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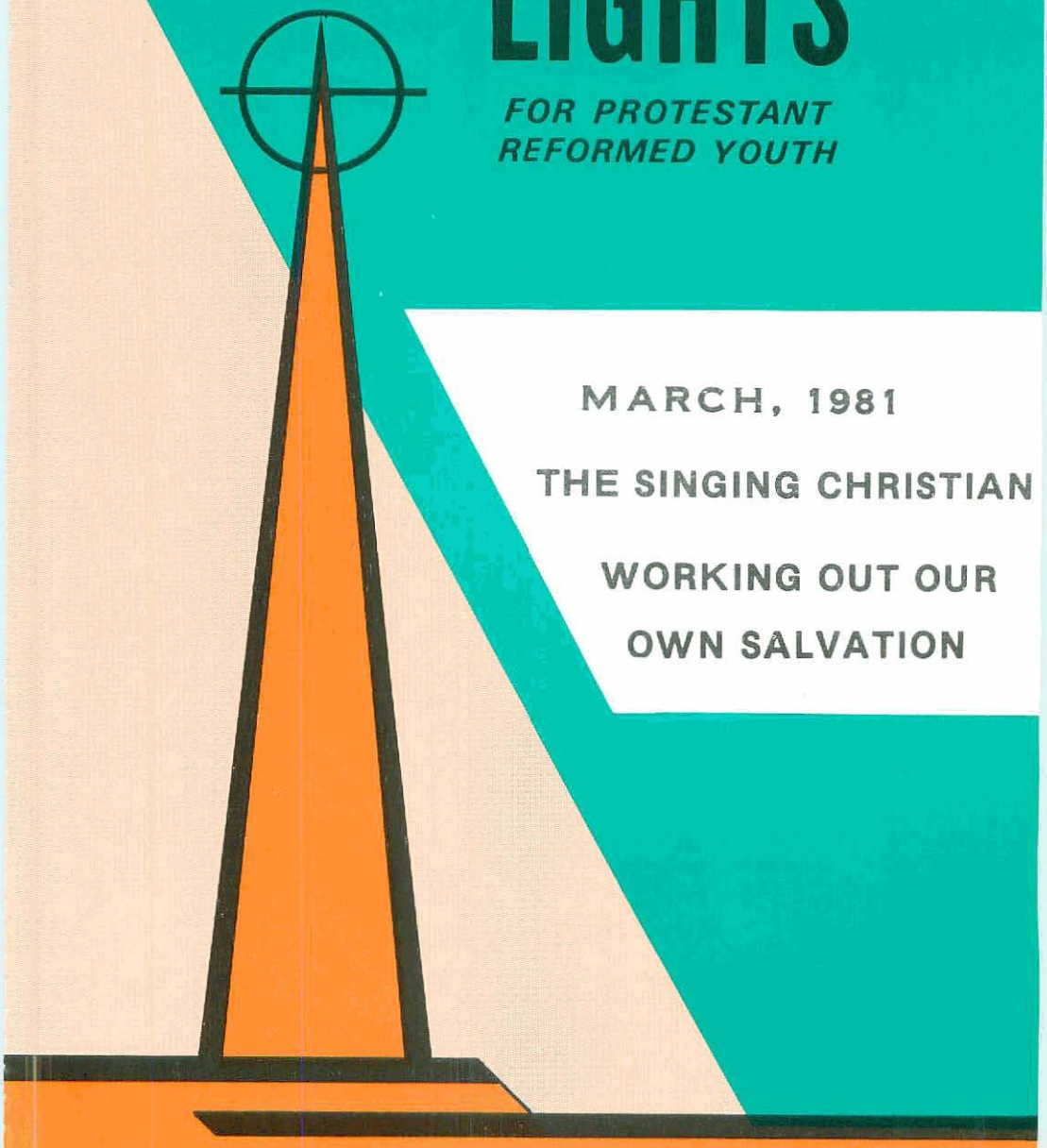
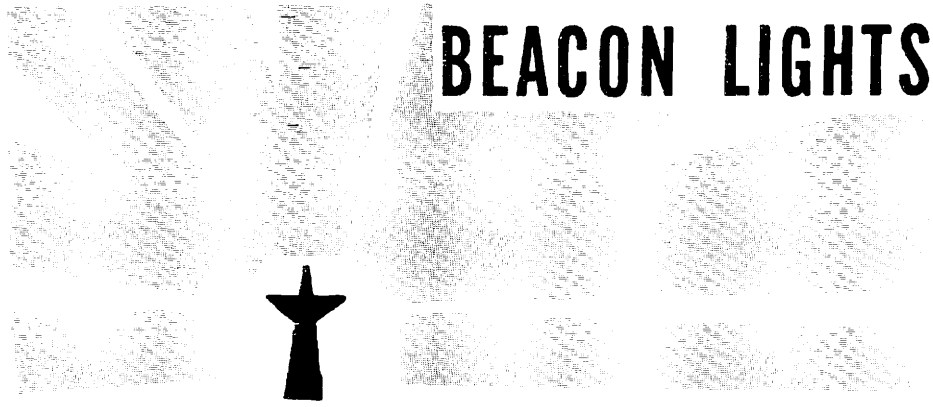


MARCH, 1981

THE SINGING CHRISTIAN

WORKING OUT OUR OWN SALVATION



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Editorial

OPEN EAR TO DISCIPLINE

by David M. Harbach

When a covenant child challenges the authority of his or her parents and disobeys them, that covenant child is disciplined in love. This is true for our covenant children no matter which authority they challenge and disobey. It is also true no matter how often they disobey. The discipline we use is covenant discipline and is unique to the children of God. The ungodly world of man can imitate this discipline but can never experience the true joy we experience as God's people, either when we are disciplined or when we do the disciplining. We do well to keep this in mind in the light of todays emphasis on correcting the ills of society. There is the tendency to go along with the ideas of modern man concerning the disciplining of children without examining these ideas carefully in the true light of God's Word. Ultimately, this modern discipline, sometimes called Christian discipline, leads to the deadly poison of common grace, which I will explain later in this article. Christian discipline is nothing new. However, covenant discipline is unique in that it arises from the regenerated heart and only belongs to God's people and their seed in continued generations. Covenant discipline finds all of its power in the promises of God. As God's people, we must exercise covenant discipline with ourselves and with our children all of the time. In this article, I find four areas of discussion necessary in order to understand covenant discipline in the broad sense. These four areas are: discipline in general, covenant discipline in connection with righteousness, the parents' obligation to discipline and our obligation as young people toward discipline.

