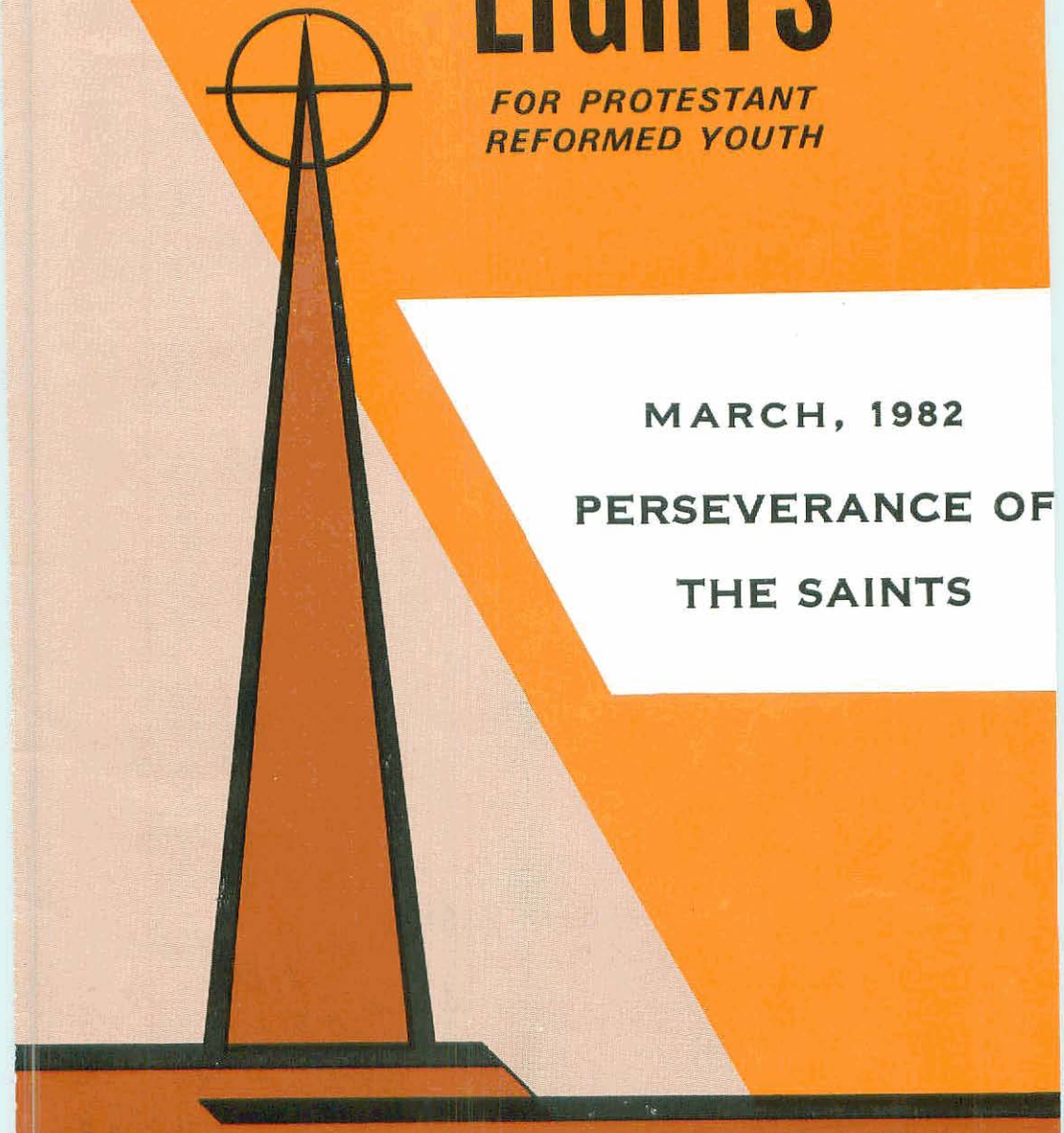
BEACON LIGHTS

FOR PROTESTANT REFORMED YOUTH



MARCH, 1982

PERSEVERANCE OF THE SAINTS

BEACON LIGHTS

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Guest Editorial

JEHOVAH BUILDS THE HOUSE

by Rev. Bruinsma

A new house is being built. The foundations have been poured and the house is under construction. Already the house is beginning to take shape. The builders are busy: the mason is carefully laying another course of brick, the carpenters have nailed together the studs and lifted the walls, the plumber works in the basement sweating the pipe joints which will soon supply water to the kitchen and washrooms, the electrician is carefully planning where he will situate the circuit breakers, the switches and plugs. The future owners of this house are with joy slowly perusing the progress which is taking place. They speak with one another of the carpeting, curtains and tile that will put the finishing touches on their house. That was one day.

The next day we look for the house and all we find is a pile of rubble. No builders are seen; all is silent. We then pick up our newspaper and read: Tornado rips through city demolishing all in its path.

* * * * *

We are looking back in history upon a mighty city fortified with wide, strong walls. It is evening. We find that the day shift of watchmen who stand upon these walls are now being replaced by the night watchmen. These replacements rub their eyes for they have just awoken. It is their turn now to stand upon the walls of the city to guard the city against enemies.

Suddenly the valley about the city is filled with the light of a thousand torches and the foe is upon the city in a heartbeat. The watchman begins to cry out the warning, but his cry is cut short by an arrow piercing his neck. The next morning the city is laid waste having been overcome by the foe. The watchman had awakened in vain.

