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Youth is a time of high hopes and aspirations.
Youth is a time of dreams, plans, and preparations.
This is no reason for surprise. It is but natural that the young person, a young man or a young woman, should have a forward look. The youth stands at the close of his childhood. His childish thoughts and childish acts have been put away with his toys, and he looks in at the threshold of his adult life. His life is a life of preparation; preparation for the future that lies ahead. First there is school with its great variety of subjects, all in preparation for adulthood. One leaves school and there are the numerous choices and decisions that must be made: what is to be his vocation? with whom will he establish his friendships? who is to be his life partner? etc. All this comes upon a youth because adulthood is pressing upon him and approaching quickly.

At the same time one experiences the maturing of his spiritual life. There are catechism classes and society meetings for him to attend which are established with the purpose of preparing him for an adult life within the church. There is the growing consciousness of the preaching of the Word and its importance for his life. Throughout, God takes an ever growing importance within his heart as he grows in knowledge and in truth.

It is but natural, when life proceeds so rapidly as it does in the maturing youth, that there should be many hardships to conquer; reoccurring disappointments and doubts to overcome. When one stands before decisions affecting the whole of his life, it is necessary for him to make personal evaluations of himself, which often bring disappointing conclusions. A person finds himself limited. In school he is not always able to study and to learn as well as he would like. He wishes he had greater abilities to concentrate, to comprehend, and to remember. On the job he wishes he were quicker and more capable of mastering his duties. But our abilities are not always what we might wish them to be. Even spiritually, one feels the weaknesses of the flesh, the powers of temptation, and how incapable one really is of withstanding the powers of sin.

Thus youth can often be a time of disappointment; because a person is not always what he would like to be, and he does not always have the things which he would like to have. It seems as if we would be so much more successful both
The month of November is a month that seems to center in Thanksgiving Day. It is a day especially set aside for the purpose of expressing our thanks to God for all of the blessings which He has given us. It is not intended to be, nor should it be, a day absolutely unique in the year. It is our duty every day of the year to lift our hearts in thanksgiving to God. Nevertheless, Thanksgiving Day is not to be disparaged. It is entirely proper that also in "Beacon Lights" we should be reminded to this end.

Moreover it is not difficult for the youth of the church to take a very real and active part in this celebration of thanksgiving. As we have said, youth is a time of self-evaluation. In making these evaluations he finds without fail, much for which to thank God. Just from an external point of view the blessings of youth are many. There is a certain youthful vitality of body and mind, good health, optimism, and ambition. Youth sees the world with young eyes which are inclined to appreciate and thank. In his spiritual life the young person begins to come for the first time to a comprehension of the truth with its many brilliant facets. He begins to taste the power of the Word of God and rejoices. In catechism he hears of the riches of our Reformed heritage, and his heart swells with thanksgiving. Truly it is not hard for the young person to find ample room in his heart for a hardy expression of thanksgiving.

Yet there are those other things, those shortcomings and limitations of body, mind, and spirit, those things which seem to hinder life, those things which one surely would not call "blessings." What must be done with them on Thanksgiving Day? Are they, perhaps, the unmentionables of Thanksgiving Day which we must do our best to forget? Are they merely burdens to be born, about which we should not complain? Do we balance them against our blessings so as to see how small they really are? What actually is their place within our hearts?

A text was brought to my attention which, for me, has shed a very beautiful light upon this problem. It is found in Psalm 84:11:

"For the Lord God is a sun and shield: The Lord will give grace and glory:
No good thing will he withhold from them that walk uprightly."

Notice especially the last clause, "no good thing will he withhold from them that walk uprightly."

One's first inclination is to object, "This is not true. At least, if I am to be included among the upright, it is not true of me. There are so many good things that I do not have. I would be so much better off in school if I had more application, if I could concentrate better, if I had a better memory, if I were smarter. On the job I lack much in ability and ambition. Surely I would benefit spiritually if I were stronger and not so easily tempted, if my faith were greater, if I had greater understanding and knowledge of the truth."

But just a moment, remember this is the Word of God. Do not be too hasty to evaluate this text according to the wisdom of your mind. Do not judge it with your own judgment. Read it with the eyes of faith, "no good thing will he withhold from them that walk uprightly."

The meaning of this text is plain. All the things that God gives to the upright are good. If there is anything that He
withholds it is simply because that thing is not good. Maybe we were wrong from the start. True, there are many things which we lack, things which according to our own judgment it would be good for us to have. But God is God. Eternally He has set forth His counsel concerning us. It is a plan set forth according to divine wisdom, a wisdom which is able to adapt all things to the well-being and glory of the church. We cannot always see that wisdom, but it is there, giving grace and glory to God's people.

Now let us evaluate our lives again. Take away all earthly wishes and earthly evaluations. Judge purely and simply according to the Word of God. There are things which we lack, things which we think it would be well for us to have, but God has withheld them from us. Is it because God is limited? Is it because God is not capable of giving us all that we should have? This cannot be true for God is capable of doing whatsoever He pleases. Is it then because of us, because we are not truly upright? But we are upright, for we have been saved by Jesus and His righteousness has been imputed unto us. In Him we are made perfect, and God looks upon us with untainted love.

There is but one reason why we lack the things we do, they are not good for us. We may not be able to understand it. To us they may seem to be exactly the things we need. But God has withheld them. That is the proof that, regardless of what they may seem to us, in reality they are not good for us.

Yes, even our shortcomings and our weaknesses have a place on Thanksgiving Day. Even as it is due to God's grace that we have the things we do, it is also by His grace that we lack the things we do. Also for this we should always thank God. In that faith we can exclaim, "O Lord of hosts, blessed is the man that trusteth in thee."  

Bernard Woudenberg
One in Faith

(Beloved reader, God hath dealt marvelfuly with His people. He does so today. His covenant shall stand and He will do wonderous works.) The reality of salvation as a living bond with Christ causes the Christian to extol His Maker. Have you pondered on this thought lately? You, as a living member of the body of Christ are united with Him. This unity is not merely a unification of intellectual entities, but it is a close living union. You live with Christ, and by God's grace die with Christ. You walk life's path not alone, but with your Savior.

