BEACON LIGHTS

FOR PROTESTANT REFORMED YOUTH

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TEARS
SADNESS TURNED TO GLADNESS

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Editorial

A WHYS LETTER TO MY GRANDCHILDREN

by John M. Faber

Why? That one-word question has been asked by you, your brothers, your sisters, and all the children over the whole world. It has been the spring-board for countless lessons taught by your parents, teachers and ministers. And now I will ask you the same question: why is the first sentence I wrote true? And another: Why do all children ask such questions?

If your Gramps thinks back to his childhood he can hear some of those "why" questions, like: Why do we get milk from cows and not from horses or dogs? Why do the ants make holes in the ground for their homes? Why do birds gather twigs and fuzzy material for their nests? and, why in such different locations? Why do some flowers, like tulips, grow from bulbs, and other plants, like radishes, grow from seeds? Why do oak trees grow from acorns, and the huge cottonwood trees grow from tiny seeds that float on the slightest breeze? Why are cows so dumb, and foxes so smart? Why cannot we tell from an animal's face how smart it is? An elephant looks dumb, but why is he so smart that he even seems to reason things out? Why do we have a stomach as large as our fist, and an angleworm is ALL stomach?

Solomon did not direct us to a lion which is big enough to have a big brain, but to the tiny ant with such a tiny brain, to learn wisdom from it. Why isn't smartness according to size? Why does a robin hippity-hop in the lawn to find its food? Why does the hawk fly high in the sky to prey upon chickens, chipmunks and mice? Why do the bright stars all seem to keep their own places in the sky? And, why does that truth have any relation to the fact that apples fall from the tree? And, by the way, why do things never fall up?

That is about enough "whys". I guess that you have asked many of those I have mentioned. But isn't it terribly annoying when you ask so many questions of your parents when they answer with a single word, "because"? I think that is because we finally tire them with our persistent questioning. Like when we ask why cows give milk, and our Mother says that it is for their baby calves; and then we ask: then why do we also give it to human babies, and why do we drink a glass full of it at our meals, and why cannot some people drink it because it makes them ill? You see when we pile up questions upon every answer we get, our mother loses patience and says, "because".

You notice that I have not given any answers to all the "why" questions I have asked. But now I am ready to ask a question which this letter is all about. Here is the question: "Why do all children, most grownups and all scientists ask questions?" I find the answer to that question in the Bible. In Genesis one verses twenty six and twenty seven God tells what kind of creatures He created after the creation of the animal kingdom. "And God said, Let us make man in our

image, after our likeness; and let them have dominion over the fish of the sea, and over the fowl of the air, and over the cattle, and over all the earth, and every creeping thing that creepeth upon the earth. So God created man in His own image; in the image of God created He him, male and female created He them."

That, boys and girls, is the answer to my question. But maybe I had better explain that a bit further. You see, in order to have dominion (that means rule) over them he had to learn all about those creatures. He must understand their make-up, he must know what they are good for, and how to make use of them. It was very important to understand every creature. But God also had said that man should have dominion over the earth! That would take a great amount of study! Just think that thousands of years would pass before man began to understand one of God's creations: Gravity. At that it was a sort of stumbling upon the truth by a simple thing like an apple falling upon a man's head. That apple's fall started him asking several questions and he developed the theory we know quite well now, The Theory of Gravity. From that lowly starting point he reached the understanding why the sun, the moon, and the stars all keep their correct orbits!

So God made man different from the animals. Man was a questioning, an inquisitive creature. Adam, before The Fall, understood his duty: to learn all he could about nature in order to learn more and more of God's Nature. In earlier letters we have told you of God's fingerprints in His Creation. Those prints were to be a study book for all mankind. After the Fall man did not fully realize his calling anymore. He did not realize that his study should always end in praise to the Creator. But man remained a questioning creature. So from then till now we are always questioning our parents and teachers about everything we see about us. Ungodly men, in their sinful way, have thought up many inventions based on the answers to their questions. But, sad to say, when they learn something new of God's Creation they say, "Mother Nature does this, or that" and refuse to see God behind each new fact learned.

But we! We have been turned about from our old sinful nature and have become new creatures. Now we can see God's fingerprints in all our studies in school. Our Study Book of Nature has been explained to us by God's Study Book, The Bible. That is the reason we ask our parents, our teachers and our minister for answers to our repeated "whys". They know the Bible forwards and backwards. They have the answers, they are wise. Did you notice in the title of my letter to you, that if you say, Whys, you say, wise. Now you know why our parents send us to the Christian School, to get answers from the Scriptures, to see the Glory and Greatness of Our God. That is why God created us: to praise and glorify His Holy Name! Psalm One Hundred Fifty leads us into that praise worship from the first verse, "Praise ye the Lord, praise Him in the sanctuary, praise Him in the firmament of His Power" to the last verse, "Let everything that hath breath praise the Lord. Praise ye the Lord."