* * * * *

In these accounts, any mention of God is left out. Do you understand the

truth of God which they express? The answer lies in this: in that tornado, in the assault of the enemy upon that city, we see the Hand of God at work. These were not mere happenings of chance or of a cold cruel fate. These are examples of the truth of God's Word as it is expressed in Psalm 127:1, "Except Jehovah build the house, they labor in vain that build it: except Jehovah keep the city the watchman waketh but in vain." The central truth which this verse expresses to us is exactly this: everything that takes place in the creation and in the history of this world, whether that history be in the palaces of kings or in our own personal lives, is directed, controlled and upheld by God. That truth is known as God's providence. The Heidelberg Catechism defines God's providence as "the almighty and everywhere present power of God whereby as it were by His hand, He upholds and governs heaven, earth, and all creatures so that . . . all things come not by chance but by His fatherly hand." That means that everything that takes place in our life as well as every creature's life depends entirely upon God. What God wills, He performs. Take our examples again; if God had not sent a tornado, could He not have sent a flood or a fire? Could not God have taken away the health or even the life of any one or every one of those builders? Surely except the Lord build the house, they labor in vain that build it. Or again, could not God have sent a plague upon that city and slain its inhabitants? Could He not have rained fire and brimstone upon it as He did upon Sodom and Gomorrah? Except the Lord keep the city, the watchman waketh but in vain. The fact of the matter is, God controls and upholds all things. Remove His almighty Hand for just one infinitesimal of a second and the universe would perish. "He's got the whole world in His Hand!" All of the efforts you and I put forth to accomplish a certain end, to reach a certain goal, are vain, empty, worth nothing if God does not prosper them. We understand how very, very weak is the arm of flesh! We can do nothing apart from the sovereign will of our God!

We must always bear in mind the words of Solomon in this Psalm. Are we busy with our labors at work, at school or in the home? It is the Lord who keeps us in all that we do. If He did not, our labors would be in vain. Are we planning to make a move in the future? It is the Lord Who builds. All our plans are subject to His.

Especially is this true in the home. It seems as if Solomon has the family in mind when he pens these words. If we were to relate this verse specifically to that idea, perhaps we could read it as follows: Except Jehovah build a godly family, the parents labor in vain: except Jehovah keep them and their children, these parents wake up each day in vain. Have you ever given much thought to that? Only when God in His covenant faithfulness builds a godly home and keeps it, are the labors of parents therein worthwhile. That does not mean that parents may have the attitude that it does not matter whether they labor or not, their labors are of no use anyway. Solomon does not say that. Solomon does not say that Jehovah will Himself build the house and keep the city, and that, therefore, there is no need for builders and watchmen. Solomon says that except God give the strength, wisdom and ability, their labors are vain. Parents

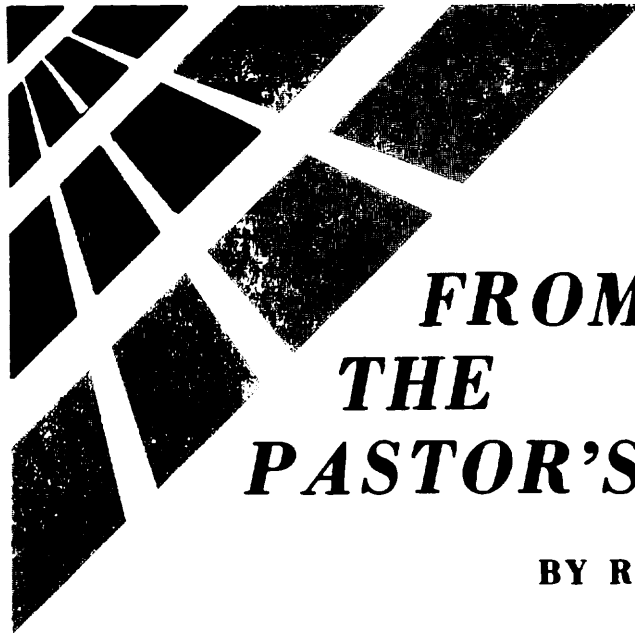
are called to labor diligently as spiritual builders and watchmen in the home. They must instruct, encourage, admonish and chasten their children. That is their calling.

Solomon's point is that if in all of this, these parents fail to rely upon Jehovah, then their labors are useless. A parent can love, instruct, and admonish all he wants; but if he does so apart from God, his labors are vain. A parent can teach his child to go through all the motions of religion - to love his parents, to go to church, etc. - but if that parent does not depend on God to bless his labors, then his labors are empty. Instruction in itself does not save; God alone saves.

Parents, therefore, in all their instruction must be deeply conscious of their dependency upon God. God builds the house; He keeps the city. I must teach my children to love and know Jehovah and rely upon Him even as I do. I must show my child that faith is much deeper than merely going through the motions. I must witness to the fact that faith is utter reliance upon God. That means that parents must realize that their every effort is nothing except the Lord bless it.

When parents rely upon God, then He gives them joy too. God is a faithful Father Who will bless parents in their efforts. Not that God promises these parents that He will save all their children, but that as they labor He will use their efforts to gather His people.

Not only must young people remember the truth of Psalm 127:1 in everything that they do, but especially as they look for a life's mate. When young people date they must look for a godly person with whom they can establish a future home and family which relies upon Jehovah. God blesses our dating only when in it we realize that He uses it to build the church of the future. When we finally choose a husband or wife, may it be with this in mind: he or she together with me must build a home which looks unto and depends upon Jehovah. Then our labors are not in vain.



FROM THE PASTOR'S STUDY

BY REV. G. LUBBERS

The Lord's Command to Honor Father and Mother

She was a very sweet girl. She had always thought well of her parents. On their birthdays they were ever remembered by her with a special token of kindness and affection. And when they died, she placed the most beautiful and expensive flowers on their coffins, and spoke endearingly of her lovely parents. She missed them much after they died and rested in their graves — awaiting the great day of the LORD.

Fact is, she did everything for them except one thing! Pray, what could that be? Wasn't she a model daughter, an example to all good and morally clean girls? She lacked the one thing: she did not ever "honor" her parents as enjoined by the Lord in the Fifth Commandment: "*Honor* thy father and thy mother. . . ."

Each Sunday morning we hear this exhortation of the Covenant words read to us, do we not young people. We are singled out, given so to speak "special mention" too in the Decalogue. And we are told by the great apostle Paul that this is "a first commandment with promise".

Perhaps this commandment has not really sunk deep into your heart, nor have you truly reflected in a spiritual way on its implication for you, your brothers and sisters.

Let us take a hard look at this exhortation "honor thy father and thy

mother''. One young man started giving this a little thought once, and he did this because he could not always be obedient to his parents very well. What they sometimes did, as weak and imperfect parents, was a little sand between his teeth. So he would go to find solace with the neighbors. But then he heard this Fifth Commandment read on Sunday. It startled his conscience, and he did not have peace.