Extending from this personal unity with Christ, you are, by inmost desire, joined with your fellow believers in the Church militant. Thus you must not ascetically withdraw yourself from your brethren, but earnestly seek to join with the brother in Christ. Then truly your bond of communion is one in faith.

Our faith in which we are unified is God's gift. Principally it is God's Word and revelation. Included however, is all of history in which God works out the plan of salvation. Already in Scripture, significance is placed upon the revelation of God in history. We learn from Holy Writ the unfolding of the covenant in the history of Judah and Israel, and also of our calling as members of the same body of Christ. We must count it all privilege to suffer for Him, yea even to die for Him.

Stephen is an example of the faith unified unto all eternity, for at his death he saw the heavens open. Luther expressed the idea in his beautiful hymn, "The body they may kill, God's truth abideth still, His kingdom is forever." History, as God's word, also reveals to us the manner in which the truth was delivered unto us. Thus, the faith in which we are unified is basically God's revelation.

To enable a better understanding of our unification in faith, we must seek to increase our knowledge of that faith. To you young people who are established firmly in the church, make yourselves strong in the faith. Be edified and grow up in the grace and knowledge of Jesus Christ. Don't be too busy for the things of God and His kingdom. Read the Bible and meditate on it. Increase your knowledge by studying good Christian literature. Attend as much society activity and catechetical instruction as you possibly can, for the quest of truth and knowledge rewards you with greater understanding of the blessings of God.

Also we may inject a note of warning that as young people we do not consider our connection with our Churches as a light and frivolous matter. God has blessed us by placing us in a church which teaches that God is all. It is the only truth, for it is God's truth. It is not the philosophy of one man, as many think, but it is God's revealed truth. God has revealed himself in His word and by his grace permitted us to polemically and apologetically defend and expound that doctrine. Our affiliation, therefore, is a serious matter.

Someone reading this article may have plans to leave our churches because of a friend or future mate. We would seriously warn you to discuss in every detailed manner the impending result. You may leave the physical body of our church, but will you before God, ever be able to leave our

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Unions

III.

As we have emphasized in previous articles on the subject of unions, the matter is important and warrants discussion, for it is not something which is irrelevant to our daily life in this world in which we live, but on the contrary has to do with our right to earn a living and to live our physical life in this world. No one has a right to take from us our mark. But the world does that nevertheless. And the question is, whether we must sacrifice our principles, or whether we must suffer in order to remain faithful to our calling. No, that is not really the question. For we may not sacrifice our principles ever, regardless of the results. The question is, how do we sacrifice our principles by joining a labor organization?

Why is the stand which are churches have taken, namely that union membership and church membership is incompatible, necessary to maintain even though we may be required to suffer because of it? That question I will answer in these articles.

The Christian Reformed Church speaks of the labor unions in America as being "neutral labor unions." And they base their stand on the fact that these unions are "neutral." Because they are no more than "neutral" organizations, one may hold membership in them and remain a member in good standing in the churches. Therefore, we ought first to investigate whether these unions are in reality neutral as they are called, or whether this is a misnomer. Of course, it seems to be strange, to say the least, that an important decision of this kind can be maintained only on the basis of the word "neutral." It would seem that, apart from the question whether or not this is true, it is very weak ground to base a decision of such importance. And yet no other reason can be found in the stand of the Christian Reformed Church.

What is meant by a "neutral" organization?

This is not such an easy question to answer. When a group of people form an organization of some type, then they adopt a set of principles to define the nature of the organization and the purpose of its existence. These principles speak of the type of organization that is being formed, the purpose for formation, the way in which the organization will function, and the means by which the purpose will be achieved. Thus there is for example, the organization of police. It is their purpose to enforce the laws of the land and to do so by means of arrest and punishment of the offender. The organization is composed of men who are duty bound to maintain peace and order in society.

Every set of principles which an organization adopts express an ethical and moral and spiritual content. This can never be avoided. In the final analysis that means that every principle adopted by every organization expresses the views of the body which adopts it with respect to God and His kingdom. Either an organization is committed to the principle of the furtherance of the cause of God, the glory of His Name and the realization of His purpose, or it is committed to the principle of the establishment of a kingdom apart from God and
without His Christ, a kingdom which is dedicated to the realization of the power of sin and darkness, the furtherance of the cause of the Anti-christ.

I suppose that a "neutral" organization would be one which has not committed itself to either. This is impossible. It is impossible for man himself cannot be neutral. Man cannot assume the position that he will defer a decision as to whether he supports the kingdom of God or the kingdom of darkness. Man must think and act and desire. And every time he thinks or acts or desires, he expresses an opinion concerning his attitude toward God. Man is not "neutral." Neutrality is absolutely impossible. There is no such thing in the world. To call an organization "neutral" is a flat contradiction in terms.

There is no common grace in the world. There is no such thing as natural and civic good. All is either of sin or of God. All is either committed to sin or committed to the service and the glory of Him Who is most blessed forever.

So entirely apart from the right or the wrong of unions, they are emphatically not neutral! And to call them such is very dangerous, for it leaves people with the impression that they may join such an organization without a spiritual commitment.

There are however organizations which do not express definitely that spiritual commitment. Men do not always look so far ahead and include definitely in their constitutions that they are dedicated to the cause of sin. If they are established by wicked men, they are also used for the purpose of sin and evil. And oftentimes this involves a denial of the principles upon which an organization is founded. But they do not always definitely express their purposes in the principles which they adopt. I have in mind, for example, certain types of government. A monarchy may seek to rule over a people with the definitely aim of maintaining peace and order.