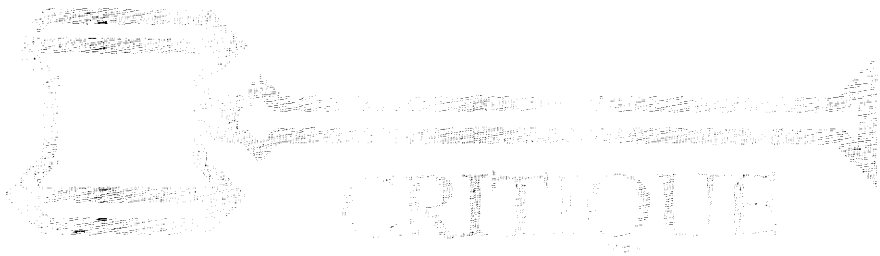
In my questioning old (1905 model) mind I still have many unanswered questions. But I have a very strong feeling that we will never stop asking questions into all eternity. You know, boys and girls, that after the fiery destruction of this world and the present heavens, God will make a New Heaven and a New Earth for us to dwell in. I believe that we will be busy learning and ever learning the works of God in that new creation. Just like the first earth could not be fully understood in our short life time, so the New Earth will be so wonderful that we can find something to contemplate all the time. I just used the word, "time" because I do not know what to call the passage of moments in the hereafter when time shall

be no more. But I am sure we will never tire of learning more and more about God by learning from His Creation. And make no mistake about it. It will take an eternity to do just that!

I still have many unanswered questions about that eternal learning process. Will we need teachers in that kingdom? Who will they be? Former teachers or ministers? Angels, maybe? But this I know from the Scriptures, our Risen and Glorified Lord Jesus will be our teacher so that in His Face we shall see God. Do you understand what that means? I have yet many questions of that truth as to its fullest meaning. I hope that you will always ask questions, as I do.

With love,

Your inquisitive Gramps.



MAKING CONFESSION OF FAITH

by Bernie Kamps

This article is written mainly for those who are considering making public confession of their faith.

What is this faith that you are confessing? This faith is a sure knowledge of God, isn't it? It is not an abstract knowledge not even similar to knowledge that is learned from schooling and the study of certain subjects, such as concepts of space and the planets. This knowledge as John Calvin writes, "consists in assurance rather than in comprehension." To confess that the Lord is my shepherd and know that He restoreth my soul, is faith.

How is faith obtained? Is it a gift of God which you have accepted and therefore now believe on Him? Is it a gift that God has bestowed upon you because He knew in His counsel, that you would believe? Of course not! Some will have you to believe this heresy. What does scripture say? In the book of Hebrews 12:2 "Looking unto Jesus the author and finisher of our faith; who for the joy that was set before Him endured the cross, despising the shame and is set down at the right hand of the throne of God." Our comfort and consolation lies in this fact that Christ has begun the work of faith in us and certainly will finish this work.

To believe that you have anything, even the smallest part in your faith, will

deprive you of assurance as well as contradict scripture. For if you can accept God's gift of faith, surely you will reject that same gift when you sinfully doubt the promise of your salvation.

As you have been preparing yourself for the possibility of public confession you have had much time for inner searching of your soul and spirit. You have been asking many questions concerning your trust in God, forgiveness of sins and whether or not you are an elect child of God given the promise of eternal life. You no doubt have been struggling with self doubt; the devil and your sinful nature have accused you of being merely a church attending hypocrite. As you pray to God earnestly pleading for forgiveness of your sins, you examine your daily walk, your inner thoughts, sinful desires, your conscience plagues you and condemns you. Is there pardon for such a sinner as I?

Let us look to the Heidelberg Catechism. What does it say concerning our walk on this earth? What is thy only comfort in life and death? "That I with body and soul, both in life and death, am not my own, but belong unto my faithful Savior Jesus Christ; who, with His precious blood, hath fully satisfied for all my sins, and delivered me from all the power of the devil; and so preserved me that without the will of my heavenly Father, not a hair can fall from my head; yea, that all things must be subservient to my salvation, and therefore, by His Holy Spirit, He also assures me of eternal life, and makes me sincerely willing and ready, henceforth, to live unto Him."

Am not my own! Fully satisfies for all my sins! Preserves me! Such blessed comfort! We do not, may must not look to ourselves but to Christ for our justification before God. While we see nothing but imperfection, God sees perfection. God looks down upon His elect saints as pure in Christ. Ephesians 1:4 "According as He hath chosen us in Him before the foundation of the world that we should be holy and without blame before Him in love."