This young man, like many others, went to his minister and asked him, ''Reverend, must I *love* my parents more than I love the neighbors?'' This young man was not far from the kingdom of God. He knew that he must love his neighbor as himself, and that this was the Second Commandment like unto the First Commandment: Love God with all your heart and mind and strength. But then the law did not say: Love thy father and thy mother, but spoke of *honoring* them.

Hence, his question. And a good question it is indeed. It calls for a clear-cut answer, does it not?

What is really ''honor'' according to the Bible?

We might begin by pointing out that the Hebrew verb used in the Fifth Commandment for honor means: that which is weighty, important. Applied to the parents it means that the parents are set in authority by God Himself, in *God's* authority. This sets a ''father'' and a ''mother'' in a class apart from the children, whom God does not place in this position of the *right* to rule. In ''love'' we often meet as equals. Love must be very mutual and is the bond of perfectness, ethical goodness. But not so in ''honor''. Those who we honor are *not* our equals. God has placed them in a different legal status. He has placed them in a *regal* status.

Did you know that we are told to ''fear God'' and *honor* the king''? (I Peter 2:17; Romans 13:1-7) Those are good and true words of God. And the Lord stands back of these words. He is not mocked. Now He that says ''honor the king'' also says ''honor thy father and thy mother'' — honor them in the authority wherewith God Himself has clothed them!

This is the ''honor'' which we owe to all whom God has set over us — even this is true of a Christian servant toward a hard and cruel master, knowing that such a master also has a LORD in heaven to whom he shall give account of his, that is, of *God's* authority.

In passing, it may be noted that this means that fathers and mothers must not attempt to be some mere equals, peers with their children. They must stand in the authority toward their children, with the Word of God in their hearts and with the written Word in their minds. What they say must breathe: thus says the LORD, Jehovah, your God. Then they are not merely some ''difficult'' parents, but they are parents standing in loving authority, the love of God Himself in Christ. Thus they ''command'' respect, and not ''demand'' it. They are not demanding, difficult misunderstanding parents who are not ''with it'', a bit daffy, some idiotic blockheads, so to speak. They are different from unbelieving parents, who refuse to stand in God's authority and execute it according to His will, and who create the problems of unrest and chaos in their

families and in the world, never really training them, but letting them grow up "full of the debble" like Topsy in *Uncle Tom's Cabin.*

In all of the social advice and the attempts to solve the problems of "youth", even among men who would like to restore "order in society" and decency in the schools, the one ingredient is missing. It is the lack of "honor" that is exercised and that is shown between parents and children, teachers and pupils. For only in this exercise of authority, which commands respect, is the man of God thoroughly furnished unto every good work, to which God has created us in Christ Jesus as His elect children.

God is not mocked!

He refuses to come down from His throne! He executes His will! His will is to clothe the parents with His authority over His covenant children, and this His will He will have read and dinned into our hearts — words which shall charm the obedient children unto all eternity in heaven, and will terrify the disobedient in hell, when seems to thunder into his soul and conscience: Son remember: Honor thy father and thy mother. . . . It is easier for heaven and for earth to pass away, than for this commandment to fall to the earth.

Yes, then shall the disobedient "children" who never "honored" their father and mother begin to say: Lord, Lord, did we not do all kinds of nice things for our "dear old parents": bought them nice things, proclaimed special "mother's day" and even added a "father's day," and we finally tucked them away in a very professional nursing home, and planted a endearing parting kiss on mother's cheek when we left! We were good children, were we not? But the Lord will say: ye are really children of disobedience, like all the children of the world upon whom the wrath of God remains forever. Then shall they say: what lacked we?

What will the answer be?

Ye did not honor my representatives to you in God's covenant. Ye did not honor your teachers, the minister, the elders, the policemen, the judges of the courts — and my great majesty back of it. Ye did not fear God, love the brotherhood and honor the king!

Ye did not give God that which was God's!

Therefore, ye did not give to your father and mother the honor due to them.

Ye did not crucify your old man of sin, and put on the new man as new born creatures. Ye did not really believe my covenant Word: I am the Lord thy God, who has brought you forth from Egypt, from the land of spiritual bondage and disobedience to honor thy father and thy mother. You ever walked as those who are "under law" and not as those who are "under grace". You did not say: I am crucified with Christ, and what I now live I live by the Son of God, who loved me and died for me, and who, as a child, perfectly honored Joseph and Mary.

Thus did the eternal Son of God in the flesh.

When we honor father and mother we do it *in* the Lord. Walk in the Lord and honor thy father and thy mother!

THE PERSEVERANCE OF THE SAINTS

by Rev. H. Veldman

In our final article on TULIP we call attention to the letter, P, in TULIP, the perseverance of the saints. We must distinguish between perseverance and preservation. The preservation of the saints refers to a work of God upon the saints. The perseverance of the saints refers to a work of God through the saints. We must be very sure that we explain also this perseverance of God's people as a work of God. In the perseverance of the saints the people of God are active. They persevere. In the preservation of the saints they are passive. The people of God are preserved. And we must surely understand the relation between them.

How wonderful is the truth of the preservation and perseverance of the saints of God! It is wonderful, first of all, because of that whereunto we are preserved and persevere. This is nothing less than a glory so great that no human heart could or can conceive of it, no eye can see it, etc. - I Cor. 2:9. It is a glory that is heavenly, everlasting, immortal. What tremendous heights fascinate the Christian pilgrim in the midst of the world! Then, it is wonderful, in the second place, because of us who are preserved and persevere! We are sinners; we are by nature hopelessly lost sinners; we are sinners who are holy only in principle; and we are such in principle redeemed sinners who are constantly confronted by overwhelming odds, by an enemy, within and without, with whom we cannot possibly cope or contend. And yet, these impotent and hopelessly lost sinners actually persevere until the end, and attain unto a glory which could never enter the heart of man. And wonderful, in the third place, is this truth because of this preservation and perseverance. God's people are preserved and they persevere until the very end. They all persevere; none is lost. And, they are all preserved in such a way that not an hair of their heads is singed; none was ever harmed in any sense of the word. They are not only conquerors, but they are more than conquerors. Everything works together for their good.