To begin then, the word discipline has nine noun meanings and three verb meanings according to the Oxford English Dictionary. In the noun use of the word, discipline can mean: instruction, teaching, learning and educating; a branch of instruction; instruction used to form the pupil to correct behavior; the orderly conduct which results from training; the order maintained by students in school; the system of order maintained in the church; and correction, chastisement, punishment inflicted by way of correction. In the verb use of the word, discipline can mean: to instruct, to educate, to subject to discipline; to inflict discipline upon someone by way of scourging or flogging; and to deal with or treat in an orderly manner.

Our problem in understanding the meaning of the word discipline is found

in the way we use the word. The word discipline evokes in us a negative response. We don't like to use the word because we think it relates only to some bad or naughty deed. It becomes what is done to us when we have committed a gross or public sin. It is also what we do to others when they disobey us. We sense a feeling of pain with the word discipline because we associate it with being spanked, reprimanded or corrected. Our human nature reacts against correction of misbehavior. Our human nature reacts against authority. Both of these facts are related to discipline. Then for us, the word discipline becomes distasteful and unpleasant. This is unfortunate because the word discipline should evoke a positive response in God's people. For example, discipline is Godly instruction. Instruction in the ways of the Lord, in true godliness and in true holiness. Discipline is necessary so that we lead a sincere godly life. Covenant discipline is directing and guiding the child of God unto a mature man of God. Oh yes, it hurts! It is hard work all our life, but it is for our good because it is rooted in God's love for His people. It not only points out our sins, but also points us to the cross of Christ, where we find the full blessedness of salvation. Covenant discipline is the work of our Father in heaven to turn us away from our sins and unto Himself, so that we partake of His blessed covenant fellowship.

Secondly, covenant discipline always points to the righteousness of God. Discipline is necessary to teach us that to be righteous is to be in harmony with God's will. We see our sinful deeds because God shows them to us. We know we are worthy of God's wrath, but we believe assuredly God has imputed unto us the righteousness of Christ. Therefore, we are enabled to obey God's will. A deeper meaning can be understood in this quote from H. Hoeksema's *Reformed Dogmatics*, page 130, "Righteousness as imputed to the elect sinner in Christ is that Gift of God's grace conceived in eternity, realized in Christ, bestowed on the elect through faith, and perfected in the day of judgement, whereby the elect sinner is translated from a state of condemnation into a state of justification, and in Christ judged to be in perfect harmony with the will of God, on the basis of which he obtains a right to eternal life." Covenant discipline is possible because of the righteousness of God and has as its goal the perfecting of the child of God.

The Bible has in it the expression "righteousness of faith." Romans 10:6. Rev. H. Hoeksema in *God's Eternal Good Pleasure*, page 140, writes, "The expression 'righteous by faith,' then, signifies that you are justified by means of faith. It means that the source of your and my righteousness is Christ, His work, His atoning death, His resurrection, in which God gave Him testimony that He, Who entered into the deepest agonies of death for our sins, finished all things, fulfilled all God's demands, is perfectly righteous as Head of His Church, and that His people are righteous in Him....I have the blessed assurance that I am righteous before God." In being disciplined we are sometimes in dispair because of the terribleness of our sins. Yet, we must not look at ourselves for deliverance but to Christ and His work on the accursed tree. Then we are encouraged to fight the battle of faith. Then discipline

becomes for us, covenant instruction in the ways of our righteous God.

Thirdly, discipline is not something covenant parents may or may not do. Discipline must be carried out constantly. We must not assume our children will learn to be obedient on their own. We must not think that, because they are covenant children who possess a regenerated heart and Christ's spirit, they will eventually obey, even though they may be naughty for a little bit. This is where we overlook the sins of our children. This is where we are dead wrong. It is a failure to obey God, when He tells us to lead, guide and teach His children the ways of the Lord. Yet, there are parents that maintain a proper discipline with their children, but face the difficult task of raising covenant children who are terrors. These parents are at their wits end as to what to do. "I have tried everything and nothing works," they say. Admittedly there is no amazing cure-all for such problems, nor should we look for one. The point I wish to make is don't give up, but keep using your sanctified wisdom and the God-given right and privilege to raise His children in the fear of the Lord. You know this is very hard to do, but it must be performed! To lead or instruct our children, does not mean to let them do as they please, nor does it mean to beat the living tar out of them. We must live as a godly example before our children while we lead and teach them this same example found in God's Word. As parents, we must come to them with the Word of God. Unfortunately, most of the time we forget to do this even though God commands us to do this. Next time, let us remember to go to the foot of the cross of Christ with our children!

