years to come.

The two nominees for Spiritual Advisor are Rev. Daniel Kleyn and Rev. Carl Haak. Rev. Kleyn is the minister at First Protestant Reformed Church in Holland. It is his desire to see the Fed. Board, through its activities, provide good spiritual guidance and opportunities for spiritual growth to our young people.

Rev. Haak is the pastor of Georgetown Church. His plans for the Fed. Board would be to keep societies informed of upcoming conventions and promotions, as well as fundraisers. Also, he would like to foster a sense of unity through the mass meetings, and give the opportunity for growth in leadership on the part of those who are chosen to serve on the Fed Board.

We, as members of the Federation Board, feel that all these nominees will be able to carry out their work with the Protestant Reformed Churches and our Young People's Societies. We ask that each of our young people prayerfully consider each nominee for their specific office on the Federation Board. ❖

Emily is a member of Hope Protestant Reformed Church in Walker, Michigan and is Vice-Secretary of the Federation Board.

Scripture's Teaching Regarding Alcohol (4) The Godly Abstinence From Its Use

by Rev. Douglas Kuiper

*And I set before the sons of the house of the Rechabites pots full of wine, and cups,
and I said unto them, Drink ye wine. But they said, We will drink no wine:
for Jonadab the son of Rechab our father commanded us, saying,
Ye shall drink no wine, neither ye, nor your sons for ever: (Jeremiah 35:5-6)*

*He that eateth, eateth to the Lord, for he giveth God thanks;
and he that eateth not, to the Lord he eateth not, and giveth God thanks....
It is good neither to eat flesh, nor to drink wine, nor any thing
whereby thy brother stumbleth, or is offended, or is made weak. (Romans 14:6b, 21)*

We have seen that God permits his people to use alcohol, with certain restrictions. That leads to the question, do we sin if we do not drink wine? We noted that Paul commanded Timothy to drink a little wine (I Timothy 5:23). So does God require each of us to use wine regularly?

The answer is that God never commands us to drink alcohol, except when we drink it in the Lord's Supper.

To explain this answer, we must do two things in this article. First, we must see that God does require us to use wine in the Lord's Supper. Second, we must see that God gives us the freedom to abstain from drinking alcohol in our personal and social life.

* * * * *

Let's deal with the matter of the Lord's Supper first. I will be brief here, because this is not the point which I really mean to stress in this article.

That God requires godly believers to drink wine when partaking of the Lord's Supper is clear from Matthew 26:27-28, Mark 14:23-24, Luke 22:20, and I Corinthians 11:25.

Let me quote Matthew 26:27-28: "And he took the cup, and gave thanks, and gave it to them, saying, Drink ye all of it; For this is my blood of the new testament, which is shed for many for the remission of sins."

Clearly, Jesus commanded those who partook to drink a cup in which was contained wine. First, he said, "Drink ye." Not to drink was not an option for them. Second, he added the word "all." This word modifies the command, not the prepositional phrase. In other words,

Jesus was not commanding them to drink the whole cup dry; but was commanding each of the disciples in that room to drink. None may refuse.

Today also godly believers who partake of the Lord's Supper must drink wine. Partaking of the Lord's Supper is an act of worship, and we are not free to worship God any other way than that which he commands in his Word. Besides, wine is a fitting picture of the effect of Christ's shed blood on us. Wine contains alcohol, which rejoices the heart. Christ's shed blood rejoices our spiritual heart. Grape juice, lacking alcohol, cannot serve as a picture of this joy.

Perhaps one can think of good reasons why one might not be able to drink the wine of the Lord's Supper, in exact obedience to this command - perhaps because of how the alcohol will interact with medicine which one is taking, for example. I am not ready to condemn such; I do not see that to be contrary to Christ's command.

What would be contrary to Christ's command is if a godly believer refused to drink the wine of the Lord's Supper because he does not like wine itself, because he thinks it wrong ever to drink wine, or because he does not believe that the wine is a picture of Christ's blood shed for him. He must drink the wine, in faith and obedience, in remembrance of Christ.

* * * * *

In our personal and social life, however, God never commands us to drink wine or any alcoholic beverage. This is clear from Jeremiah 35 and Romans 14.

The passage from Romans 14 speaks more of meat,

or food, than of drink; but what it says applies also to drink, and particularly to drinking alcohol.

Notice that the passage indicates that some might not drink, because they are not sure God would approve of that act. These are “weak in the faith” (Romans 14:1). This does not mean that they are second rate Christians, or that their faith itself is deficient. Rather, it means that their conscience might accuse them of sin for doing something that is not in itself wrong, because they are not sure God approves of it.