Both truths are surely scriptural and confessional. Our preservation and perseverance are surely confessional. Our Canons teach the truth of preservation, as in Head V, Articles III and VIII. And the truth of perseverance is taught in Heads III and IV, Articles 16 in Head III and in Articles 12 and 13 in Head V, as well as in V,2. From Scripture we quote the following, first of all

in re the truth of preservation. We read in I Cor. 1:8-9: "Who shall also confirm you unto the end, that you may be blameless in the day of our Lord Jesus Christ. God is faithful, by whom ye were called unto the fellowship of His Son, Jesus Christ, our Lord." Phil. 1:6: Being confident of this very thing, that he which hath begun a good work in you will perform it until the day of Jesus Christ." I Thess. 5:23: "And the very God of peace sanctify you wholly; and I pray God your whole spirit and soul and body be preserved blameless unto the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ." We read in I Peter 1:4, 5: "To an inheritance incorruptible, and undefiled, and that fadeth not away, reserved in heaven for you. You are kept by the power of God through faith unto salvation ready to be revealed in the last time." And in John 14:16 we read: "And I will pray the Father, and He shall give you another Comforter, that He may abide with you forever." More passages, of course, can be quoted, but these may be considered sufficient.

The truth of the perseverance of the saints is also held before in Holy Writ. We read in Matt. 24:33: "But he that shall endure unto the end, the same shall be saved." In Rom. 2:7-8 we read: "To them who by patient continuance in well doing seek for glory and honour and immortality, eternal life; But unto them that are contentious and do not obey the truth, but obey unrighteousness, indignation and wrath." Heb. 3:14: "For we are made partakers of Christ, if we hold the beginning of our confidence stedfast unto the end." Heb. 6:11: "And we desire that every one of you do shew the same diligence to the full assurance of hope unto the end." In Rev. 2:10, 26 we read: "Fear none of these things which thou shalt suffer: behold, the devil shall cast some of you into prison, that ye may be tried; and ye shall have tribulation ten days: be thou faithful unto death, and I will give thee a crown of life. And he that overcometh, and keepeth My works unto the end, to him will I give power over the nations." And finally we read in Rev. 3:11: "Behold, I come quickly: hold that fast which thou hast, that no man take thy crown." To these, too, many passages can be added. But I believe that these may suffice.

The preservation of the saints simply means that God preserves them as saints. They never perish. Their life from God is retained. There is no falling away of saints. Perseverance, too, is a work of God. O, this truth does not mean that we work for Jesus, win the world for Jesus, strive to transform the kingdom of this world into a kingdom of light and of God's dear Son, make this world a better place in which to live, extend the kingdom of our Lord Jesus Christ so that it will cover the face of the earth, in the postmillenarian sense of the word. Such is not our calling, either as churches or as individuals. But it does mean that we continue in grace and in the certain salvation unto which the Lord has effectually called us. It means that we hold fast to which we have. It means that we hold fast to Christ's word, His truth, never departing from the same, always maintain the truth of the infallible scriptures. But it also means that we hold fast to our life from God in Christ Jesus, that we walk in and according to this truth, always living according to it, also antithetically in the midst of the world. It means that we keep our garments unspotted in the world,

that we believe the scriptures and live, practice what we believe. Doctrine and life, the truth and practice are inseparably connected, may never be divorced.

The question is very important how are these concepts, preservation and perseverance, related? Fundamentally, there are only two possibilities. We are either preserved because we persevere or we persevere because we are preserved. Salvation is determined either by the will of God or by the will of man. It is conditional or unconditional. The arminians teach that we are preserved because we persevere. They claim to maintain that all salvation is by grace, that they also maintain that God will work that grace in a sinner provided that that sinner wills it, and that the sinner wills it even until the end. He therefore, must deny the certain perseverance of the saints and teach a falling away of saints, that saints, once saved, can perish. It is his contention, therefore, that we are preserved because we persevere.

Now we cannot discuss this position of the arminian in detail. That the scriptures speak of those who have become unfaithful we do not deny. However, the apostle John, in I John 2:19, declares that they went from us because they were not of us, for if they had been of us they would no doubt have continued with us. It is true that the Word of God admonishes us to fight the good fight of faith, to put on the whole armour of God, to labour to enter the rest, to be faithful that no man take our crown. But does this mean that we can do this all of ourselves: Of course not! Does not the Lord God declare emphatically, as in Eph. 2:8-10, that we are saved by grace, through faith, and that this is not of ourselves, but a gift of God, lest any man should boast? It is indeed true that the Christian fighter is assured before he fights that he will win in the struggle, that the crown is sure, that he is more than conqueror. But does this therefore imply that this fighter therefore will not fight, as the arminian claims that this must follow because the fighter is assured of victory already at the beginning of the struggle? This is unadulterated nonsense. This alone gives him the strength to fight.

Indeed, we persevere because we are preserved. First, we are preserved because of divine election. This we read in Eph. 1: 3-4 and Rom. 8:29-30. Secondly, we are preserved because of Christ's particular atonement, and as we read in John 6:39; 10:15; 6:37, 40; 10:28. Thirdly, this preservation is assured because of the Holy Spirit Who will abide with us and in us forever, as we read in John 14:16. Notice, too, that we read in I Cor. 10:13; I Cor 1:9; Phil. 1:6; I Thess. 5:23; I Peter 1:4-5.

Because we are preserved we do and must persevere. How true is what we read in Rom. 8:35-39. Indeed, we must persevere. That is our calling. We must fight the good fight of faith, and this we must do even unto the very end. However, we shall also persevere. Indeed, nothing will ever be able to separate us from the love of God which is in Christ Jesus our Lord. We persevere because we are preserved. Now we may be sure that the work which God has once begun will be finished until the day of our Lord Jesus Christ. May we ever hold fast to this reformed, Calvinistic view that is rooted in the Word of God. And may we live accordingly.

SELF-WORTH

by Ben Wigger

If you are at all like me, there have been times in your life, as there have been in mine, when your self-worth was at a very low point. This is a problem which occurs from time to time in all of our lives. But if there is one particular age group which it does seem to effect more than any other, it is the teenage years.