In order then to make confession of faith let us look at question and answer # 2 of Lord's Day I. "How many things are necessary for thee to know, that thou, enjoying this comfort, mayest live and die happily? Three, the first, how great my sins and miseries are. Do you know? Oh, yes you do, we all know our wretchedness if we prayerfully examine ourselves, don't we? Looking within makes us shudder to realize that every possible sin we are capable of committing and we see the many sins that cleave to our flesh like tentacles. "The second, how I may be delivered from all my sins and miseries." We are delivered only by Christ's crucifixion, sacrifice on the cross and raising again from the grave. You must believe that this is a concrete fact. Sometimes it is almost as a myth to us, but God has given you the gift of faith, thereby you can and do rest assured that your sins are wholly covered. I Corinthians 15:22 "For as in Adam all die, even so in Christ shall all be made alive." The third, how I shall express my gratitude to God for such deliverance." After our burden of sin is lifted, what relief we do feel. After confessing with our hearts and knowing God has truly forgiven the iniquity of our souls, we sing with the psalmist "Thou art my hiding place; thou shalt compass me about with songs of deliverance." We express our gratitude with singing, prayer and a sanctified walk as the Holy Spirit causes us to live out of our regenerated heart.

Now fellow Christian, believe with your whole being that eternal life is yours, because God has first loved you. Make confession of faith then, knowing that the Holy Spirit only works in the hearts of God's elect, of which you are one. Remember Philippians 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."

THE BLESSING OF GOD'S LOVE

by Mrs. H. Brands

". . . the love of God is shed abroad in our hearts by the Holy Ghost which is given unto us. . . ."

The Christian virtues named in scripture are characteristics which every Christian has in embryo form but which must grow from this embryo startingpoint into full-blossomed flowers which characterize the whole person.

So it is with the virtue of Christian love of God. Every child of God knows to some degree the love of God. Without some knowledge of that love, who would dare lift his eyes to heaven and pray? Without God's love, who would dare to ask for forgiveness of sins? No, apart from God's love we stand bound hopelessly to our sin and to hell. By grace we believe God's love and we pray.

But we must also grow in love. Love cannot be mature and characterize our whole person until it has experienced and survived testings of it. As a youth we may have a degree of love-of truly Godly, Christian love, too-but this love must deepen, grow more and more inward in our hearts, must come to characterize every thought and word. Not until heaven will this be perfected but it must be present and growing already in this life.

Romans 5:5 teaches that God uses suffering to "shed abroad in our hearts" the love of God. There are two aspects to this shedding abroad of God's love in our hearts, each aspect demanding the other.

First, we experience how God Himself loves us. This whole article on the blessings of sufferings has emphasized the unique and beautiful way in which suffering teaches us this. Through suffering God draws us deeper into meditation and prayer, and through these means He draws us closer to Himself, to experience of His love.

You know, if it weren't for sin, this wouldn't be true. Apart from sin, we would automatically meditate continually on the things of God, we would naturally walk in fellowship and prayer with God, and so there would be no sanctifying purpose for suffering. But as sinners this is not true; we too easily neglect fellowship with God and grow instead in the service of self and of the things on earth. Love of self and love of things kill the love of God! God's love cannot exist alongside of these loves! And so God thwarts us in our sinful self-love and things-love so that we turn more and more from these and to Him. It is not angry wrath when He sends us suffering but rather it is love which draws us away from earthly desires and into the holy love of

His perfect fellowship.

Second, when we walk in God's fellowship and love, this love must come to expression also in love of our neighbor. "He that loveth not knoweth not God; for God is love." (I John 4:8) When the love of God for us is shed abroad in our hearts, then it must also come to expression in being shed abroad from our hearts to others.

Suffering makes this love for others to grow. Through our own suffering, we learn to understand the needs of others, the depth of their grief, the reality and severity of the trials they experience. We learn to care for their griefs, to want sincerely to help them. We long to have them know the same experiences of God's love which we have and we thrill in conversation which exalts this love of God. Young children of God often find it hard to talk about the things of God without feeling artificial about it; the Christian who has suffered and experienced God's faithful love talks freely, naturally, out of his heart, about the God he walks and talks with continually. He loves God Himself and loves to see others love God in the same way.

And so, in this two-fold way, the "love of God is shed abroad in our hearts" as the core result of suffering. And that is blessing! I can be content in any situation if I know that God loves me and thus I love others.

THE BLESSING OF HOPE

"And hope maketh not ashamed: because the love of God is shed abroad in our hearts by the Holy Ghost. . . ."

Can you imagine the reaction of an unbeliever to this last point? He will raise his eyebrows and say, "Uh. . .a blessing? Are you talking about a **blessing** experienced in suffering? And as a **blessing** you talk about 'pie in the sky by and by'?"

We answer without hesitation or shame. Yes! One of the blessings of suffering is that we learn to experience "hope". Our hope is of life in heaven forever, of fellowship with God unending. Our suffering is made worthwhile by the blessing it produces of hope.