At this point, let us consider together the recent emphasis on disciplining children according to God's Word. There are those who rightly see the Bible as a profound source of wisdom in the instruction of our children. There are well-known psychologists who have written books expressing a Christian discipline. Dr. Dobson is well-known to most of us and his books are worth reading. However, there is no emphasis on covenant discipline. The danger is to think like these psychologists, who know very little about God's Covenant of Grace and who know less about an antithetical walk in the midst of the world. The process goes something like this; children today are far more disobedient than ever before and this creates an attitude of dispair on the part of the parents. "Nothing seems to work," they say. The world calls this an ill of society. The church calls it the sign of the times and seeks to smother it in love. In both instances, the people seem to be at a dead end as to where to go for help. Then come along the saviors, who tell us how to discipline our children. We flock to hear them and attend their classes. We learn a lot and soon begin using the principles we learned from them. Without realizing it, we have become disciplined to think like them. Their cry is that all children can be disciplined because all children are inherently capable of doing good and obeying God's Word, if only they would. They also cry God is gracious to all children. Therefore, all children are capable of performing some good by being obedient. Finally they cry, because children are capable of performing civil good, by being obedient, this shows God's favorable attitude to them. You recognize, I am sure, the poison of common grace running through these cries.

Let us discipline our children, not because they are naturally capable of doing good but because God has worked in them His righteousness and made them capable and willing to obey those whom God places over them.

Finally, there is a passage in Job 36:10. Elihu, for the third time, speaks to Job and tells him in Chapter 35 that he has spoken wrongly and should be sorry for what he has said. In chapter 36, Elihu gives numerous reasons why Job should submit to God's will in his life. Elihu begins by expressing to Job the ways in which God leads His people. Young people, verse ten through twelve reads, "He openeth also their ear to discipline, and commandeth that they return from iniquity. If they obey and serve, they shall spend their days in prosperity and their years in pleasure. But if they obey not, they shall perish by the sword, and they shall die without knowledge." These are strong words young people. When God opens our ear to discipline, we hear Him speaking to us and telling us to serve Him. Verse ten is a striking example of obedience. Consider this thought, when I stop up my ears my ability to hear is impaired, so that I can not hear at all. I can not hear words spoken to me. When I persist in doing this for a long time, the knowledge that I might have gained through hearing is totally lost. In fact, I become a danger to myself. Someone may say, "Look out!" I do not hear this warning. That is a picture of us as we are by nature. We do not *want* to hear. God works with us and in us so that He opens our ear to discipline, to instruction, to teaching, so that we know who we are, why we are here, what we are to do, and how we are to do it. There is no mystery, there is the loving command to stop sinning, to flee from sin, to flee to Christ. Young people, strive to follow your parents godly instruction, because God is speaking to you through them!

Working Out Our Own Salvation

by Rev. M. Schipper
Emeritus pastor of Southeast Prot. Ref. Church

We have been asked to give a brief dissertation on the text found in Philippians 2:12, 13. No motivation was given to signify the reason for this request. We are assuming that it was more than to give an old retired minister something to do. Was it perhaps because it appears on the surface that this text seems to contradict the general tenor of the preaching in our churches that salvation is of the Lord, and that it is entirely His work from beginning to end? Or, to put it a bit differently: if salvation is entirely the Lord's work, how can the apostle exhort: you must work out your own salvation?

The text, as it appears in the King James Version, reads as follows:

"Wherefore, my beloved, as ye have always obeyed, not as in my presence only, but now much more in my absence, work out your own salvation with fear and trembling. For it is God which worketh in you both to will and to do of his good pleasure."

To determine precisely what the apostle has in mind with the exhortation that we work out our own salvation, it is important that we consider the text in the light of its immediate context.

That context is suggested in the word "wherefore" which introduces the text. That word indicates that what the apostle says in the text is a conclusion of what he had been saying in the preceding. That context harks back to verse five and following. There the apostle had exhorted the church at Philippi to "let this mind be in you, which was also in Christ Jesus." The mind of Christ, as described by the apostle, was characteristically twofold: namely, to be humble and obedient. This humility and obedience the apostle demonstrates in the verses six through eleven, where he says: "Who being in the form of God, thought it not robbery to be equal with God: but made himself of no reputation, and took upon him the form of a servant, and was made in the likeness of men: And being found in fashion as a man, he humbled himself, and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross. Wherefore God hath highly exalted him, and given him a name which is above every name: That at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, of things in heaven, and things in earth, and things under the earth: and that every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father."

It is not our special concern in this writing to dwell on the doctrinal implications of the above quotation; for that would take us too far afield. Rather, we note how the apostle demonstrates in these verses what the mind of Christ, the Son of God in human nature, was. It was His mind to humble Himself and to be obedient. And that mind, the apostle says, must also be in us. In humility and obedience we must work out our own salvation.

But what does that mean that we are to work out our own salvation?

This cannot mean that salvation in any sense of the word is a work of man, or that it is dependent on us whether we are to be saved.

Everywhere Scripture teaches us not only that man is incapable of saving himself, but that salvation is from beginning to end a work of God in Christ. The apostle in his letter to the Ephesians (2:8-10) teaches, that we are saved by grace through faith, not of works, lest any man should boast. He stresses the truth that we are God's workmanship, created unto good works which He prepared in order that we should walk in them. Man, of himself, is by nature spiritually dead, wholly impotent to raise one finger toward his salvation. He is inclined to all evil and incapable of doing any good. Moreover, man as he is by nature does not want to be saved. A salvation which consists in the eternal blessedness of God's communion he does not desire. As we have said, all Scripture militates against the conception which allows man to contribute to his own salvation. If our salvation is all of grace and not of works (and it is); then there is no room for man to save himself. Besides, if salvation were a work of man in any sense, it must become evident that the work of Christ in the matter of our salvation is vain, and man would have something wherein to glory in himself, and not in God.

Indeed, it must be stressed that salvation is wholly the work of God in

Christ. Christ is God's anointed Servant, appointed and qualified to save us. Eternally He was set apart for this great work. For this work He came as the Son of God into the flesh. As God's Servant He accomplishes all of God's good pleasure. His salvation is also a finished work. It is not so that He merely makes salvation possible for us, and that now it is up to us whether we will be saved. He is Jesus, Who saves His people from their sins (Matthew 1:21). In His body and soul on the tree of the cross He pays the penalty of our guilt and merits for us righteousness and life. That this was accomplished by Him, God attested to in His glorious resurrection and ascension. God not only gave Him a name above every name and made Him Lord over all, but He gave to Him the Spirit without measure to apply that salvation to our hearts, and to bring us at last into the glories of eternal salvation in the day of His coming.