The ultimate aim of a wicked man who is king may be to seek his own ends and to satisfy and gratify his own lusts for money and power. But the monarchy, as such, may be a legitimate means of rule in a world of sin. Such it was in the days of Israel. And even though wicked men often sat upon the throne, righteous men also ruled, and did so in service to God. The purpose of wicked kings was to use Israel's monarchy to destroy the promised seed and to establish their own kingdom of sin. The purpose of righteous men was to serve God and rule over God's people.

Or, to use another illustration, a group of small and independent grocers may organize in order to buy merchandise at lower rates and in larger quantities in order to earn a living in this way. Wicked men may seek their own ends, but righteous men may seek to earn a living by legitimate means. Wicked men may seek to sin more by this organization; righteous men may use it to earn a living in order that they may support the cause of Jesus Christ in the world.

Let us apply this whole matter to labor unions. The question is not therefore, whether these unions are "neutral"; that is impossible. The question is, upon what principles are these unions founded? Are they principles which do not conflict with the principles of Christian conduct? Are they principles which are compatible with the principles of a child of God in the midst of the world? Or are their principles in violation of the will of God and thus are in conflict with the principles of Christian living? Do they militate against the calling of the saint? Do they oppose and deny the manifestation of the life of Jesus Christ in those who belong to His body? Are they therefore incompatible with church membership? These questions we must answer.

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The Fruit of Preparation

David Turnabout, we wrote the last time, spent two and a half evenings in preparation for an essay which he was to deliver in the Young People's Society of his church. He was determined that the embarrassment of the preceding Sunday would not be repeated and that if it took him all week he would attain a thorough understanding of the fifth article of his Confession. With this resolve, and with the aid of the material he had obtained from his minister, he plunged into his task. We shall try to follow David in his labor and give you a brief synopsis of what he found in his study.

The first thing that aroused his interest was the chapter heading of this article. It reads: “From Whence The Holy Scriptures Derive Their Dignity And Authority.” Especially the last three words struck his attention since before this David had never really thought of the Bible as a book of “dignity and authority.” He had viewed it as a book of religious information from which in his earlier childhood he had been compelled to painstakingly memorize many passages. The book to him also had a limited historical value and he had even heard a preacher once say that from the book of Revelation one could learn what is yet going to happen in future times. That was interesting but “authority” he felt was something else.

“Authority,” thought David as he sat gazing at the papers scattered on the table in his room. “That must mean a higher power.” Pulling the Webster from the small book case next to the table, he looked up the word and found, “a right to command or to act; dominion.” “Ah,” he thought, “but that implies a subject over which authority is exercised and to whom the command is issued. That must be the readers of Holy Writ. That includes me! The Bible has authority, the right to command, dominion over me! Hum!”

Not having thought of it in this light before, David felt that this was a good point with which to commence his essay. As he recalled a few passages of Scripture from childhood’s memory, this point began more and more to take on meaning. That means, as he explained in his essay, that we are to be obedient and subject to the Scriptures since it is not the word of man but of God Himself. We are not our own and, consequently, cannot and may not do with our time and our lives as we please but are bound by the authority of the Holy Word. To violate this is our sin and, oh, how sinful we are, always pressing pleasure and selfish activities before the study of the Word; seeking wealth and honor in this world when the Word enjoins us to “seek the things that are above.” The dignity of the Holy Word demands our deepest and most humble respect. It’s origin is Divine and failure to reverence it is gross sin. David recalled the passages of Scripture that speak of those who “stumble at the Word and go to perdition” and he remembered that the “stumbling” there is explained as “being disobedient.” This point made a deep impression upon young David so that he concluded it by strongly exhorting himself and the young people of his society to be mindful always of two things:

Firstly, our young lives are always subject to the authority of God’s Word. We are, therefore, to regulate and plan them according to that Word. It may not be
"what I want" but always "what does the authority of the Word require of me." If we bear this in mind, David advisedly pointed out, we will find that most frequently our wants and God's demands are in conflict. Right now, for example, I would rather be at the basketball court than preparing this essay.

Secondly, we cannot ignore or violate the authority of God's Word with impunity. It may seem that for a time we get by with much and in our youth especially we are inclined to think that we are "smart" when we obviously fool our parents or the "dominie" and engage in the things that are contrary to the authority of the Word but "our sins will find us out." God punished evil doing. We walk in "error" when we conceive of putting a "fast one" over God. Then we do not the "truth."

By the time David had completed this introductory point to his essay he found that already he had more material than he had had in his entire essay the previous week. As yet, he had not even entered into the content of the article itself. Three and a half hours had already been consumed thinking, looking up references and writing about the authority of God's Word in its practical application to our lives. It was not time ill-spent!

"At this rate," considered David, "my essay will be too long. Some may think I'm preaching a sermon. Others might get mad because our society will still be meeting when their friends come out of the church up the street at about 8:10. Maybe I had better not write all this but say a little bit about the article itself. I don't want to make enemies. What shall I do?"

This problem was tossed about in his mind until Wednesday evening when he again assigned himself to the task of continuing his work on the essay. By that time he had resolved to make his essay as complete as possible irregardless of its length.

He read and re-read the article several times and as he did so several of the questions that had been asked the previous Sunday and some new ones arose in his mind. Now as then, he was unable to answer them and so he began to read the material his minister had supplied. It began to crystalize in his mind. The meaning of the article became clearer and clearer until he felt he was now ready to pen his thoughts. Before doing so he thought it advisable to go downstairs and "talk it over with dad and mom" for a half hour or so. Perhaps they could give him a fresh idea that might enrich his writing.

Dad was sitting in the living room busily engaged in reading the newspaper. From the mirror behind his chair it could be easily discerned that the comics at present captivated his attention. Oh, yes, there was a meeting that evening of a newly-formed Society for Protestant Reformed Education but dad didn't feel like going.

"Dad," said Dave, "I want to talk to you for a little while about that essay I am writing for Young People's Society for Sunday night. Perhaps you, and mom too, if she isn't too busy, can give me some ideas and answer a few questions about my article."

"Don't bother me now," retorted Dad. "Maybe some other time. Go ask your mother. I think she's in the kitchen."