Regarding such people, Paul tells the saints in Rome: “Him that is weak in the faith receive ye, but not to doubtful disputations” (Romans 14:1). That is, receive such as a member of the church, and do not dispute and argue regarding his weakness. It must not be our goal to try to convince him he is wrong. Especially it must not be our goal to try to persuade him to drink alcohol, if he is not convinced he ought: “Let us not therefore judge one another any more: but judge this rather, that no man put a stumblingblock or an occasion to fall in his brother’s way” (Romans 14:13). This is repeated in verse 21, quoted above.

Paul can give this instruction, only because God never requires us to drink alcohol in our personal and social life. If we were required to do so, Paul would have to instruct the Roman saints not to tolerate this “weak faith” on the part of some.

Don’t overlook the fact that Romans 14 does speak of two situations in which we might sin by drinking alcohol - two situations other than drunkenness. The first regards one who is not sure God is pleased with his drinking. Because he is not sure God is pleased with him, he sins if he drinks. His sin is not in the drinking itself, but in his not drinking in faith. Verse 23 reads: “And he that doubteth is damned if he eat, because he eateth not of faith; for whatsoever is not of faith is sin.”

The second regards one who can drink to God’s glory. Though he might be able to do so, he may not drink if by doing so the brother who is weak in faith sins, by drinking contrary to the testimony of his conscience. So verse 21: “It is good neither to eat flesh, nor to drink wine, nor anything whereby thy brother stumbleth, or is offended, or is made weak.”

* * * * *

That God does not command us to drink in our personal and social life is also clear from the interesting scenario recorded in Jeremiah 35. There we read that God commanded Jeremiah to give wine to certain men of the house of Rechab and tell them to drink it. One would expect these men to drink it, then; one should not

disobey a prophet of Jehovah, who comes with a command from Jehovah.

But the Rechabites said “We will drink no wine.” And God commends them for this (verses 18-19)!

One of their ancestors, Jonadab, had told his sons not to drink wine or build houses, but to live in tents. Certainly it was not a sin for the Jews to build houses, or to enjoy food and wine. But Jonadab, who lived in the northern kingdom during the wicked days of Ahab and his sons, forbade his children to do these things so that they might better show that they did not give themselves over to the wickedness which was so prevalent in their day. Over 200 years later his descendants in the time of Jeremiah still refrained from building houses or drinking wine, to show their heartfelt love for God and his law.

That God commends them for their refusal to drink wine when the prophet had commanded them to drink it indicates that God does not require us to drink wine, apart from the wine of the Lord’s Supper. In fact, God knew they would refuse, and wanted to use their refusal as an object lesson for the rest of the Israelites. The sons of Jonadab obey his law, but the Jews do not obey God’s; therefore the Jews would be chastised severely, but the Rechabites would enjoy God’s blessing.

* * * * *

What must we conclude from this?

First, we must respect those Christians who have made a decision before God not to drink alcohol in their personal and social life.

Second, we must respect them even more when their reason is to show themselves different from so many in the world and church who abuse alcohol.

And third, when we are of legal drinking age, we must ask ourselves these questions before drinking: am I drinking in the confidence that God is pleased with me? What effect will my drinking have on others who see me? Will others who see me drinking responsibly, be led to drink irresponsibly, or be led to drink against the testimony of their conscience? And will my drinking in any way indicate that I have forgotten to live a distinctively Christian life in the midst of a wicked world?

Selfish people that we are, we don’t want to ask such questions. The answers might make us not do something we want to do. But God would have us ask them, answer them honestly, and live accordingly. ❖

Rev. Kuiper is pastor of Randolph Protestant Reformed Church in Randolph, Wisconsin.

Romans 12:1

by David Warner

“I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that ye present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God, which is your reasonable service.”

In this passage, the apostle Paul is beseeching us. To beseech, according to Webster’s New World College Dictionary, is to ask earnestly; to entreat or implore almost in a begging manner. Paul is calling us to present our bodies a living sacrifice. The reason we must present our bodies as a living sacrifice is because the condition of our spiritual heart is shown outwardly in the whole of our lives, mainly through the use of our bodies. You might ask how somebody could be a living sacrifice. God showed Adam and Eve how sacrifices were to be made when he killed the animal that clothed them after their fall into sin (Genesis 3:21). In the very next chapter, we read that Cain’s offering of the fruit of the ground was not acceptable unto God, as Abel’s offering of the firstlings of his flock was pleasing. In Exodus 12, the Passover was instituted. Verse five tells us that the sacrifice had to be a one-year-old male lamb without blemish. When Aaron was ordained as priest, the LORD said that the firstlings of a cow or sheep or goat were to be sacrifices of a sweet savor to the LORD. Many passages in Scripture tell us that this lamb without blemish or spot was a picture of Christ’s sacrifice of himself on the cross in our stead. John 1:29, 36 call Jesus the Lamb of God. I Peter 1:18-19 tells us that we are redeemed by his blood, and Hebrews 9-10 assure us that he is the one sufficient sacrifice. The sacrifice of many animals is not needed anymore since Christ has come as our one complete sacrifice and savior. Revelation 5:12-13 worships the Lamb that was slain, as described in Isaiah 53:7. However, if the saints have overcome deceitful Satan by the blood of the Lamb, as Revelation 12:9ff tells us, to what purpose would the multitude of sacrifices be unto God (Isaiah 1:11)? He doesn’t delight in these. So why would Paul be imploring, almost commanding, us to be living sacrifices?