It must become evident therefore that our salvation is a finished work, to which nothing must be or can be added by us. Even the realization of our salvation in our lives is His work. By His Spirit the exalted Christ enters our hearts, renewing them through the power of regeneration, justifying and sanctifying us, implanting in our hearts a true and living faith. By His Word and Spirit He calls us into salvation efficaciously in such a way that we respond.

However, and this is evidently what the apostle has in mind, we are saved as rational, moral creatures. In the matter of our salvation God in Christ treats us as such. It is not so that when God saves us He puts us to sleep as it were in a Pullman sleeper, and we ride unconsciously to eternal glory. Rather, He renews and bends our will into conformity with His will. He moves our feet in the way of His precepts, and we walk consciously in that way. He inclines our hearts to love Him and seek Him, and we love and seek Him with all our hearts. He raises up our hands in praise, and we adore Him. He prepares our good works and gives them to us, and we walk in them. Consciously He realizes His salvation in us and we work it out.

Let no one think he is saved who does not live a life which is in conformity with His salvation.

In the way of sanctification He saves us, and in no other way. It is the way of holiness, without which no man shall see the Lord. It is the way of continual repentance and conversion. It is the way of separation from evil and corruption of the world. It is the way of conscious and continual obedience. It is the way of humility and contrition. It is a life of gratitude, manifested in the desire to be pleasing unto Him.

It is imperative that we walk in that way. That is why the Lord teaches us that no man can serve two masters. No one can enter the kingdom of heaven while he is seeking the things which are below.

Indeed, we must work out our salvation to the very end. That is the significance of the word the apostle uses here. It is a work which is not completed until the end is reached.

But the manner will be with fear and trembling. With fear, not because somehow he is not sure that he will not be ultimately saved. But because he knows how often his self-honor enters into his work. With trembling, because he considers that of himself he is weak, and he knows how strong the power of evil is that besets him.

Notice, too, how the apostle admonishes us to work out our own salvation,

not that of the brother or sister next to us. It is strictly your and my salvation which must be worked out. Though we may and do desire the salvation of the neighbor, for this belongs to the love of the neighbor. But you and I cannot perform for him. Each is responsible for his own. That is what the apostle means when he exhorts us to work out our own salvation.

For this the apostle also gives encouragement in the text. "My beloved, as ye have always obeyed, not as in my presence only, but now much more in my absence,—work out your own salvation..."

The church at Philippi had always obeyed. Not only was this true when the apostle labored among them, but this was true also now when he was absent from them. When the apostle was present with them they had manifested the true Christian attitude. When he preached to them, they listened. When he had exhorted, they took it to heart. When he had asked for their benevolence, they gave liberally. And this was, of course, as it should be. For certainly had the apostle exhorted and they had not listened, they would have been disobedient indeed. If he had preached the sincere Word of truth, and they had trampled upon it and rejected it, it would have been a grave offence. If he had asked for an offering and they had coldly turned him down, they would have been disobedient to their calling to show true brotherly love. In all those things the members of this church had shown that they were not mere eye-servants. The fruits of the grace of salvation were clearly in evidence, and he tells them so. And now, when he was absent from the church, he was informed that they were still obedient to the gospel. They revealed much more of their faithfulness than when he was present with them. It showed that they responded to their calling, not because of the apostle, but because they understood their heavenly calling. And this compliment is intended by the apostle to serve as encouragement to them to continue. They must continue the good work of working out what God in His grace had worked in them.

Would the apostle say the same of us? That is the question each one must answer for himself. Let each one answer to the question: Is the mind of Christ operative in us? That mind of Christ so operated in Him that He worked out our salvation for us and in us in the way of humility and obedience to the will of God. Does that mind of Christ so operate in us that we in humility and obedience work out that salvation in our lives? That is the question we must answer. Has the Word of the gospel of our salvation humbled us into the dust, so that we confess that all our salvation is of Him alone and of pure grace, from beginning to end? Has it wrought in us the true sense of contrition and obedience? Has it created in our hearts true gratitude, so that all our life is bound up in the fervent desire to walk in all good works that are pleasing to God? If the answer is affirmative, as it should be, then we may conclude that also we are working out the salvation which God in Christ has wrought for us and in us.

Then it must also become evident to us that our work is nothing more than the work of God in us, and through us. That is also how the apostle concludes the text. He gives us the divine motivating reason for working out our own salvation. "For it is God which worketh in your both to will and to do of His good pleasure."

Indeed, not only is the matter of our salvation His work from A to Z; but also the working out of that salvation is His work in and through us. No man

may boast. All self-righteous Phariseeism is denied. Let no one say when he works out his salvation that he in anyway contributed to his salvation.

It is God Who energizes, works in us both the willing and the doing of His good pleasure. Not as in stocks and blocks, not below our consciousness; but in conscious, willing, and obedient creatures, who so respond to His work of grace that we live lives that are consecrated to His glory and praise.

And when His work and our work is finished, then we shall appear before Him as the product of His sovereign and elective grace. Thus God shall forever behold us as well-pleasing to Him, and He shall forever be magnified.

FROM THE PASTOR'S STUDY

THE SINGING CHRISTIAN

by Rev. G. Lubbers

"...singing and making melody in your heart to the Lord...." *Eph. 5:19*

It was a good hour in the church many, many years ago. We came to hear a male quartet sing for us that evening. I was then a relatively young minister, and I was asked to give an "appropriate talk". I chose to speak and give a brief message on the "singing Christian".

That subject is very much up to date in any age and time. God's people are a singing people. They sing worthwhile songs to appropriate tunes. They sing in the consciousness of standing before the great white throne, and they sing in the hope of glory, when under Jesus, the great Chief-Cantor in Israel, they shall sing in perfection: the Song of Moses and of the Lamb.