Dave felt at once the intent of this reply and knew what it meant when dad was in an ill-mood. He made a quick exodus for the kitchen.

"Mom," he said, attempting a different approach, "Watcha doing?"

"Son, please don't bother me now," she replied, a bit more pleasantly than dad had done. "Don't you see it's Wednesday evening already and I still haven't finished my ironing for this week."

That was enough for Dave. He knew that he would get no assistance from his parents and so, after devouring part of
the content of the cookie jar, he retraced his steps to his room somewhat bitterly disappointed.

"Parents are awfully strange sometimes," he thought to himself. "They keep harping on you to do these things and when you make an attempt, they give no encouragement or assistance. Why are they that way?" Dave was just about minded to give up on any idea of completing that essay when he remembered the authority of the Word. Even if he had to do it alone, he would finish the task in obedience, not to man, but to God!

Here we must close for this time because our space is filled. We will continue, D.V., next time but here we will say just a word yet to parents such as Dave's. Remember that such conduct as exhibited above is also in "error." Do not think your children will regard their catechetical work and assignments in society more important than recreation and pleasure when you yourself display more interest in the "comics" of life than in offering them a few minutes advice and assistance. Remember the authority of the Word: "And thou shalt teach them diligently unto thy children, and shalt talk of them when thou sittest in thine house, and when thou walkest by the way and when thou liest down, and when thou risest up."—Deuteronomy 6:7.

Rev. Gerald Vanden Berg

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EDITORIALS
(Continued from page 4)

spiritual body of truth. No bond is stronger than the union of Christ and his church (of which marriage is a symbol). Great sorrow can arise from separating from the faith which you were taught to love as a child. Prayerfully consider all these things, knowing that Christ is the only bond of unity.

The church must struggle continually to preserve this unity. God has promised that He will never forsake His Church, in this we find continuing comfort. The church has struggled through all the ages and in all countries. The devil is not silent, but goes about as a roaring lion. We, therefore, must stand firm on the Word of God from which we are able to receive the only true comfort in life and in death.

Through this struggle the church is led to glory. The evil days must come before our Lord shall return. The cup of iniquity must be filled. But for us, united in the faith of God, there is hope eternal which never fadeth away. Praise be unto the Father, to the Son, and to the Holy Ghost for our faith in which we are united as children of Him.

Jay Kortering

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CHRISTIAN LIVING
(Continued from page 6)

In this connection, there is also the question of what is generally known as corporate responsibility. But to this we must call attention in the following issue.

H. Hanko
Spiders

The spider spins his silver thread
With quiet industry,
To weave himself a gossamer bed
That breathes of artistry.

Though wind and rain may come to tear
His fragile world apart,
Still with a steady patient care
He makes another start.

Against such odds as would confound
The minds of mortal men
The spider weaves, without a sound,
His world to rights again.

So wrote one upon observing the activities of the spider. Its activities appear so useless, so futile, so frustrating. The writer of the book of Job expresses this futility and fragility when he compares the hope of the ungodly to the web of the spider. Notice! "... And the hope of the ungodly perisheth, Because his hope is cut off, And his trust is (as) a spider’s house." Job 8:13b-14. Yet it constantly works and strives to maintain itself and the little world it lives in. Listen to Solomon as he expresses the tenacity and subtlety of the spider in Proverbs 30:28, "The spider taketh hold with her hands and is in King’s palaces."

In this connection we mention the story about the Scottish hero, Robert Bruce. The story tells how Robert Bruce learned to overcome failure by watching a spider try again and again to fasten a thread across the entrance to the cave in which he was hiding.

In spite of its seeming frailty there is a universal fear of spiders which is difficult to explain. The first tendency of most people who encounter a spider is to kill it and crush it with one stamp of the foot, just as we have a tendency to kill a snake.

This fear is of such nature, in fact, that it has resulted in the development of numerous superstitions about spiders, most of which are entirely fallacious. It is commonly supposed that the great majority of spiders are poisonous and that they are courageous and aggressive enemies of man. There is a little evidence, however, to show that spiders, as a whole, are dangerous; and there is considerable evidence to prove beyond doubt that they are really cowardly creatures.

The fear of spiders dates back to early times. In Italy the bite of the tarantula was supposed to cause a “mania” for which the only cure was to dance until exhausted. The exercise caused profuse perspiring which removed much of the poison. Certain forms of music were also regarded as helpful treatment of “tarantism,” as the effect of the bite was called. Many musical compositions, to which the name “tarantella” was attached, were written primarily to stimulate the dancing. It should be kept in mind, however, that the Italian tarantula is a lycoside spider and not a true tarantula.

There are more of these interesting but fallacious legends about the spider. These legends may explain in part some of the common fears of the spider.

An old superstition, which is interesting to notice, says that a person can cure his fever if he wears a spider in a nutshell fastened to his neck. Longfellow mentions this superstition in the poem “Evangeline.”

That spiders secrete a poison cannot be denied. Anyone watching an insect that has been bitten has seen the deadly effects of the poison injected by the jaws of the
spider. But the amount of poison necessary to kill an insect and the amount necessary to cause the death of a human being are vastly different quantities.

Most investigators insist that the average spider cannot pierce the flesh on the palm of the hand, and all of them testify to the apparent unwillingness of spiders to bite at all. Those which can and do bite do so only when captured, compressed or irritated, and the effects are rarely injurious.

In many parts of the world, tarantulas (Aviculariidae) are considered deadly poisonous, and there is no doubt that some of these spiders possess considerable virulence. Extracts made from the poison glands of the tarantula and injected into the bodies of sparrows and mice cause almost immediate death. Few cases of human deaths resulting from tarantula bites are on record, however, and in these there is some reason to believe that the real mortal cause was secondary infection. Here is one prime example. A shipment of bananas was received from a Central American banana plantation. Upon opening the shipping case a tarantula crawled out an attached itself to the hand of the grocer, and appeared to inject some poison into the hand of the grocer. Seeing the proceedings and being a very ardent believer in the deadly poisonousness of the tarantula to human beings he quickly grabbed the nearest cleaving knife and chopped off his hand at the wrist to prevent the poison from going into the rest of his body. Some time later the man died of blood poisoning. Not the poison injected by the tarantula but because of the infection that resulted from chopping off his hand with the infected cleaving knife.