This is really the logical followup of the other points we have made. Suffering results in the blessings of meditation, of prayer, of sanctification, of patience, of experience in God's faithfulness, of God's love. All this means that we are blessed with coming more and more to know God Himself. The more we know Him, the more we love Him, the more we also desire Him. We come to see that nothing, but **nothing**, can compare with His fellowship and love. The Holy Spirit of God in our hearts teaches us that.

As this fellowship grows in our lives, we come also to see more clearly how rich and beautiful our hope of heaven is. Heaven is no idle dream; it is God's final perfecting of the wonder of grace which He has begun now already. The more I experience now His desirableness, the more also I will desire that perfect experience of Him for eternity. The hope of heaven becomes a blessing which grows and grows.

This is the explanation of suffering for believers. We shall never in this life understand fully, but we know that suffering brings us blessings beyond measure, blessings all centering in the experience of God's grace and beauty and fellowship. And it's only for a few short years, only while we live in the midst of a sinful world, fighting sin without and within, that we suffer. Then we leave behind us the suffering and forever enjoy the blessings which suffering taught us: blessings of eternal fellowship in perfection with our God in Jesus Christ. . .Who loved us and sustained us each step of the way He led.

SADNESS TURNED TO GLADNESS

by Rev. John A. Heys

When you young people have a sad look on your faces, when the twinkle in your eyes is not there, when your usual smile is gone, while you are actually in good health and have no bodily pains, we know that there is something wrong in your soul. You have troubled thoughts and aching hearts. And it is going to take some good news to bring back that smile, that twinkle of youthful life in your eyes and evidence that you are happy once again.

Now we trust that you believe that we, your parents, your elders, deacons, ministers of the Word of God, your teachers in school, we the senior citizens and older members in the congregation do want to see you happy, and that it hurts us when we see you downcast, suffering in your souls and walking with heavy hearts. What a thrill it gives us to meet with you at your singspirations, your convention meetings and your choir programs to hear you sing from the bottom of your hearts. Yes, it makes us a bit envious. We are not envious in a sinful way so that we complain to God for the fact that as the flower of the grass we fade and lose our strength and enthusiasm. We see that so clearly when we stand next to you and mingle with you (Although there is no "generation gap" in the church the way there is in the world). We know that we deserve worse conditions and limitations than those we are experiencing. Did we not last time agree that we are worthless and wholly undeserving of any of the blessings of God's kingdom? By His grace we are poor in spirit so that our mental attitude is that in ourselves God ought to destroy us, not bless us with the joys and wonders of His kingdom. But believe me, we do want to see you happy and with Solomon we say, "Rejoice, O young man (and young woman) in thy youth; and let thy heart cheer thee in the days of thy youth, and walk in the way of thine heart, and in the sight of thine eyes: but know thou, that for all these things God will bring thee into judgment." Ecclesiastes 11:9.

There is, however, one sorrow that we do want to see in you, one kind of mourning that we pray that you may have. It is the mourning of the second Beatitude, namely, "Blessed are they that mourn: for they shall be comforted." Now that statement in itself could include all kinds of mourning and refer to all kinds of people. All by itself this statement of Jesus would seem to speak of a "common grace" that He has for all people in their state of mourning. But we may not so deal with Scripture. No text may ever be taken by itself and apart from what precedes, follows and is written elsewhere in Scripture. We may not consider these words of Jesus to refer to all who mourn because of the death of a relative or friend. They are not all going to be

comforted. They are not necessarily all citizens of the kingdom of heaven. That mourning is not a sign of belonging in that kingdom where there will be no sorrow nor tears at any time. Those who mourn and are blessed because they shall be comforted are those who mourn **over their sins.**

You see these Beatitudes do not speak of seven kinds of people that pretty soon we will find in the kingdom of heaven. No, they present the citizens of that kingdom from a sevenfold point of view. In other words, each citizen of God's kingdom will have all seven of these characteristics. Those that mourn and will be comforted are those that are poor in spirit, and—looking a bit ahead—are the meek who hunger and thirst after righteousness. Few mourners in this vale of tears there are that hunger and thirst after righteousness. Few mourners there are therefore who are blessed and will be comforted. Let no one try to teach you that God loves everybody and has a certain "common grace" for all in sorrow, suffering and woe. That suffering, sorrow and woe God sent as part of the punishment upon sin. Why did He send it to that individual, if He were graciously inclined to that person and had a "general benevolence" toward him? Why do they die and through death enter hell fire? Cannot the almighty God prevent that, if He actually has some grace for them? And why is it so temporary that He lets them die and be cast into a place where there is surely no evidence of His grace at all? Can an unchangeable God do that?