The singing Christian takes the shoes from off his feet! He knows that he is standing on holy ground; he knows that coals have been taken from the altar to purify his lips. He is deeply conscious that what proceeds from his lips is a sacrifice upon the altar of incence; it is thanksgiving which he can only bring through Jesus, who suffered for him without the gate. (Hebrews 13:12-15). His heart is in tune with God by means of the Holy Spirit who works in him love, joy and peace!

A historian can relate some facts of history, demonstrating the great events in their historic perspective and meaning. If he is a believing and confessing historian, he will ever attempt to show the unfolding of the counsel of God, and the great deeds of God in the things which must come to pass quickly. He may relate them to his students, write them in a book; it will then be a "history" which throbs with a sense of the footsteps of Jesus Christ in history. This is all well and good, but it is not yet a song which rises from a

heart set aflame with the love of God!

When all of this "history" of the mighty deeds of God, their grandeur and sublimity, have touched his heart, and the Spirit has given him to be spiritually touched by the beauty of the wonders of God, then the Christian begins to sing. He sings with rapturous joy in God through Jesus Christ; he sings the praises and glories of a great Savior God who has called him out of darkness into His marvelous light. Yes, then he is a living stone, bringing forth sacrifices and spiritual oblations to God through Christ.

Yes, God made His creature a singing creation!

In the dawn of creation, the morning stars rejoiced, did they not? Does not God speak loquaciously, "Where wast thou when I laid up the foundations of the earth? Declare if thou hast understanding...when the morning stars sang together, and all the sons of God shouted for joy" Job 38:4, 7. Yes, then it was that every bird in paradise sang its chiefest notes to its Creator; then when creation was not yet subject to vanity and death and destruction, and the sparrow did not yet fall to the ground. Yes, the birds were singing their love songs and their mating-cries when Adam named the animals. There was not a cry or a sigh in all creation! All was very good! And Adam and Eve sang with lilting voice in the morning of creation; they sang not the song of Moses and the Lamb, they did not yet sing in and of the Word made flesh, who came to dwell among us, as our Savior God. Nor was their song the groan of hope, the first-fruits of the Spirit. They sang as only the first Adam could sing, and Eve with and in him. They sang of this creation; they sang perfectly of God's power and divinity by the things made. O, they saw the things which God revealed so very clearly in creation.

They sang!

They bowed down, and kneeled before the Lord their Maker!

But they did not kneel before God their Savior, who saved them from sin, death and hell. They did not sing the song of heaven, as this is sung before the great white throne, by those who harp as harpers with their harps.

But now God has given to us a *new* song! It is a great "Hallel" by saving grace. It is the song that shall never end! It is the song of one who has eternal life, and this life is in the Son. And it is a song by which we make melody in our hearts. In this heart we love God, we believe God, we trust God, and our spirit rejoices in God our Savior.

Thus we sing!

Yes, praise waits for God in Zion on Sunday morning in the church of the redeemed. No, it is not merely a praise which expresses some creaturely, be it lofty theme. Organ and flute, psaltery and harp must join in with the living voices of the congregation. All these must be for edification. It must be as the "minstrel" which the prophet desired when he was about to prophecy (II Kings 3:15). It must be sweet and lofty strains which lift up the hearts of the saints on high, and prepares them to worship; yes, it must lead them to sing not merely in artistic niceties, but must lead them so that their singing is like a mighty river, deep, broad and strong! No, it need not be a swift river, but must reflect the waters of Salem, which run softly; it must be hearty and strong singing, lifting up to God a *joyful* noise.

It must be singing in which the saints are prophesying!

They must speak in Psalms. Yes, they must be hymns, songs of praise to

the Lord. No, they must not be lying "hymns" which prophesy the lie in the midst of the singing camp of Israel; they must not be man-centered, but God-centered and God-motivated and God-directed songs! Out of Him and through Him and unto Him are all things!

Since they are prophesying while singing, they must be "teaching and admonishing one another". It must give grace to the hearers and to the fellow-songsters in the church! They must not be the endless chanting and repeatings of a few catchy phrases, some sentimental "journey", but they must speak to God and of God, and speak of all His marvelous attributes: God's love, mercy, grace, power and faithfulness. God must be greatly magnified in our prophesying. And then we do not have a lot of frenzied nothingness, but we have songs full of good theology in the best sense!

The singing Christian sings like a *Christian*! He sings now as being some first-fruits of God's new creation: he sings in hope of the final redemption. He sings with joy unspeakable and full of glory. He sings in hope of one day singing perfectly. Someone once made the beautiful observation, that, when Peter and the disciples "sang an hymn" with Jesus going to "Olive's brow", there was only one good singer in that group! It was Jesus, the great Poet, who sang His own hymns in perfection in His low estate and suffering. Peter and the rest along. They sang very imperfectly. They sang, they knew not what, when they lifted up the hymn at the Passover table. The angels were a bit disturbed by that singing; it lacked the deep reality of the prophetical singing.

Our singing as Christians too is yet very imperfect. It is all yet such that it besmirches the great white throne, were it not that Christ takes our song and purifies it on the altar of consecration!

But we sing in hope—in the hope by which we *are* saved! We sing in the hope of one day singing in the great congregation, that numberless throng come out of the great tribulation. What a choir that will be. It will be the entire church of God, the church which has washed her clothes in the blood of the Lamb. No singing of Adam in the first paradise can compare; "*Die Schopfung*" of Heyden will not do there. It will not fit in that grand theme of the New Creation, where the saints sing in the Cross of the Cross, in the Blood of the Blood. For the singing in heaven will not be a singing in the Word not-yet-made-flesh, but it will be a song in the Word-Made-Flesh. God is gone up with a shout, the Lord with the sound of the trumpet!

Yes, it will be the Victor's song.

It will be the Christian singing in glory!