There is some indication, too, that there is a racial susceptibility to tarantula poison, and there is, of course, the question of individual sensitivity. Just as one person may eat strawberries and develop the well-known "strawberry rash"—so may there be a sensitiveness to spider poisons in some people.

Tarantulas are mostly southern or tropical, the several American species in the United States being confined chiefly to the Southwest and Far West. They are rather common in California.

Tarantulas are occasionally imported on bananas, but most of the hairy spiders that are ordinarily seen are not tarantulas at all. The commonest banana spider is probably Heteropoda venatoria. The fear of tarantulas has resulted in the application of the name tarantula to all large spiders.

The spiders of the genus Latrodectus (family Therididae), however, are well known to be virulent and many of them are quite capable of inflicting serious poison wounds in humans. The commonest representative of this group is the "black widow," a name erroneously applied to several members of the group throughout the United States. The eastern form Latrodectus mactans is a coal-black spider which frequents outhouses, barns, and stony places where it constructs a large funnel-shaped cobweb. The body of the female is almost half an inch long and has yellow or red spots, or both, along the mid-dorsal line of the abdomen. There is usually an hourglass marking distinctly visible on the underside of the abdomen. The male is much smaller, and in addition to the dorsal spots of red or yellow, it has four pairs of yellow strips along the sides of the abdomen. The western form is somewhat similar and is equally venomous. Many deaths have recently been attributed to the western black widow spider.

The only other virulent spider of any importance is the jumping spider, which lives under sticks and stones on the ground. It is usually black with three white spots on the upper side of the abdomen.

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THE BOOK OF ACTS
THE CONVERSION OF CORNELIUS
Chapter 10:1 to 11:18
(Continued)

III. The Conjunction of the Two Visions: (vss. 17-22)
A. The Facts:
1. When do the messengers from Cornelius arrive?
2. How do they make inquiry for Peter?
3. Who instructs Peter as to their arrival? What is meant by "the Spirit said unto him?"
4. What does the Spirit tell Peter to do? Why is it added: "nothing doubting"? What reason does the Spirit attach to the command to Peter?
5. According to the text, did any other than the Spirit inform Peter that he had callers?
6. Who, according to the text, spoke first when Peter and the messengers from Cornelius met?
7. Of what do the messengers tell Peter?

B. Significance:
1. Is there any importance in the fact that the messengers arrive at the exact time when Peter's vision ends?
2. Why does the Spirit inform Peter of the arrival of the men, and also tell him to go with them? Why does he not rather let the events themselves show to Peter the meaning of the vision?
3. What element does the Spirit let Peter discover for himself? Why? Is it not true that as far as the chief thought of the vision is concerned, the Spirit does not instruct Peter, while He simply causes all the incidental circumstances of the vision to be worked out in such a way that both Peter and the messengers are unmistakably brought together by God and taught His will in the matter?
4. Was there anything in the way in which Peter and the messengers met that might also serve to convince the messengers of the reality of Cornelius' vision and its meaning?

IV. The Visit to Cornelius: (vss. 23-48)
A. The meeting of Peter and Cornelius: (23-33)
1. How long did the journey take?
2. What was Cornelius' attitude during this time?
3. Who accompanied Peter on his journey? Why?
4. Who were gathered at Cornelius' house? What is the significance of this?
5. What did Cornelius do upon Peter's arrival? How is this to be explained? How did Peter react, and why?
6. What did Peter find when he entered the house? Does this indicate an individualistic trend in the preaching of the gospel?
7. Peter's introduction:
   a. What does Peter say that God had shown him? Did the vision concern
   men or food? Does Peter then refer only to the vision itself, or to what
   followed the vision also?
   b. What does Peter say concerning his own attitude after he received this
   revelation from God? Is he thoroughly convinced of his calling to go
   to the Gentiles?
   c. Why does he inquire as to their intent in sending for him?
   d. How does Cornelius respond? What kind of speech does he expect of
   Peter? In whose presence are they gathered?
   e. Was this repetition of the details of the two revelations also of signifi-
   cance possibly for the "many" that were come together in Cornelius' 
   home?

B. Peter's Preaching: (vss. 34-43)
1. Was this all that Peter preached, or may we say that this was the gist of
   his preaching, while his actual instruction was more detailed?
2. What kind of hearers did he have? Were they "raw pagans," or is it
   evident also in his sermon that his audience was already acquainted with the 
   gospel of Christ?
3. What is the meaning of Peter's opening words, that "God is no respecter 
   of persons"? Cf. also Romans 2:11; 3:9.
4. Is, according to vs. 35, salvation a matter of works? If not, what is the 
   meaning?
5. What forms the very core of Peter's preaching?
6. Why does he emphasize that he and the apostles were witnesses of these 
   things?
7. What, according to Peter, did Christ command them to do?
8. What must be the content of their preaching and testimony?
9. How does Peter connect the gospel with the O.T. Scriptures? Why?
10. How is the remission of sins to be received? Who shall receive it?

C. The Fruit of Peter's Preaching?
1. How did God seal the preaching of Peter? vs. 44.
   a. What is meant by this outpouring of the Holy Ghost? Were not
   Cornelius and those with him moved by the Spirit before this?
   b. How was this gift of the Spirit manifest?
   c. For whom was this sign of the outpouring of the Spirit meant as a 
      testimony? For these Gentile converts only?
2. The baptism of Cornelius and his house:
   a. Why does Peter ask, "Can any forbid water...?"
   b. What reason does Peter attach to his question?
   c. What was the meaning of this baptism?
   d. Is there any basis here for the doctrine of infant baptism?
3. What was the effect of these events on "those of the circumcision which 
   believed"? Were these the men that had accompanied Peter from Joppa?
4. Why did they ask Peter to tarry for some days? What do you suppose took 
   place these days?
V. Peter's Report to the Church at Jerusalem: (11:1-18)

A. The occasion:
1. From whom had the apostles and brethren heard about the spread of gospel to the Gentiles?
2. Who are meant by "they of the circumcision"?
3. With what did they charge Peter? What does this accusation indicate?