But to return to the mourning of which Jesus speaks, you cannot have that mourning unless you are poor in spirit, and if you are poor in spirit you are going to have this mourning over sin. The one who truly sees his worthlessness, yea how worthy he is of the opposite of being blessed by God, will mourn over the sins which cause him to see and understand his worthlessness, his utter and abject poverty as far as works are concerned that will earn for him a place in God's kingdom. Indeed, in the measure that we are poor in spirit we will mourn over our sins. Let me explain that to you.

Let us go back to that parable of Jesus called The Pharisee and the Publican. The Pharisee had such a good opinion of himself that he rejoiced in all the works which he performed, and though he did not say it in so many words, he told God that He ought to be glad that there were such good people on earth! There was no mourning over sin there. There was no mourning over the sin committed in that very conceited, proud and sinful prayer! But the publican, seeing himself as **The** sinner, seeing that he had of himself no good works that would assure him of a blessing, threw himself on God's mercy, and in sincere mourning over his sins struck his breast and cast his eyes to the ground. He had comfort, for Jesus said, in applying the parable, "I tell you this man went down to his house justified rather than the other."

The question, therefore, young people, is whether you feel badly about your sins. It is so easy to laugh about them. It is so easy to make jokes about them. It is so easy to seek to be entertained by the world by their portrayal of sin in books, drama on the TV screen as well as theatre. It is so easy to seek it and even to label it as innocent fun and a good work, quite in harmony with the Word of God. Remember that Jesus said in this same sermon on the kingdom, "Many will say to me in that day, Lord, Lord have we not prophesied in Thy name? and in Thy name cast out devils? and in Thy name done many wonderful works? And then will I profess unto them, I never knew you: depart from Me ye that work iniquity." But let me tell you something. If you touch a hot pan and it hurts your hand, you are going to be careful not to touch it again. If eating a certain food gives you hives and there are big, red raised and itching swellings all

over your body, you are going to avoid those foods. And if you really mourn over your sins, and they trouble you, you are not going to seek them and make plans to walk further in them. How about it? Do you mourn over your sins? Do you know them as sins? Let us look a bit more closely at this matter.

There are two questions we ought to ask and to which we ought to give ourselves an answer. Do you feel badly about what you did because you realize that you displeased the God Whom you love? It is not a question as to whether you regret what you did because it could bring upon you the terrible punishments of hell. Satan can have that kind of sorrow and regret. No, do you love God? Does it hurt you that you have gone against His will and not walked in love toward him? Then you are blessed and will be comforted. For then your mourning is the kind of mourning of which Jesus speaks in this second Beatitude.

The second question you must ask yourself and to which you must give yourself an answer is whether your **heart** is sorry. It is one thing to say that you are sorry and quite another to **feel** miserable about your sins. It is one thing to say you are sorry and another to **be** sorry. We are such hypocrites by nature, and so accustomed to use phrases and expressions that do not speak the testimony of our hearts, so outwardly polite and "civilized" that we say "Thank you" to the police officer who gives us a ticket for breaking a traffic law. But God reads the heart and never goes merely by what the lips say.

What, then, young people, do your hearts say? Do they tell you to prepare and train yourself for jobs and careers which give good pay but take you away from the church and from a path of truth and righteousness? Who are the friends your heart has chosen for your fellowship? What kind of husband and wife are you seeking? One that will most certainly help you stay away from these deeds that displease the God we love? Or is it one who will pull you along to do those evils that should cause you to blush and have shame? Remember two verses which the psalmist penned down in Psalm 119:63 and 136, "I am a companion of all them that fear Thee, and of them that keep Thy precepts." And again, "Rivers of waters run down my eyes, because they keep not Thy law." It takes that kind of heart to mourn over sin.

Those with such hearts will be blessed. Those whose hearts mourn when they have fallen into sin, and when they see the sins of others, will be blessed. They will be blessed with all the joys and happiness of God's kingdom. But they are blessed now as well. Each time Jesus says, "Blessed are. . . ." And indeed it is a blessing to know that this kingdom is ours. Still more, it is a blessing to be able to mourn over sin. To mourn over sin is a blessing which God gives to His elect children on the basis of the cross and in the way of a rebirth and work of sanctification by the Spirit of Christ. It is a gift of sovereign, eternal, unchangeable, saving grace.

Therefore those who mourn over their sins because they love God are blessed with a sign that Christ did indeed die for their sins, and that the guilt has been removed because He paid for these sins in full! They are blessed with the knowledge that the kingdom of heaven with all its joy and singing is theirs; that ahead of them awaits a realm completely free from the curse not only, but a world without all those sins that now bring misery to the new man in Christ.

Indeed, what a blessing to know all this now. And what a blessing it will be in the days ahead when those who find joy in sin bring it to an even higher degree of development with more crime and violence than we now know and see (and that is plenty!). Indeed the mourner's sadness will be turned to gladness.