Sing praises to God, sing praises; sing praises to our King, sing praises. Sing praises with understanding! God is the King of all the earth!

Yes, it will be the Victor's song, the song of the triumphant Christian. Then shall Zion smile on all her foes! She shall sing: this God is our God forever and ever! And her "Amens" shall sound throughout the ages to come.... Hallejujah!

A special word of thanks to Miss Agatha Lubbers who serves as editor of *Perspectives in Covenant Education* and is a member of Faith Prot. Ref. Church for her many years of faithful contributions to our "Critique" department. As she lays her pen aside we wish her the Lord's continued blessing.

1981 SINGSPIRATION SCHEDULE

April 19	Hudsonville
May 17	Faith
Summer	Pre-convention
September 20	Hope
November 22	Faith
December 20	Hudsonville

TEST YOUR MEMORY

1. Finish this sentence: "Father, save me from this hour: but for . . . ." John 12:27

2. How long had Lazarus been dead when Jesus came to his grave? John 11:17

3. Who anointed Jesus with ointment, and wiped His feet with her hair? John 11:2

4. In Jewish law the testimony of how many men was true? John 8:17

5. What was the name of the high priest who counseled that Jesus should be put to death? John 11:49

6. Who said to Jesus, "Lord, we know not whither thou goest?" John 14:5

7. Finish this sentence: "Peace I leave with you, my peace I give unto you: not as . . . ." John 14:27

8. What did Jesus say men should do if they loved Him? John 14:15

9. Who was told that he would deny Jesus? John 13:38

10. On what day of the week did the risen Lord first appear unto His disciples? John 20:19

(Bible Baseball, Robert T. Taylor, D.D.)

BOOK REVIEW

Hyper-Calvinism and the Call of the Gospel, by Rev. David Engelsma; Reformed Free Publishing Association, 1980 (also distributed by Kregel Publications), 150 pages, $4.95. (Reviewed by David Moekler.)

This work is the third title to come from the pen of Rev. Engelsma. A young person might be led by the title to believe that it is too deep and then keep hands off. The truth is that it is a book with some "meat" to it of short length. One which old and young alike could certainly benefit by from reading.

Rev. Engelsma writes in a very matter of fact, straight forward way. Clearly the argument is presented. The call of the gospel is placed in the light of Scripture and the historic Reformed faith.

The back cover of the book gives this description. "Now with the increase of Arminianism in Reformed circles Rev. Engelsma has turned his attention to a defense of the Reformed views of the gospel call. He refutes the accusation that the Protestant Reformed Churches are hyper-Calvinists. *Hyper-Calvinism and the Call of the Gospel* also explains the relationship of the gospel call to missions and the lively preaching of the Word and warns against the danger of falling into the error of hyper-Calvinism. Finally, he examines and defends the Protestant Reformed view as the traditional, historical, Calvinistic position."

This book would especially be of benefit to those young people studying the *Essentials of Reformed Doctrine* in their Catechism Classes.

"Paul did not regard the preaching of the gospel as an *offer* of salvation to everyone, directed to everyone in a universal love of God and providing everyone with a chance to be saved. Instead, he viewed the preaching of the gospel as the power of God unto salvation (Romans 1:16), as the creative call of God that calls the things that be not as though they were (Romans 4:17), and as the mighty voice of the risen Christ that raises the dead (II Timothy 1:10). Such a quickening, renewing, and enlightening power is the preaching *unto God's elect.*

Hyper-Calvinism and the Call of the Gospel,
David Engelsma,
Chapter 3, Page 54.

COMMON GRACE VERSUS TULIP

by Rev. H. Veldman
Emeritus Pastor of Southwest Prot. Ref. Church

I wish to congratulate our young people upon the choice of this subject. Do you, young people, realize that the Christian Reformed Church's (our mother church) adoption of the Three Points in 1924, their choice of a common and a general grace of God, led very directly to their present sad and deplorable condition? Having been asked to write an article for our *Beacon Lights* on the subject: Common Grace versus TULIP, I gladly consent. Are you really interested in this subject? It is, of course, my desire that our *Beacon Lights* be read by our young people. After all, this is their periodical. And our young people should read it.

We are all, I am sure, acquainted with *TULIP.* It is the word which represents, symbolizes the Five Points of Calvinism. These Five Points of Calvinism are: Total Depravity, Unconditional Predestination (Election and Reprobation), Limited or Particular Atonement, Irresistible Grace, Perseverance of the Saints. We prefer the term, Particular Atonement to Limited Atonement. We understand that the term Limited Atonement means that Christ's atonement is limited only to the elect. Yet, in a certain sense Christ's death is also unlimited, unlimited in the sense that it is boundless in its value. The word, particular, stresses that the sufferings and death of our Lord are intended, of God and of Christ, only for them given Christ of the Father from before the foundations of the world.

Our subject also speaks of Common Grace. I have already mentioned that the Christian Reformed Church, in 1924, adopted a common and a general grace of God. You see, we can distinguish between Common Grace and General Grace. Both, of course, are common, as intended for and bestowed upon all men and not merely upon the elect. The idea of Common Grace refers to the things of this present time. It means that the Lord bestows rain and sunshine, food and drink, health and strength, all the things of this present time in His divine love and favour. Common Grace refers to a universal love of God. It also means that, when Adam sinned, the Lord exercised a checking, restraining operation of His Spirit upon him so that the process of sin was checked in him. Adam did not become wholly corrupt. And it also speaks of a general operation of His Spirit whereby the sinner is enabled by God to do good in His sight in the midst of the world. This is what is commonly known

among us as the theory of Common Grace. General Grace, however, also common to others besides the elect, refers to salvation. It emphasizes that God would save all men, that His predestination is conditional, upon foreseen faith and unbelief, that Christ died for every man, and that the preaching of the gospel is a general, well-meaning offer of salvation, in which God graciously offers salvation to all who hear the gospel. All men, of course, are not saved. Only some are saved. But that all men are not saved is not because of the will of God but because of the will of the sinner. God loves all men. He would save all men. If God "had his way" all men would be saved. But the will of God is thwarted, frustrated by the will of the sinner. It is the sinner who determines his salvation.