The "growing pains" which are quite often experienced by young people can contribute to a very large degree, to the ups and downs of a person's feelings toward himself as well as how he feels towards others in his daily social contacts, be it at school, home, or work.

I don't think that it is at all unusual for a young person to have days when he or she asks some questions something like these. Is there any good reason why I should keep on taking up space in this world? And if there is, I would like to know what it is. It seems like at times I can do nothing right. I'm a hopeless "klutz" when it comes to any sport. I've never had a boyfriend, or girlfriend, and probably never will. Who would want anything to do with ugly old me? And to be perfectly honest with ourselves, it gets so bad at times that it actually makes us mad at God for making us this way, and seemingly loading others down, at school, or at work, with all kinds of good looks and talent.

Now despite the fact that we all have those times when we feel some of these same things, the fact that we all do does not make it right. In fact, just the opposite is true. To wonder if God made a mistake when He made you the way you are is to question the very wisdom and perfection of our Creator. God determined from before the beginning of time that you should be here now, and that you should be exactly what you are today. God does not make mistakes. It was He who formed you, and marvellous are His works (see Psalm 139:13-16).

But you, as a confessing child of God, know all of this; you are familiar

with what the Bible says about this problem we face. It is just that we tend to forget what God's values are, and we like to replace them with the standards of this world. In short, we use the wrong yardstick in measuring our values. We often tend to value ourselves by how smart or attractive or talented we are. But the Word of God says quite clearly that what we value highly, God does not. Luke 16:15 where Jesus addresses the Pharisees by saying: "Ye are they which justify yourselves before men; but God knoweth your hearts; For that which is highly esteemed among men is abomination in the sight of God".

God sees what we are on the inside. It is of no importance to Him that we may be the most popular young person in school. It doesn't matter to Him how good looking we may think we are. What does matter, however, is how we use what He has given us. Do we use it to further our own position among friends, or do we use what has been given us to His service. For that is our chief calling here on earth, to praise and glorify God's Name. God knows each and every one of our hearts; and with proper spiritual awareness through prayer and the hearing and reading of His Word. He will show us what it is that He wants us to do. You are unique. God know all there is to know about you, He has a special work for you. Ask Him to show you what it is and to help you do it.

Let's look for a minute at the other side of the picture. It is wrong to be down on yourself because you see your own worth as less that what everyone else has, but it is also wrong to see yourself as worth more than anyone else. God may have given you the talent to play a good game of basketball, but that one fact taken by itself does not automatically make you a better person than someone who can't dribble a basketball the length of the court without bouncing it off his foot. God has given us all talents, some are more obvious than others; some we will use today, some we will not even be aware of for years to come. We must not judge a person's worth by how much he has of the "good life" as the world likes to call it. We should look at each person on the basis of their walk and confession before God and men. God has called each of us to serve Him in some particular way. We are not all given the same calling. If we were all great basketball players, where would the spectators come from? But together we form a Church which will be complete without any missing parts. God has prepared a place for each of us, not only from the viewpoint of eternity, but also for this life as well.

We have a duty and a calling to consider these things. On the one hand it is sin to feel sorry for ourselves because we may think that we have been cheated by God with regard to earthly things; but on the other, it is also wrong to feel that we are better than our peers because we get all "A's" in school, or because we average 30 points a game in basketball.

If we look at all of this with the spiritual eye, and consider that we are saved children of God, and that we did nothing, in fact could do nothing to save ourselves. And without the shed blood of Jesus covering our sins, we would be thrown forever into hell. Then we have to come before our Heavenly Father in prayer, and thank Him that despite our sin and pride in ourselves, He loved us enough to save us from our sins.

THE SORROWS OF CONCEPTION:

How The World Would Void Them!

by Mrs. Harold Brands

We are reading it more and more these days. What the May, 1981 *PARENTS* magazine did was to put it all into one concise article, entitled "What is Science Doing to the Human Race?" or "Embryo Technology". To most readers the article was just what *PARENTS'* editor called it, "shocking".

What this article basically reported is that scientists have been seeking to tamper with the development of human babies at every step of their prenatal life. Here is a summary of the article's report on scientists' endeavors, rearranged under my headings along lines of fetal development:

I. A human baby by God's design is the result of an egg and sperm uniting.
   A. Scientists are attempting—and succeeding—to produce offspring from females only, that is, uniting two eggs and eliminating the need for male sperm. (Motives: in animals, to have cows produce only females for greater milk production; in people, to permit lesbians or single women to raise their own offspring.)
   B. Scientists are trying to produce offspring from four parents instead of only two; they've succeeded with mice. (Motive: stronger offspring.)
   C. Scientists want to replace genes with substitute genes. (Motive: to prevent illnesses such as hemophilia by inserting nondefective genes.)
   D. Beyond replacing defective genes, scientists want actually to CODE the genes in order to control the resultant individuals. (Motive: why not create animal-humans, i.e., chimeras, to do our menial work? Or plant-humans to create their own chlorophyll and thus eliminate the need for food!! Or super-humans for superior survival?)

II. A human baby by God's design is conceived by the love of his two parents.
   A. Does a husband have sperm problems? Scientists have been practicing "AID" (artificial insemination by a donor) for a hundred years already (and then the father is not the wife's husband).
   B. Does a wife have egg trouble? Well, let's borrow another woman's eggs! How?
      1. Ovary transplant: by operation, receive half of another woman's eggs.

2. Artificial embryonation:first artificially inseminate another woman with the husband's sperm, then flush out the fertilized egg and replant it into the wife, who can then carry it to term.

C. Does a wife have damaged fallopian tubes? Well, operate to remove an egg, put it into a petri dish, add the husband's sperm, replace the fertilized egg into her uterus. (Problem: only 3 fertilizations in 20,000 tries yet.)

III. A human baby by God's design develops within his mother's womb.

A. Does a woman have trouble carrying a baby to term? Scientists are considering various "surrogate wombs", that is, flushing out an egg already fertilized and planting it into another womb, this womb being either artificial, of another woman, or even of an animal such as a cow.