TEARS

by Sherry Koole

The following was written after rereading an article written by my mother, which I happened to come across shortly after her death. In reading the article I realized that many tears were shed by my parents on my behalf along with the tears that were shed by other parents for their children. In rereading the article I see that now I as a parent will also have times when I express both grief and gladness by way of tears. I would like to share with the young people the thoughts of my mother's article by way of a poem, both being entitled. . . .

"TEARS"

Because of the things you secretly do
And of the friends you choose to keep,
Tears upon our pillows fall,
Long and silently we weep.

You do things that "everyone else does,"
And so you ask us, "Why the fuss?"
Once again the tears appear
And heavy hearts within us.

When we cannot help but wonder
If we've somehow failed our calling
To raise our children in God's way,
We can't stop our tears from falling.

For you're the children of the church
Yes, you're the church of tomorrow
And when you act in such a way
Our hearts are filled with sorrow.

What would become of the church we love
If you continue the world's way?
We shudder to think it, Young People,
And amidst our tears we pray.

Tears of anxiety, fears, and grief
Yes, many the tears of sadness.
But there are many other tears
We shed because of gladness.

A little one practicing songs
And possibly quite off key
Exclaims how he loves singing praises;
How happy he's made us be.

The love of God is clearly seen
Within this young one's heart.
Our hearts are filled with joy and praise
But once again the tears do start.

Or on an occasion when you, Young People,
Make confession the whole church hears;
'Tis a joy for the whole congregation
And we cannot hold back our tears.

And after your public confession
There will be less sorrowful tears.
Not because you will sin no longer
But you'll strive harder to live in God's fear.

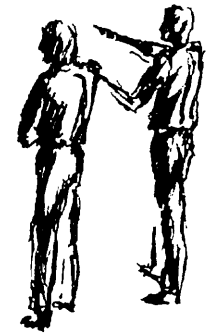
Don't think that your life will be easy,
And whatever the world may do,
Hold fast to your words of confession
And Jehovah will see you through.

Call on none other than God, your Father,
For He is the Almighty One.
We pray that He safely will guide you
And strengthen you your course to run.

If you continue to fear Jehovah,
When your life on this earth is done
Your battle with sin will be over
And the vic'try you'll have won.

Yes, tears of anxiety, fears, and joy
Yes, many the fallen tears;
Now they're shed for you but soon shall be
Shed by you in future years.

Gems from the Goldmine of the Scripture



by Rev. C. Hanko

"Take heed to yourselves: If thy brother trespass against you. . . ." Luke 17:3

There was a young minister, who soon after his arrival in his first congregation met up with a parishioner who strongly disliked him. The man refused to talk to him. What made matters even worse was, that while this minister was preaching his opponent sat shuffling his feet and making all kinds of disturbances to express his disapproval. At first he did this from the back of the church, but later even took the front seat, in order to express his disgust where every one could see. This pastor approached his elders one day to speak about this unruly member. The elder told him something that he never forgot, "Remember, Reverend, that this is also one of your sheep."

Offences do arise, even in the church, in the Christian school and in the Christian home. It is impossible for sinful saints, who by nature are still inclined to all evil, to live together without rubbing each other the wrong way, hurting each other, and wronging each other, even causing the other party to sin.

If nothing is done about this, the sting and the hurt remain. Resentment grows like an ugly festering sore, or like a cancer. A barrier is created, which rises higher and higher as resentment grows into bitterness, bitterness into distrust, backbitings and hatred. As one person put it, "I never killed anyone, but I must admit that I was happy when some person died." Yet even though one may think that he was never guilty of murder, words can cut deeper than the sword, slander can be more destructive than outright murder.

It is of little wonder that the world finds no solution to their problems. Children build up resentments against their parents or teacher, which results in a bitterness that makes it impossible to act decently toward their elders. Schoolmates avoid each other, give them looks of scorn, talk behind their backs about them,

arousing suspicion and distrust in the hearts of their schoolmates. The trouble is, that these evil gossippings are so hard to forget. Years later these evil tales, true or untrue, came back to mind. No wonder that children, after they get a bit older, leave home. No wonder that husbands and wives find each other unbearable, accuse one another of mental cruelty, and flee for an escape to the divorce court. Separation, so it is said, in spite of all the trauma involved for them and for their children, is still better than living in a house filled with hatred. No wonder that the daily papers never fail to report stabbings, shootings and other forms of cold-blooded murder. The world of sin knows no solution for its problems.

Jesus warns us: Take heed to yourselves! That is, beware! Be on your guard!