TULIP, symbolizing the Five Points of Calvinism, is surely thoroughly scriptural. Total Depravity is indeed set forth in the Word of God—see Ephesians 2:1-3, Romans 8:6-8, Ephesians 5:8 (We *are* by nature darkness, do not merely perform deeds of darkness and sin, but darkness is our very being). Unconditional Predestination (double predestination, election and reprobation) is also indisputably set forth in the Word of God. God has elected us unconditionally, not because of foreseen faith—see Ephesians 1:4. Notice in this passage that God chose us, not because of our holiness, but that we should be holy. And then there are passages such as Deuteronomy 7:7-8 and Romans 9:11-13. Reprobation, too, is unconditional. There are those who would maintain that Scripture teaches election but not reprobation. How wrong they are! Reprobation, too, is surely scriptural. Notice what we read in Matthew 11:25-26. That these things are hidden from the wise and prudent is the Father's good pleasure, for "so it seemed good in Thy sight." And then there is also I Peter 2:8. This stumbling at the word, being disobedient, was according to divine appointment, even as we read: "whereunto also they were appointed." And Romans 9:11-13 teaches us that Esau was hated before he had done any evil. Limited or Particular Atonement is also thoroughly in harmony with the Word of God. How pertinent is what we read in John 10:11, 15, 26-30 We must not overlook verse 26 in this chapter. Jesus does not say that they are not His sheep because they believe not, but that they believe not because they are not of His sheep. He, therefore, ascribes their unbelief to the fact that God has never chosen them. Pertinent is also a passage such as John 12:37-41. There we read that "therefore they *could* not believe because of what Esaias had said, namely, that He hath blinded their eyes and hardened their heart, that they should not see with their eyes, nor understand with their heart and be converted, and I should heal them." And there is also John 6:39. Remember, the Father's will which had sent Christ, the Father's mandate to the Christ was not to save all but to lose nothing of all which He had given Him. Indeed, our Lord Jesus Christ died only for His elect own. Irresistible Grace, too, is taught everywhere in the Word of God. We read in Psalm 138:8 and Philippians 1:6 of this irresistible grace of the Lord. Notice, too, what we read in John 6:44. If it be true, and it is, that no man can come unto Christ except the Father draw him, then it is equally and emphatically true that when the Father draws him he must come. Indeed, it is not of him that runneth or willeth but of God that shews mercy (Romans 9:16, 18), and this mercy of God is efficacious and irresistible. Does the living God not raise the dead, give sight to the blind, hearing to the deaf, walking to the lame, speech to the dumb? Is

our God not the living God Who calls life out of death? And what shall we say about the Perseverance of the Saints? The Arminians deny this truth. The scriptures, however, teach it everywhere. The apostle, in Philippians 1:6, is confident of this very thing that He Who has begun a good work in us will perform, finish it until the day of Jesus Christ. The Lord will surely finish and complete what He has once begun.

And what must be our appraisal of the theory of Common Grace? Common Grace is indeed a theory. It is surely not confessional. It is nowhere taught in our reformed confessions. TULIP is God-centered, gives all glory to God. Common Grace is man-centered, does not glorify God, centers in the interests of man.

First, Common Grace sets forth a universal love of God. God loves all men, gives them natural things in His love and favour, has His gospel preached as a general well-meaning gracious offer of salvation because, in His love, He would save all. How contrary this is to the Word of God. Indeed, an attribute of the Lord which received very prominent mention in the Word of God is the attribute, the divine perfection of God's holiness. We refer to Isaiah 6:1-7, Habakkuk 1:13, Hebrews 12:29. Notice how in Isaiah 6 the prophet is overwhelmed by the holiness of Jehovah. Indeed, according to verse 3 in this chapter our God is thrice holy. And Isaiah laments and bemoans his uncleanness and undoneness. God Himself is a holy covenant God. He is light and in Him is not darkness at all. Only he who walks in the light has fellowship with God, as we read in I John 1:5-7. The theory of Common Grace, teaching a universal love of God, is surely in direct conflict with God's perfect and infinite holiness.

Secondly, the theory of Common Grace teaches a checking and restraining operation of the Spirit of God within the sinner, restraining his sin and corruption and enabling him to do much good in the sight of God. We do not deny a certain civic good. A wicked baker can bake good and wholesome bread. A wicked farmer knows how to work his land. A wicked dentist and surgeon know how to perform their tasks well. But we deny that this civic good is good in the sight of the Lord. Nowhere do the scriptures teach such a restraining operation of the Holy Spirit within the individual sinner. O, he cannot do whatever he desires to do. His outward conduct and activity is surely held in restraint. A sinner knows it is wise for him to obey the law outwardly, so that he does not steal or kill or disobey the traffic laws. But Scripture nowhere speaks of an internal restraining operation of the Holy Spirit in the life of an individual sinner. On the contrary, the sinner is conceived and born dead in sin and in misery, is not subject to the law of God and cannot be subjected to it. How pertinent in this connection is Romans 8:6-8! He is dead, full of darkness, full of hatred of God and of his neighbor. This is his inner being and life. Indeed, if the Word of God teaches anything, it is surely that whatever is not of faith is sin, that he loves the darkness rather than the light.

Thirdly, the theory of Common Grace repudiates the Word of God when it teaches that God gives all men things in His love and favour. Notice what we read in Psalm 73:17-19, Psalm 92:5-7, Romans 8:28. God loves the righteous, but the unrighteous and wicked His soul hateth and loatheth. Indeed, according to Proverbs 3:33, the curse of the Lord is in the house of the wicked, but He blesses the habition of the just. And this surely means that the curse of

the Lord is upon the wicked and upon all that he has.