B. Does the woman have both egg and womb trouble, or else is she just too busy to carry a baby she wants to have? Well, practice full surrogate mothering, letting another woman both conceive and carry her child. (Historical appeal for justification is made to Abraham and Hagar!)

This article doesn't make one merely shiver or even shudder; it makes one tremble. Anyone who has read the article will remember it for years. In fact, it will be forgotten only when the embryo technology it describes has become commonplace. And it will! Some of these things are already becoming common. The sordid is becoming everyday occurrence.

This first article on "Embryo Technology" was in the May, 1981 *PARENTS* magazine. Two months later, the July, 1981 *PARENTS* contained an article entitled "Contraceptives: A Medical Guide." This article contained no new or shocking material but was a concise guide with pictures of the basic methods of avoiding conception along with the success levels and problems attending each method.

I would expect that even in the world some people would observe the irony of these two articles but I have never met the unbeliever who sees anything strange in advocating both sets of ideas. The world calls both of these forms of control of birth humanistic and kind, failing to see how these controls contradict each other in essence. On the one hand man try to control birth so as to create human life or create improved human life (using their own Godless methods) while on the other hand men seek to prevent human life from being created (by equally Godless methods of their own).

But these two articles with their contradictory birth controls do illustrate for us exactly what is the world's response to the sorrows of conception. The world chaffs and kicks and tries to deny or obliterate the curse on childbearing. It tries to control conception at every phase, from choosing whether or not to conceive to choosing what to conceive at what time. It pretends to actually possess the power eventually to get rid of all pain, all abnormalities, all problems in the areas of conception and childbearing.

We know better, though. While it may have a few small successes in a few minor areas, on the whole the world only sees its problems accelerating. Even

the two articles I have referred to serve to illustrate the futility of the world's efforts. In the article on contraceptives, we find that each contraceptive has not only its degree of failure but also its attendent difficulties and dangers. In the article on genetic coding, we find that the scientists' greatest fear is that as they attempt to improve human offspring they may instead produce creatures with gross abnormalities and/or gross psychological problems. The world shall never succeed in its attempts to play God and create human life for eternity.

Young Christian woman, how do YOU respond to all of this? Whatever you do, DON'T EVER, EVER IGNORE THESE ISSUES! Remember, while your parents may read these developments and may help you form your ideas by discussing them with you, it is still you. . .and, if Christ tarries that long, your children, too. . .who will have to confront these issues in real life. The scientific control which seems so remote now may pop up before you very suddenly as an unexpected choice—or, maybe, as an unexpected DEMAND even—and you must, must, must have your ideas formed *before* that situation confronts you. Are you prepared? How do *you* respond to the sorrows of conception?

Truth vs. Error

by Rev. R. C. Harbach

THE CHRISTIAN AND HIS FEELINGS

"And at midnight Paul and Silas prayed, and sang praises unto God; and the prisoners heard them."

—Acts 16:25

"And Joseph came in unto them in the morning, and looked upon them, and, behold, they were sad."

—Genesis 40:6

There were two good (Christian) prisoners in one prison with good feelings, and there were two bad (heathen) prisoners in another prison with bad feelings. There are but two kinds of feelings, good or bad. Modern thinking likes to teach that feelings are neither automatically good nor automatically bad: they are neutral, neither good nor bad. "What makes them good or bad is how we handle them." This puts the emotions in a sort of limbo where they are neither bad enough to be condemned nor good enough to be approved. But this line of reasoning is without the support of scripture. The chief priests were *glad* when Judas went to them with the purpose of betraying Jesus. Mk. 14:11. Herod, too, was glad to hear John the Baptist preach. Mk. 6:20. He was also glad to see and meet Jesus. Lk. 23:8. But the emotion of gladness in these wicked men was surely *bad*. It was produced by wicked motives. On the other hand, we read that Nehemiah was *sad* (Neh. 2:1), and with good reason, for the cause of it was that Jerusalem lay in ruins. Also the disciples on the road to Emaus were sad, and with good reason, for they had not yet heard the good news of Christ's resurrection. Lk. 24:17. The emotion of sadness in these righteous men was *good*, for it was caused by mourning over Zion's low estate.

Just think of how Paul and Silas must have felt! They had been seized by the agents of a demoniac fortune teller, were charged with out-troubling trouble, were opposed by a mob, suffered the shame of having their clothing ripped off by the rulers, then when rendered naked were caned with many stinging blows and thrown into prison. There they had their feet clamped in the wood of a huge log, used both to prevent escape and to punish. Not a very comfortable bodily position, was it? Their backs beaten, bruised and bloody, too! Further, they must have been nearly exhausted. It *was* the middle of the night! What were they doing, moaning and groaning? We could hardly blame them, if they were. But no, what they were actually doing was: "praying, they hymned God!" They were not doing two distinct things, but performed a single act of worship. They were *praying by singing* psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, such as found in David's psalter. Imagine such feelings! They, praying, hymned the true God! Their voices thrilled with the theme song of the church of Old and New Testaments: Blessed is God!

It was Tertullian who said, "The limb in the stocks feels nothing when the mind is in heaven." In pain and wretchedness, they turned to God in prayer, yet their praying was singing. They sang a prayer for deliverance according to the counsel of His will. Their singing prayer was for strength to bear their affliction, for the furtherance of the gospel and the salvation of God's people. What glorious, sublime feelings well up in the hearts of those whose minds are full of the gospel of Christ! They must have sung songs like these:

> Loose the pris'ner, save the dying,
> All Thy enemies restrain;
> Then Thy flock, Thy chosen people,
> Unto Thee their souls shall raise,
>
> —No. 216, 4

Be Thou my help when troubles throng,
For I am weak and foes are strong;
My captive soul from prison bring,
And thankful praises I will sing.

—No. 387, 5

Afflictions on the good must fall,
But God will bring them safe thru all;
From harmful stroke He will defend
And sure and full deliverance send.

—No. 91, 3

In my distress I called on God;
In grace He answered me,
Removed my bonds, enlarged my place,
From trouble set me free!

—No. 317, 1

Who look to Him shall walk in light,
With joy their faces shall be bright,
Distressed they cried; the Lord arose
And saved them out of all their woes.