B. Peter's Report:
1. Why does Peter report all the minute details of the events that befell him and Cornelius?
2. Point out the strong evidence that Peter produces by this detailed report.
3. How does Peter sum up his report? What arguments does he adduce in support of his contact with the Gentiles? Does he present this affair as being of his own choosing, or of God's direction?
4. What was the effect upon the church? How did they glorify God?

Christian Charity

Would you like to sit in on a brief discussion on the topic mentioned above?

John comes home from church and asks: "Dad, I've often wondered, why do we have two offerings in the morning service?"

Dad: "The first offering is for the budget, which is used for the maintenance of our public worship and all the other activities in the church, but the second offering is for Christian charity."

"Charity? But is not the first offering also considered a gift of charity?"

"There is a difference. The budget constitutes an obligation which rests on every member of the congregation as long as he is able to contribute. Therefore the budget is always estimated per family."

John: "But what do I understand by charity?"

"The word charity has various meanings as you will notice if you look it up in the dictionary. But, as we are speaking of it now, charity is the spontaneous expression of our love and gratitude to God by helping our brethren in distress. Therefore this offering is entirely voluntary, but is at the same time an integral part of our public worship, as also our Heidelberg Catechism teaches in Lord's Day 38."

John: "A moment ago you spoke of Christian charity. Is there also another, let's say an 'unchristian' or worldly charity?"

Dad: "No, there is not. True enough, the world also speaks of her acts and gifts of charity, but this is actually a misnomer. Scripture teaches that the mercies of the wicked are cruel, and that all that is not done out of faith, according to the law of God, and to His glory is stark sin. Therefore we speak of Christian charity to emphasize that God has entrusted this peculiar gift to His church by spreading abroad the love of Christ in our hearts."

"Then it must be the calling of the deacons to collect and distribute these gifts of charity."

Dad: "That's right. We read about the origin and institution of their office in Acts 6. Immediately after Pentecost, the apostles themselves served the poor. But a murmuring arose that some, particularly the widows of the Grecians were being neglected, so that men were chosen, by the advice of the apostles, to make it their business to serve the poor."

"Is this office as important as the office of the minister and the elder?"

Dad: "Exactly so. Christ, as our only Prophet, speaks His Word to His church through the ministry of the gos-
pel. As our eternal King He rules and exercises discipline over His church through the elders. And as our exalted Highpriest He performs the ministry of mercy through the deaconate."

John: Then it would certainly not be proper to brand the deacons as the 'office force' of the church.

Dad: "If the office were ever relegated to that, it would be a disgrace to God's church. The duties of the deacons are actually these: (1) The ingathering of the offerings of the believers. (2) The prevention of poverty. (3) The distribution of gifts according to need. And final, but not least, (4) the consolation of those who are in distress."

John: "This becomes very interesting. Do you mean to say that it is the calling of the deacons also to prevent poverty?"

Dad: "Christ is not a parsimonious giver. He does not wait for the needy to come begging at His door, but visits them in their affliction through the deaconate. Nor does He wait until they are poverty stricken, and then hand them a crust of bread and a cup of water, but He supplies their needs, so that they lack nothing. True, deacons must be able to distribute the gifts wisely and properly, but they must always manifest the love of Christ in abundant mercy, even in giving a temporary relief."

"But when you speak of deacons consoling those in distress, by which I understand that they speak and pray with them, are they not treading into the office of the minister and the elder?"

Dad: "In a sense, the offices overlap, because the office of Christ is essentially one. But we must never forget, that while the material needs of the distressed must be taken care of, their spiritual needs in these direful circumstances must not be neglected. They must even be instructed to receive graciously, in order that they may experience abundant grace through their trials."

John: "But it, nevertheless, seems very distasteful to me to be helped by the deacons. Isn't there a measure of shame and loss of self-respect connected with it? Is it seems to me, that I would rather go hungry than throw myself on the good graces of the church. Besides, the deacons would all know my affairs, and soon my straitened circumstances would become public knowledge. I would not dare to buy even the barest necessities for fear of criticism of my fellow church members. No, State Aid looks better to me than becoming a charity ward of the church."

Dad: "You forget one very important thing, and that is, that not the individuals in the church, but Christ helps His needy through the deaconate, which He has appointed for that purpose. Christ places the needy in the church in order that His people may give a voluntary expression of His love. He appoints men for the office in order that they may discretely deal with these matters in strict privacy. Whatever sin may enter in, because the church is still in the midst of a sinful world, we may not let our own pride prevent us from receiving graciously and with sincere gratitude. Our Lord says indeed, 'that it is more blessed to give than to receive.' But many people like to read that as if He said that it is not blessed at all to receive, only to give. While Jesus states emphatically that there is also a blessedness in receiving. And wouldn't you rather receive out of the hand of Christ than turn your back to Him, in order to receive help from Philistia or Babylon in their cruel mercies?"

John: "Are there also poor people in our prosperous times?"

Dad: "If there were not, the Word of God would not be true. Jesus says, 'The poor you have with you always.' And He means to say that He will see to that for the good of all concerned. Some local congregation may not have any needy in their midst, but there are other
churches that can be aided. Besides, there are always people economically impoverished, remaining in institutions or rest homes, or burdened with some lingering illness, all of whom need a helping hand. There are also institutions of mercy which are dependent on the support of the church."

John: "Since we are on this subject anyway, isn't there room for Christian charity apart from the deaconate?"