Surely we cannot all become ordained to work in the house of the Lord, as Samuel was “sacrificed” by Hannah to God in this manner (I Samuel 1-2). Surely we will not be tested as Abraham was in Genesis 22 to offer up our children as a sacrifice. And certainly to be a living sacrifice we do not need to be literal burnt offerings to the

Lord, as Jephthah’s daughter was (Judges 11:29-46).

No; to present yourselves a living sacrifice is to be washed, made clean, to put away the evil doings from before the eyes of the Lord, to cease to do evil, to learn to do well, to seek judgement, relieve the oppressed, judge the fatherless and plead for the widow. In being willing and obedient, we are living sacrifices (Isaiah 1:11-20). In I Samuel 15:22, Samuel asks, “Hath the LORD as great delight in burnt offerings and sacrifices, as in obeying the voice of the LORD? Behold, to obey is better than sacrifice, and to hearken than the fat of rams.” The sacrifices of God are a broken spirit, a broken and a contrite heart. These sacrifices of righteousness please the LORD (Psalm 51:16-19). Proverbs 21:3 and Mark 12:33 show us that to do justice and judgement, as well as to love God with all our heart, understanding, soul, and strength, along with loving our neighbors, are more acceptable to the Lord than sacrifice. The Lord desires mercy, and not sacrifice; and the knowledge of God more than burnt offerings (Hosea 6:6).

To present ourselves a living sacrifice then is to follow God, as his dear children, walking in love as Christ has loved us (Ephesians 5:1-2). Christ has “given himself for us an offering and a sacrifice to God for a sweet smelling savor.” Becoming living sacrifices is part of bearing the name Christian (Heidelberg Catechism, Lord’s Day 12, Question and Answer 32).

But what does it mean to be a holy living sacrifice? To be holy is to be pure and separate. This is our reasonable service, our whole life devoted to serving him. Not because he is a tyrant and we are his slaves, but because we love and praise him in thankfulness for sending his only begotten Son to pay the price for our sins in his love for us (I John 4:10). We are his children, and we love him, so we must show in our lives that we belong to him. Yet we are able to do this only by the mercies of God, as the apostle Paul tells us. It is through God’s gifts to us that we are able to give back an offering or sacrifice to the Lord. Through the gift of faith we are able to offer up the sweet savor of our prayers to him. Through our various talents we are able to praise him. Through the commandments we obey him. Through covenant ministers, parents, teachers, and friends we can learn of his truths and continue to grow in the body of

the Church. We can present our selves living sacrifices, holy, acceptable to God through the blessings which he has bestowed upon us, for “of him, and through him, and to him, are all things” (Romans 11:36). In obeying the law and taking joy in him, we carry out the calling God has given to each of us. Psalter number 109 sings of this wondrous fact: “The offering on the altar burned Gives no delight to Thee; The hearing ear, the willing heart, Thou givest unto me. Then, O my God, I come, I

come, Thy purpose to fulfill; Thy law is written in my heart, ‘Tis joy to do Thy will.”

Being a living sacrifice is to hear him, to love him, and to obey him by heeding his will for us in every aspect of our lives, which we do only by his grace and Spirit. ❖

David is a member of Peace Protestant Reformed Church in Lansing, Illinois.

Church News

Church News

BAPTISMS

“He is the LORD our God: ...He hath remembered his covenant for ever, the word which he commanded to a thousand generations.”