This requires a bit of soul-searching, of self-examination. A good look at ourselves in the mirror of God's Word, especially when problems arise between us and others, helps us to see in how far we may be responsible for the rift that has arisen in our lives. We can far more readily see the splinter that is in our brother's eye than the mote that is in our eye. Our sinful inclination is always to excuse ourselves and condone our actions, even if we have to lie awake at night to think of excuses. It is true that some people readily offend, whether by their proud attitude, their sharp criticisms, or some other miserable fault. On the other hand, there are also people who are thin-skinned. They live a miserable life, because they are so often offended by the slight or words of others. There are people who always seem to be carrying a chip on their shoulders. I suppose that I could mention many more. All kinds of people are found also in the church. At best we are all sinful saints. Whenever an offence arises we should ask: In how far am I to blame? How did I help to bring this about? What could I have done to prevent it? Instead of licking our wounds and feeling sorry for ourselves, we must honestly review the whole sorry experience, and certainly not stare ourselves blind on the guilt of others, while we minimize our own part in the trouble.

The next step is to beware lest we fall into even worse sins. One sin so readily leads to another. David committed the sin of adultery and tried to cover it up with murder. For a whole year he struggled with a guilty conscience until the prophet Nathan pointed the finger at him: Thou art the man! Scripture speaks of a whole series of sins that so readily arise when there is already a barrier of sin between us and another member of the church. It speaks of bitterness, and wrath (raging), and anger, and clamor (fightings), and evil speaking, along with all malice. All of these, the Word of God tells us, we must put away. Ephesians 4:31.

The third step is to take a good look at the wrong that was done to us. Was the wrong done to us only, or to God? It may be that our pride was hurt. It may be that we took offence to some slur, some snide remark, some mistreatment, whether deliberately done or inadvertently. Often our personal pride causes us to make a mountain out of a mole hill. Maybe we were offended more by what was done to us than by the sin that was committed against God. The hurt to us may be painful enough, but the more serious question is, did the offender sin against God? It is very well possible, that a sin, for example, may have been committed against the ninth commandment, whereby our good name was dragged through the mud, our reputation was seriously hurt, our family and our future were damaged by the sin committed. This makes it a matter for Christian discipline.

But Christian discipline, as you very well know, belongs to the forgotten chapters of the Bible. It undoubtedly is better that I say, the neglected chapters, rather than the forgotten chapters. Yet

Christian discipline is the special God-given privilege of the believer to remove any barrier that may arise between fellow believers. The world knows nothing about this, because they deny the cross. But it is our unique privilege to meet as believers at the foot of the cross, whether as husband and wife, parents and children, brothers and sisters, classmates, or whoever. At the foot of the cross two sinners, who realize their own sin and misery, can confess their own sins committed against the Most High Majesty of God. That makes it easy to swallow our pride, humbly take the mote out of our own eye, while we help the offender to take the splinter out of his eye. There, looking up to the crucified Savior who laid down His life to save us miserable sinners from condemnation, it becomes easy to find forgiveness, make reconciliation, and rejoice in what God has done for us in His forgiving mercies in Christ Jesus!

I already hear the objection, this is easier said than done. I know that. But "Thus saith the Lord".

I refer, of course, first of all, to the passage of Scripture in Matthew 5:23, 24, that tells us, that, if I may put it that way, when we are on our way to church and are reminded that someone has something against us, we turn about, and first reconcile with the brother. That lays the responsibility directly at my doorstep, even though I am not the offended party. I may have seen or heard that the brother (or sister) has something against me. He may be right or wrong, but I know that it bothers him to the extent that he cannot worship with a free conscience. I may not hide behind the excuse that if he has anything against me he had better come and tell me. That will not help me, if I sit in church and seek in vain for a blessing. It is my obligation to go to him and remove that obstacle as fast as I can. Even before matters grow worse, as Jesus points out in the verses that follow.

The other passage I already referred to before. This is found in Luke 17:1-5. There Jesus tells us that it is impossible among sinful saints that offences should not arise. (The word for offences, from which our word 'scandal' comes, means literally 'to lay a snare', 'to put a stumbling block in someone's way', and thus cause someone to sin). Yet, Jesus goes on to say, even if offences are bound to arise among us, woe to that man who is guilty of putting a snare, or laying a stumbling block on our way. It were better for that man that he be killed, that a millstone be tied about this neck and he be cast into the sea, rather than that he should cause one of Christ's little ones to stumble into sin. Upon that Jesus admonishes us: Take heed to yourselves. Beware. Keep a sharp look-out for yourselves, for you are also sinful persons who can readily offend one of God's children. Whereupon He instructs us: "If thy brother trespass against thee, rebuke him; and if he repent, forgive him." That erases the slate clean. "And if he trespass against thee seven times a day, and seven times in a day turn again to thee, saying, I repent; thou shalt forgive him." No wonder that the disciples, upon hearing that - seven times a day - pleaded with the Lord: We need a lot of faith for that, "Lord, increase our faith."

Who can live up to such a high standard of forgiveness and mercy? Only he who by the grace of God knows that God must forgive him for more than seven times a day, even every hour, every minute, every second of his sinful life.