Dad: "Let's not forget that the deaconcy are appointed by God exactly for that purpose. Even if anyone would desire to give some large gift for some special cause, he could still do so anonymously by sending it through the office of the church. In that way, our left hand never gets to know what our right hand is doing."

John: "But I'm thinking of many personal works of charity. It seems to me that the Bible speaks of those also. I am thinking of such passages as Lev. 25:35, Prov. 11:25, Luke 6:38, Acts 11:29, Rom. 12:8, James 1:27."

Dad: "That is true. The family is always the first one to reach out a helping hand. Brothers and sisters have a mutual obligation of love to each other. And children have that obligation to their parents. Moreover, we little realize how much a short visit, a word from Scripture and a prayer can mean to the sick and sorrowing. Even a card, a small gift, or a helping hand can mean so much, especially when we know that these are expressions of love of God in the hearts of His people. In that respect it may also well be said, 'Freely ye have received, freely give.'"

John: "Maybe we are wandering away from our subject now, but what do you think of all these sales, suppers, paper drives, car washes, etc."

Dad: "That subject would be worth a broader discussion some time. But, in brief, those things would certainly be wrong if they imply that Christians will not give unless they receive a like value in return. But here also the motive makes all the difference. There may be some in the church who can contribute their time and efforts. The Marthas and Dorcas can bake, or sew, or knit. The men can put forth some concerted effort on some project. As long as the church does not have to depend on these things for their sole support, and as long as these labors are performed in the love of Christ they cannot be despised."

Let me stress what we started out with saying: Charity is the expression of love, the love of God which He has implanted in our hearts, and which finds expression by returning to Him even in aiding one of the least of Jesus' brethren, Matt. 25:34-50.

C. Hanko

Choosing a Profession

"In the Sweat of Thy Face . . ."

We read in the Bible so simply, "And the Lord God took the man, and put him into the Garden of Eden to dress it and to keep it." In the Garden of Eden, Adam understood his position perfectly. And he was able to perform it perfectly. In fact, it was exactly the kind of work for which he was qualified and it was exactly the kind of work he wanted to be doing. His whole being was in every minute of his working day. His pleasure and his work were one. That must have been wonderful! Adam had perfect satisfaction and joy in performing his God-given work in a sinless state.

But it didn't last long! With sin came "thorns and thistles." Instead of joy in his work, he had sorrow. Instead of satisfaction and peace, he had unrest and painful exertion. Instead of doing his work with pure delight, Adam now experienced what God meant when He said, "In the sweat of thy face shalt thou eat bread till thou return unto the ground." He now performed his work in a sphere of vanity and death. An so do we!
Principally things are the same today as they were for Adam after the fall. And as sin develops and living becomes more complex, the "thorns and thistles" which rob one of satisfaction in one's labors seem to multiply more rapidly. Not only are we called on today to earn our livelihood in a sinful work-a-day world characterized by godlessness, but today in our age of specialization much of the work itself has become such that it no longer holds any intrinsic interest for the worker. The hand craftsman of earlier days is gone, and the production line worker has taken his place. There is an ever greater denial of satisfaction in the work itself. Much of the work by means of which thousands of people earn their living is routine and extremely dull and boring. All pleasure of creativeness is denied them and labor as a whole grows more and more restless. The only thing that can compensate is the material gains. And that at best is a poor substitute for true satisfaction in work performed. It doesn't work, to work for money! We know that the "love of money is the root of all evil." This certainly has become obvious in our day.

Office as well as factory workers are often accused of being "clock-watchers." In fact, in the office where I once worked, I remember hearing some of the office workers remark as they came through the door in the morning, "I wish it were five o'clock!" And the standing joke was that a "clock-watcher" doesn't clear his desk at the stroke of five. He has it cleared by then!

This situation exists because the worker's interests and his employment are not closely related. His daily work does not tie in with the hobbies and interests to which he turns in his few leisure hours.

Therefore, it is of great importance that we consider carefully and choose wisely how we will spend all those working hours, not primarily for our own satisfaction, but primarily because God demands of us that we use all our energy as willing and cheerful friend-servants of His. It is true that gratitude and contentment are spiritual gifts which God bestows upon His people. But we have these gifts of grace only in principle and it certainly is not easy to be content and happy and zealous in a job that holds no interest for us.

It is important that we recognize the qualifications and talents which God has given to us, and that we develop them and use them, not only in our leisure time, but especially, in the work we choose by which we earn our daily bread. That is why choosing our life's occupation must be a matter of prayerful consideration. It is not a matter of just working at a job that will be remunerative, if taking the job with the highest pay, but it is a question of service in God's Kingdom. And if we make our choice in this way, we will find joy and satisfaction in our work. The more bored we are with our work the more difficult it is to be thankful, willing servants of the Most High.

On the other hand, the more interesting we find our work, the more zealous and enthusiastic we can be concerning it.

That is why the teaching profession and the ministry are such ideal occupations. From many aspects they may not be considered ideal for there are many "thorns and thistles" growing here also. But they are ideal from the point of view of service in the Kingdom of God. Ministers and Christian teachers, who take their callings seriously, have no leisure time pursuits which do not tie in with their professions. Everything a minister does, he does as minister. He is always the minister. You can not separate him from his calling. His evenings as well as his daytime hours are devoted to his work. Everything a consecrated teacher does, she does with the idea of making herself a better teacher. Satisfaction is derived, not from the remuneration, but...
is derived from the work itself. And if the clock is watched at all, it is watched because, in the words of Longfellow: "Art is long and time is fleeting." There is always so much to be done and so little time in which to do it. A teacher sees the direct results of her teaching in the papers she marks and she sees her own failures revealed in the failures of her pupils. If the spirit of God is in her heart she will be spurred on and filled with zeal to do better because she wants to serve God better.

We all labor in a sin-cursed world where man must "eat his bread in the sweat of his face until he return to the ground." But in this sin-cursed world God calls us to labor as Christian stewards. Therefore, choose your daily work with care and prayer so that your working hours may give you happiness and contentment because you are laboring as God's friend-servant in the service of God's Kingdom.