Psalms 105:7, 8

The sacrament of Holy Baptism was administered to:
Emily Anne, daughter of Mr. & Mrs. Bert Mulder—Edmonton, Alberta, CAN

Seth John, son of Mr. & Mrs. Matt Kamps—Georgetown, MI

Quinton Jared, son of Mr. & Mrs. Jared Dykstra—Georgetown, MI

Samantha Grace, daughter of Mr. & Mrs. Mark Meulenberg—Grace, MI

Addison Michele, daughter of Mr. & Mrs. Dan Drnek—Holland, MI

Joslynn Marie, daughter of Mr. & Mrs. Rick Brunsting—Hope, MI

Logan James, son of Mr. & Mrs. Justin Kamps—Hudsonville, MI

Samuel Bruce, son of Mr. & Mrs. Drew Duthler—Hudsonville, MI

Allison Nicole, daughter of Mr. & Mrs. Ryan VanDerMeulen—Hudsonville, MI

Luke Gene, son of Mr. & Mrs. Rodney Wierenga—Immanuel, Lacombe, Alberta, CAN

Christina Renae, daughter of Rev. & Mrs. Clay Spronk—Peace, IL

Aliyah Grace, daughter of Mr. & Mrs. Aaron Lanting—Peace, IL

Lee John, son of Mr. & Mrs. Les Kamps—Southwest, MI

Jordan Alex, son of Mr. & Mrs. Kevin Kuiper—Southwest, MI

Ayla Nicole, daughter of Mr. & Mrs. Mike Holstege—Trinity, MI

CONFESSIONS OF FAITH

“Teach me, O LORD, the way of the statutes; and I shall keep it unto the end.” Psalm 119:33

Public confession of faith in our Lord Jesus Christ was made by:

Michelle Morley—Bethel, IL

Janna Bleyenbergh, Jerry Bleyenbergh, Matthew Brummel, Danielle Burgers, Jordana De Jong, Laura De Jong, Brittany Gritters, Heidi Oostra, Mark Van Maanen, and Justin Vink—Hull, IA

Amber Gritters—Redlands, CA

MARRIAGES

“For this God is our God for ever and ever: He will be our guide even unto death.” Psalm 48:14

United in the bond of Holy Matrimony were:

Mr. Andon DeBoer and Miss Angie DeJager—Edgerton, MN/Sioux Falls, SD Mission

Mr. Jason Tolsma and Miss Andrea Stiksma—Edmonton, Alberta, CAN

Mr. Todd Kooienga and Miss Nicole VanOverloop—Faith, MI

Mr. Brent Meelker and Miss Stacy Feenstra—Kalamazoo, MI

Mr. Adan Santistevan and Miss Alicia Campbell—Lovedland, CO

Mr. Jim Hoogendoorn and Miss Lori Vermeer—Peace, IL

Mr. Geoff Haveman and Miss Joanna Struska—Trinity, MI

"LITTLE LIGHTS"

The Fountain

The water sprang
In arching glee,
A bubbling, gurgling, mounting tree:

From deep within
The ground it climbed,
To reach a peak of height sublime.

O fountain fair,
A pillar there,
What can you teach me in the air?

The spray you spew
Delights the eye,
And sprinkles o'er me as I try

To understand
The truth you show,
A doctrine dearly held to know,

A firm decree,
The fountain of
A holy faith and life above.

It's not my work;
I'm not the root;
It's all of grace—election's fruit!

Canons I, Article 9

This election was not founded upon foreseen faith, and the obedience of faith, holiness, or any other good quality or disposition in man, as the prerequisite, cause, or condition on which it depended; but men are chosen to faith and to the obedience of faith, holiness, etc. Therefore election is the fountain of every saving good, from which proceed faith, holiness, and the other gifts of salvation, and finally eternal life itself, as its fruits and effects, according to that of the apostle: He hath chosen us (not because we were, but) that we should be holy and without blame before him in love (Eph. 1:4).

... let it shine!

by Connie Meyer



F	W	E	W	C	C	H	O	S	E	N	E	L	U	F	F
B	O	B	E	D	I	E	N	C	E	O	A	H	P	T	H
L	Q	R	R	E	H	T	O	E	R	G	L	M	O	C	V
A	S	F	E	C	N	E	I	D	E	B	O	I	N	L	U
M	T	W	Y	S	C	P	T	E	B	R	E	O	M	A	Y
E	C	A	U	S	E	R	I	D	F	S	B	N	D	N	G
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E	T	G	N	I	V	A	S	H	Y	T	I	L	A	U	Q

Connie is a member of Hope Protestant Reformed Church in Grand Rapids, Michigan.

BEACON LIGHTS

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(UPSS046-840)

Who cares?
Who cares?
Who cares?

What's in it for me?
What's in it for me?

What difference does it make?

Whatever...
Whatever...
Whatever...

What motivates you?

Be ready to discuss these questions around God's Word:

Being honest, what or who motivates you to do your school work as well or as poorly as you do? Now imagine that influence disappearing from your life. Would you continue to perform at the same level? Why or why not?

What would be your reaction if your parents decided to free you from all rules and requirements when you reached the age of 16?

What changes would you make in your life? Why?

What would stay the same? Why?

Registration deadline is May 1, 2008.
www.prccconvention.com



Proverbs 29:25