—No. 90, 3

Now think of the butler and baker in that other prison. They looked sorrowful, dejected and uneasy. Sad they were because, being royal servants of high position in luxurious and lucrative surroundings, living richly and merrily, they ever expected being shortly released and restored, when an unsettling change occurred. They both had dreams which they sensed had portent of things to come. This worried them, for they were anxious as to whether they predicted good or bad luck. Their concern was not entirely free of superstition and was quite self-centered. Their outlook could not be God-centered, for before they had met Joseph they had known nothing of the true God. They were feeling-oriented. Joseph was God-oriented. That is why they were where they were, and why Joseph was soon found where he was, next to the king. As Pharaoh's servants they knew they could not always have their own way. This was even more true in prison. Yet this did not prevent their always wanting their own way. For they were also desire-oriented. Joseph was commandment-oriented. His constant consideration was, What does *God* command me? These Egyptian prisioners always thought, What do *I* want? Thought of suffering was unbearable with their minds ever set on their pleasures, importance and opulence which they felt was their due. Joseph knew that the sufferings of this present time were not worthy to be compared to the eternal pleasures that would be his through constant faithfulness and stedfastness.

So there are two ways of life: one which is a feeling-motivated life of sin, oriented toward self, and another, a commandment-oriented life of holiness directed toward God. According to the former, modern advice urges people, "not to try to solve problems, but to discuss feelings." The thought behind this plausible procedure is, "Feelings are neither right nor wrong; they just are." Accordingly, you will likely be asked, How do you *feel*? But instructed Christians are thinking-oriented, rather than feeling-oriented, so that a much more meaningful approach would be, What do you *think*? How often we hear, I feel blue. I feel sick. I feel good. Or, You got me feeling so upset with that nasty remark of yours; I felt like two cents; I felt like a fool. Better it would be to approach the other person with the suggestion, "Could we sit down and calmly discuss together a problem and complaint I have?" and not ask, What do you *feel* we should do about it? It is always better to say, May I share an *idea*, or an *opinion*, rather than merely to emote?

The saints in the Philippian jail had a problem. They were in prison. What to do about it? They did not adopt the dubious method of dwelling on and indulging in their feelings rather than to labor to solve the problem. Such a procedure we call a "cop-out," a sinking into a depressing avoidance pattern. Rather, they boldly faced the problem, and in prayer turned it all over to the great problem-solver, the Lord Jesus Christ, who was uppermost in their minds. Acts 16:31. They paid little attention to the fluctuating feelings they might have dwelt on. In fact, they were above such feelings as rage, resentment, bitterness and self-pity. So set your mind not on feelings, but on the problem to be solved. If the problem is, I'm not doing too well at school, then "get cracking" in your studies which the Lord has appointed you in your responsibility as a student, *whether you feel like it or not*! You say, I feel so dumb! What you mean is, I'm stupid! Stupidity is not an emotion, but a problem. You may adjudge yourself, or conclude that you are stupid. The thing to do is to discuss with your teacher why you make this negative judgment, and what are the reasons for this conclusion. Then you are on the way to solving, not feelings, but the *problem* of stupidity. The responsible student, who conscientiously keeps up in his studies, is assidous in all his school life, does not "feel stupid." At the end of a school day he may pray his prayers in a certain sense of satisfaction, so that he won't be saying as he hops into bed, Wow! I feel guilty!

It is not a Reformed method to "express your feelings," or to "get in touch with them by having your head listen to your heart." What if your heart is not right? See Jer. 17:9. See also Ezek. 36:26 on how the heart that is *not* right may be *made* right. As for "feelings," the Bible does not know the word. Take your concordance and look up the word "mind" (and related words). That emphasis will be far more beneficial to you. It's wrong to propose: "Talk out your feelings with the person who bugs you so as to resolve them." What you want to do is resolve your problem. All bad feelings are sins, ought to be faced as sins, called sins, confessed as sins and recognized as stemming from bad behavior, especially from disobedience. See Ephes. 4:26-31; 5:3-6. This being

so, it would be wrong to follow the directive: "Share your bad feelings with calm assertiveness as they occur." For first of all, this is rather childish, and means, e.g., I don't know how to deal with my habit (problem) of foolish talking and jesting. Help! In the second place, it is ridiculous to "share" one's sin. That would only spread the sin. No, rather confess it (to any person offended and to God, asking their forgiveness, Eph. 4:32), put it away, then begin to practice what the Word of God teaches. Eph. 4:22, 24.

The feeling-oriented, not the commandment-oriented, stand in such a shaky position as to lose all they have of the Christian Faith. For feelings change, and bad feelings degenerate, become worse, deteriorating to the point where no more desire for the truth remains. This happened to Charles Darwin, of evolution's "Origin of Species" fame. At about age thirty his higher emotional tastes began to shrivel, so that he lost his former love for poetry, art and music. His mind increasingly developed a decline toward one type of thinking, rather mechanically, in the direction of a naturalistic humanistic philosophy. He himself admitted this was harmful to his intellect (mind) and wilting and rotting to his emotional nature. He confessed, too, that this was at the root of his eventual drift away (Heb. 2:1, marg.) from all religion.

Then do not wait until you "feel better and others respond to you more positively." This is not only feeling but self-orientation. We must be God-oriented, as the gospel demands of us (Matt. 6:33); then we will set about to *do* better, *right away*. (Cp. Mark's favorite word, straightway, anon, forthwith, i.e., *immediately,* 1:16-17;2:11-12). We *feel* better only in *doing* better. The emotional nature of the Christian is purified and exalted in the sanctified affections of love, joy, peace and happiness as a result of walking in all the commandments and ordinances of the Lord blameless. In the blessed light of the glorious gospel of Christ (II Cor. 4:4) is the infallible cure for all our perplexities and ills. Shining in our hearts (v. 6), it fills us with all joy and peace in believing (Rom. 15:13). It all boils down to this: *Feeling* good depends on *doing* good. "He that *keepeth* the Law, *happy* is he" (Prov. 29:18).