Alice Reitsma

Halloween or Reformation Day?

How wonderful in meaning are Paul's words to Timothy as recorded in II Timothy 3:15—"And that from a child thou hast known the holy Scriptures, which are able to make thee wise unto salvation through faith which is in Christ Jesus." Equally meaningful are the same words as applied to our covenant children today.

For many years that same holy Scriptures which they are privileged to read and study was hidden in darkness, and its glorious truths buried under superstitions and traditions of men. The Church, with rare exception, had no access to the Word of God—and little interest in it either. It was not until the sixteenth century that God raised up a man, Martin Luther by name, to lead the Church out of the bondage of Roman Catholicism into the liberty wherewith Christ had made it free. Such an event, so significant in the history of Christ's Church on earth, should be observed and thought about by us who are the heirs of the fruits of that Great Reformation.

What does October 31 mean to you? Does the name "Halloween" bring a quicker response than that of "Reformation Day?" What flashes through your mind—visions of witches...pumpkin faces... masks...tricks or treat? For most people this is truly the case. Halloween is celebrated by the world in just that way.

The name "Halloween" means hallowed or holy evening, and October 31 was called this because it came before All Saints' Day. November 1 was set apart by the Roman Catholic Church early in the seventh century to honor all their saints, especially those who did not have a day named for them. But Halloween as the world knows it had its origin even further back in history. Among the early heathen tribes that inhabited Britain before the birth of Christ were the Celts. The men who exercised much influence in the tribes' religious and civil affairs were priests called Druids. The Druids believed and taught that on a certain evening during the autumn festivals ghosts, spirits, witches, and elves roamed about with intent to harm the people. This superstitious belief has lost its ability to frighten this generation, but the pagan and heathenish customs have been carried over to the present day celebration of Halloween. For that is the day when goblins, witches, and other wired specters make their hilarious appearance. What a foolish and meaningless day! In the schools of our nation, plans are made in advance to celebrate it to the full. Rooms are decorated with pumpkin faces, witches, and black cats. Parties are being arranged; costumes are being readied;
masks are being purchased or made. Fathers are braggingly telling their children the glowing details of the pranks and tricks they used to pull off. Police look with dread to the coming of that evening when it seems as if all the evil spirits are actually out wandering on the streets. Communities, alerted to the incipient danger, rally to entice the youth to harmless parties. Adults stock up on candy, gum, and such to be ready to pay tribute to masked figures who shriek in threatening voices: “Trick or treat!”

Why are the people of God willing to let anything so essentially heathenish obscure an event as important and significant as Reformation Day? Are we not delivered from Roman Catholicism and heathenish superstition? Do we not have a calling also here to testify that we are the children of the “day,” not the night!

The observance of Reformation Day and its glorious implications begin in the home. The family should discuss the liberation of the Church and the unshackling of the Word of God. Stories of the personal struggle of Martin Luther and events leading up to his nailing the 95 theses on the church door at Wittenberg, appeal strongly to the imagination of all of us. For a long time he had searched for favor with God, but this peace was denied him even in the seclusion of the monastery and despite self-imposed chastisements. With the discovery of the almost extinct Bible and his avid study of it, Luther was being prepared for his role as the great Reformer. The sale of indulgences and Tetzel’s shameless part in this traffic proved to be the spark that set off the Reformation.

Such interest engendered in the home can be built upon and enlarged in the school. Our Christian schools of today are making an earnest attempt to supplant Halloween with Reformation Day by educating the children in the proper celebration of October 31.

Various Young People’s Groups in our denomination reveal that the Reformation has meaning for them also. As they gather together on that day in their mass meetings, they reiterate in songs and speeches the fruits of the Reformation: freedom from the vain and corrupt traditions of the Romish Church and a restoration of the Holy Scriptures to the church of Christ.

Yet there is need of constant reformation within the Church. She must continue to reform as long as she is on the earth. The knowledge of the truth grows . . . Calvin follows Luther, the Confessions follow the 95 theses, and so on. More time should be spent by every one of us in a sincere study of the precious Word of God, instead of catering to the flesh which would make things easier and not too deep or doctrinal. As sons and daughters of the Reformation, let us be zealous, watching over the truth, holding fast to what we have. The world may have its Halloween . . . the Church has its Reformation Day!

Winifred Koole

Thy sacred Word, O Lord, of old
Was veiled about and darkened,
And in its stead were legends told,
To which the people hearkened;
Thy Word, for which the faithful yearned
The worldlings kept in hiding,
And into human fables turned
Thy truth, the all-abiding.
Now let us thank and praise our Lord.
Who boundless grace bestoweth,
And daily through the sacred Word
His precious gifts forthshoweth.
His Word is come to light again,
A trusty lamp to guide us;
No strange and divers teachings then
Bewilder and divide us.

—Olavus Petri, 1497-1552
NATURE STUDY
(Continued from page 11)

...interesting creatures which exhibit striking and interesting characters and habits. One is well rewarded for any type of study of them.

As to the other spiders, there is little need for concern. Most of them are harmless and wary.

On the whole spiders are remarkably

— NOTICE —

To all secretaries of member Societies
of the Federation:

Please send the name and address of the treasurer of your society along with your own name and address to the secretary of the Federation Board: Miss Ruth Dykstra, 439 Barth St., S. E., Grand Rapids, Michigan.

Please do not delay.

The Board needs this information now.

A. Lubbers
SPECIAL BULLETIN!!

Have YOU heard the very latest? Cancel all dates and make this YOUR date!!!

HERE

IT

IS!!!

Hudsonville church will be the host for the next BEACON LIGHTS Singspiration. The date set is Sunday, November 11. The time is 9:15 so everyone from Grand Haven, Holland and Grand Rapids can join in an evening of inspiration.

Young and Old—Let's make this a most successful singspiration.

Will YOU be there?

P. S. Parents — Give this serious thought! Your moral support and attendance will spiritually strengthen your children.