Finally, how contrary is the theory of a General Grace to the scriptures! The gospel a general, well-meaning gracious offer of salvation? God loves those whom He eternally hates? God would save those whom He has eternally reprobated? Indeed, the gospel is not an offer. It is the power of God unto salvation, as we read in Romans 1:16. God would save all? The gospel is a savor of life unto life but also a savor of death unto death, as we read in II Corinthians 2:14-17. Indeed, the Lord's counsel shall stand and He will perform all His good pleasure. Our God is surely God, God alone.

I have attempted to set forth in a brief article the wonderful truth of TULIP and how it is denied by the theory of a Common Grace and of a General Grace. May we as young people and as Protestant Reformed Churches never forget this truth, always remember it, and seal it with a proper walk.

Current Events and Comments

THE HOLY BIBLE

by Randy Groenendyk

Take a look at the Bible on your kitchen table. According to some people, that book is sexist, chauvinistic, and in need of drastic change.

The issue involved is called "de-sexing" the Bible, and we are certain to hear a great deal more about this highly-controversial movement in the coming months and years.

This monster first reared its ugly head last November, when a committee of the National Council of Churches met to discuss the updated Revised Standard Version Bible, due out in the late 1980's. The goal of the panel's feminists and their supporters was, and is, to "neuter" the Bible. No final decisions were made, but a sexually-neutral RSV is a very real possibility.

If the proposed changes are eventually adopted, the RSV Bible would be stripped of many of its former masculine words and references. For example, Jesus would be called the "Child of God" instead of the "Son of God." God the "Father" would be changed to "Parent." Words like "mankind" would be replaced by "humankind," "Lord" by "Teacher," "brother" by "sibbling," and so on.

Some of the more militant feminists even want to give the women in the Bible "equal billing" with their male counterparts. For example, Eve's name

would appear right along with Adam's in certain verses in Genesis.

To give you some idea of how differently the Bible would read, compare these two versions of Galatians 4:6, which would come out like this in the new RSV:

"And because you are sons and daughters, God has sent forth the spirit of the Child of God into our hearts, crying, 'My loving parent.' "

And here is that same verse in the current RSV Bible: "And because you are sons, God has sent the spirit of his Son into our hearts, crying, 'Abba, Father.' "

Quite a difference, wouldn't you agree? The question is, what should our reaction be? I would guess that most of us feel that these changes are certainly not for the better, but why?

To start, no person has the right to charge the Bible with being sexist and chauvinistic. To do so is a slap in the face of its ultimate author, the Almighty God. Blasphemous is a good word to describe such an accusation.

II Timothy 3:16-17 tells us that "All Scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness: That the man of God may be perfect, thoroughly furnished unto all good works."

Do you see the danger of trying to rewrite the Bible? Who is puny man to think that he can improve on the sacred Word of God, which is capable of making us "perfect"? How can vain, lying, sinful man have the audacity to argue that the Holy Scriptures are in some way flawed or deficient?

Remember, the Bible is not man's work, it is God's. Article III of the Belgic Confession (which does an excellent job of discussing the role and authority of the Scriptures in Articles II through VII) states that the "Word of God was not sent nor delivered by the will of man, but...men spake from God, being moved by the Holy Spirit."

Clearly, man has no business tinkering with God's Word. Oh, it probably wouldn't make a great deal of difference if the word "mankind" were replaced with "humankind," but the feminists are going far beyond that. In truth, they are changing the entire meaning and content of many verses in Scripture. By refusing to acknowledge Jesus' masculine incarnation, for example, they are striking at the very heart and soul of the Bible.

In addition, one must wonder just where all the cutting and snipping and revising will end. Some committee members, for instance, believe that the Bible also contains elements of "racism, classism, and anti-Semitism." Discussion of these "charges" was tabled for the time being, but what will happen in the future is anyone's guess.

No, the Bible is not like Webster's Dictionary, in need of revision every few years. Rather, it is the eternal, unchanging, holy Word of God. It is our duty to cherish it and defend it against all who try, in one way or another, to destroy or mutilate it.

And, of course, we must read it. Speaking from my own experience, I realize that sometimes the latest issues of *Sports Illustrated* and *Seventeen* often get a better workout every week than the Holy Scriptures. Nevertheless, the Bible should do more than serve as a decoration for our nightstand. It should, it ***must***, be our compass in the sea of life. Without it, we will surely lose our way.

NEWS from, for and about our churches

by Linda Zandstra

BIRTHS
Mr. & Mrs. Joe Postma of South Holland—son, Steven Dale.
Mr. & Mrs. Hank Vander Wal of Hope.
Mr. & Mrs. John Cleveland of Hope—son, John Richard on December 4.
Mr. & Mrs. Neal Hanko of Hope—son, Michael Neal on December 19.

CONFESSION OF FAITH
Debra Buiter and Ruth (Van Den Top) Ter Avest on December 21 in Hope.

CHURCH MEMBERSHIP
First received Mr. Arthur Knott and baptized daughter Catherine from Dutton Christian Reformed; and Mrs. Knott from Creston Christian Reformed.
First received Dr. & Mrs. Ronald Van Putten with baptized children Lawrence, Kenneth, Meri Beth and Peter from Dutton Christian Reformed.
South Holland received Rev. & Mrs. G. Lanting and one baptized son, Steven, from Loveland and Philip Lanting as confessing member from Loveland.

MARRIAGE
Ruth Van Den Top and Arlen Ter Avest on December 12 in Hope.

YOUNG PEOPLE'S ACTIVITIES
Mass Meeting on December 21 in First.
Singspiration on December 21 in Hudsonville.
First young people went Christmas caroling on December 22.

OTHER ACTIVITIES
Loveland's choral society gave a Christmas program on December 14.
Hudsonville's choral society gave a Christmas program on December 28.