TEST YOUR MEMORY

1. How did the Holy Spirit appear after Jesus' baptism? John 1:32
2. What small seed grew into a great tree? Luke 13:18-19
3. How long had Lazerus been dead when Jesus raised him? John 11:39
4. What group of people did not want some children to bother Jesus? Matthew 19:13
5. Who was governor of Judea at the time of Jesus' crucifixion? Matthew 27:2
6. How many basketfuls were taken up after Jesus fed five thousand? Mark 6:43

ACTIVITIES

1. Parable: a.) moveable tent or canopy b.) earthly story with a heavenly meaning c.) sojourner in a strange land.
2. Omnipotence: a.) attribute of God which describes His ability to do whatever He wills. b.) attribute of God by virtue of which He fills the universe in all its parts and is present everywhere at once. c.) attribute of God by which He perfectly and eternally knows all things which can be known, past, present, and future.
3. Onesimus: a.) Synagogue ruler whose child Jesus raised from the dead b.) chief of Judah who returned with Zerubbabel (Ezra 2:2) c.) runaway slave of Philemon of Closse; converted through Paul, who wrote the Epistle to Philemon in his behalf.
4. Ebenezer: a.) means, "hitherto hath the Lord helped us". b.) town of Ephraim where Israelites were defeated by the Philistines. c.) memorial stone, erected by the Israelites after defeating the Philistines.
5. Caleb: a.) son of Jephunneh; prince of Judah b.) one of the 12 sent to spy out the land of Canaan c.) a diviner employed by King Balak to curse Israel.
6. Potsherd: a.) Instrument for taking hold of something. b.) governor of a Roman province appointed by the emperor. c.) piece of earthenware.

SINGSPIRATION SCHEDULE

April 18 — Hudsonville
May 16 — Hope
September 19 -- Southwest
November 21 — Faith
December 19 — Hudsonville

Answers: 1.)b; 2.)a; 3.)c; 4.)a,b,c; 5.)a,b; 6.)c

NEWS from, for and about our churches

by Marcia Hanko

BIRTHS

—Mr. & Mrs. Dan Boone of Southwest were blessed with the birth of a son, David John, on November 4.

—Mr. & Mrs. Duane Alsum of Southwest were blessed with a daughter, Amber Gayle on November 16.

—Mr. & Mrs. Ron Hoksbergen of Hull, rejoice in the birth of a son, Jonathan Allen, on December 10.

—Mr. & Mrs. Tim Mowery of Holland were blessed with the birth of a son, Benjamin Jay on December 17.

—Mr. & Mrs. Bob Dams of Hudsonville rejoice in the birth of a daughter, Holly Kay on December 21.

—Mr. & Mrs. Greg Van Overloop of Hudsonville were blessed with the birth of a son, Bryant Scott, on December 23.

—Mr. & Mrs. Doug Klooster of Hudsonville were blessed with a daughter, Ann-Marie on November 1.

—Mr. & Mrs. Charles Ensink of Hudsonville give thanks to God in the birth of a daughter, Sarah Grace, on November 25.

—Mr. & Mrs. Dave Kregel of Hope rejoice in the birth of a son, Brent David, on January 5.

—Mr. & Mrs. Jim Huizenga of Hope were blessed with the birth of a son, Thomas James, on January 6.

—Mr. & Mrs. Ed Vander Meulen of South Holland were blessed with a son, David James.

MARRIAGES

—Ken Hanko of Hope and Mary Key of First were united in marriage Thursday, December 17.

—Jim Westing and Sandra Kamps of Hope were united in marriage on January 8.

—Alvern Miersma and Fran Sterk were united in marriage on August 14 in Redlands.

—Doug and Beth Mingerink of Southeast were united in marriage on August 7.
—Henry and Bonnie Boyd of Southeast were united in marriage on September 5.
—David Van Haitsma and Shelby Holstege of Hudsonville were united in marriage on November 12.
—Bill Rutgers of First and Ruth Bouwkamp of Hudsonville were united in marriage on December 11.

MEMBERSHIP TRANSFERS

—Ken Hanko and Lynne Hunter had their papers transferred from Hope to First.
—Mr. and Mrs. Peter Kamps and 3 baptized children were transferred from Hudsonville to Southwest.
—Hull Church received the papers of Mrs. Kathy Van Maanen from Calvary C.R.C.
—Sandy Besselsen's membership papers were transferred from Hope to Redlands.
—The papers of Fran Miersma were received by Redlands from the First C.R.C. of Redlands.
—The papers of Mr. and Mrs. Walter Griffioen were transferred from First to Hudsonville.
—Hudsonville received the papers of Mr. and Mrs. Clare Pastoor from Faith.
—First Church received the membership papers of Shelley Van Meeteran from Faith.

CHURCH ACTIVITIES

—A singspiration was sponsored by the Young People of Loveland on December 20.
—Faith Choral Society presented a Christmas program on December 13.
—A singspiration was held in Hudsonville Church on December 20.
—The Choral Society of Hope gave a Christmas program on January 3.
—The Young People of Doon sponsored a skating party on December 7.
—A singspiration was held in Edgerton on December 27.
—A Christmas Mass Meeting was held at Hudsonville Church December 20.

CONFESSION OF FAITH

—Ryan Feenstra, member of Southwest made confession of his faith on November 15.
—Faith and John Ophoff and Robert Velting of Southeast made public confession of their faith October 25.
—Beth Kamminga, Grace Houck, Joanne Koning, and Cindy Vander Vennen of Southeast made public confession of their faith December 27.
—Mrs. Ruth Van Overloop made public confession of her faith on November 22.
—Rhonda Brower, Laura Kamps, Karla Lubbers, Shelley Miedema and Bill Zwak of Hudsonville made confession of their faith on December 20.

ATTENTION YOUNG PEOPLE

The 1982 Convention will be held at:

Dordt College
Sioux Center, Iowa
August 17-21, 1982

The theme of our convention this year will be:

II PETER 3:11

Our Changeless Calling in a Changing World

I. Called to Obedience
II. Called to Moral Purity
III. Called to Faithful Church Membership

Our Speakers this year will be:

—Rev. Kuiper
—Rev. Bruinsma
—Rev. Kortering

HOPE TO SEE YOU ALL THERE!!

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