This is entirely in harmony with the completely neglected passage in Matthew 18:15-17. There Jesus meets the common argument, what if I go to the guilty party and he makes a fool of me? What if he won't listen? What if he refuses to confess his wrong? True, that does not make matters easier for us, but it does not give us an escape from our responsibility. The first road we took to point out his wrong to him was a steep one. The next road is still

steeper. Jesus tells us to go to him again, and again. Even to take witnesses along with us, to show that we are in the right and he is in the wrong. And, if all that should fail, the sin has grown to a point where it becomes a consistory matter. Easy? No. A privilege? Yes! For it is the only way that the barrier of sin can be broken down, reconciliation can be attained through the blood of the cross. We are delivered from the snares of sin and God is glorified!

Study Outlines on I Samuel

by Rev. R. Hanko

A. Eli and his sons.
   1. The wickedness of Hophni and Phinehas:
      a. What does Scripture mean when it calls Eli's sons "Sons of Belial?" I Sam. 25:17; II Kings 21:10-13; II Cor. 6:15.
      b. What particular sins did these men commit in the tabernacle?
      c. Why were their sins so serious? Ex. 39:30, 31; Ez. 44:23.
   2. Eli's failure to discipline his sons:
      a. What was Eli's responsibility as father? Deut. 21:18-21; Prov. 23:13, 14.
      b. What was his responsibilty as High Priest? II Chron. 26:16; John 2:13-22.
   3. The coming of the prophet to Eli:
      a. Upon whom did the prophet lay the blame for the wickedness of Hophni and Phinehas?
      b. What punishment was prophesied against Eli's house?
      c. Was this punishment fulfilled? I Sam. 4:11; 22:9-20; 23:6; I Kings 2:27.
   4. Application:
      a. What lesson can we learn from Eli's failure as a father?
      b. How does Eli's failure as High Priest point to the need for a better High Priest? Heb. 7:26, 27.

B. Samuel called to be a prophet.
   1. The times:
      a. What is meant in 3:1; "the word of the Lord was precious in those days?"
      b. Does the answer to this question have anything to do with Israel's spiritual condition? Amos 8:11-13.

c. What is the significance of Samuel's call to be a prophet? Deut. 18:15-22; Judg. 2:16, 18.

2. Samuel's call:
   a. Why did the Lord call Samuel in the way He did? Chap. 3:7.
   b. What was Samuel's first message as prophet?
   c. What was Eli's reaction to this prophecy? What does this tell us about Eli?
   d. What does 3:19 mean: "The Lord was with him and did let none of his words fall to the ground?" Deut. 18:22.

C. Israel's battles with the Philistines.

1. The battles:
   a. Why did Israel go to fight against the Philistines to whom they had been subject for so long a time?
   b. Was their confidence misplaced?
2. The outcome of the battles:
   a. Why was Israel defeated even though she had the ark along in the second battle? Deut. 28:7, 25; 31:16, 17; I Sam. 7:3; Ps. 78:57-62.
   b. Why did Israel put her confidence in the ark? Was this wrong? Heid. Cat., Lord's Day XXXIV, 94, 95.
   c. What happened when Eli heard the news? What to him was the greatest disaster?
   d. Why was the loss of the ark such a blow to Eli and Israel? Ps. 78:60, 61.
   e. What does the name "Ichabod" mean and why was it given?
   f. Is Ps. 78:60, 61 prophetic? Mark 9:31; 10:33; Luke 24:7; Rom. 4:25; 8:32.

There is available a series of four tapes on the history of the Protestant Reformed Church as told by Rev. C. Hanko, Prof. Hoeksema, Prof. Hanko, and Prof. Decker. This informative collection can be purchased by sending fifteen dollars to:

Kalamazoo Young People's Society
427 Fletcher
Kalamazoo, MI 49007

Bulletin clerks, take notice that the new News Editor is:

Paula Faber
4190 Burton S.E.
Grand Rapids, MI 49506

TRUE REPENTANCE OF SIN

by Rev. J. Slopsema

Repentance is a very important part of the life of a child of God. Apart from repentance of his sins he has no salvation. The Bible makes this very clear. While Jesus was in Perea some came to Him with a report of murder. Pilate, the Roman governor, had murdered a number of Galileans in the temple and had mingled their blood with the sacrafices they had brought. Jesus anticipates their question and answers it. "Suppose ye that these Galileans were sinners above all the Galileans, because they suffered such things? I tell you, Nay: but, except ye repent, ye shall all likewise perish". (Luke 13:1-3) We see the importance of repentance also from Peter's speech on Pentecost. After explaining to the crowds that the wonderful things they had seen and heard were the work of Jesus Christ Whom they had crucified but God had raised, the crowd asks, "Men and brethren, what shall we do?" In response Peter charges them, "Repent and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins." (Acts 2:37-38) Peter emphasizes this same thing a little later to the crowd in the temple who witnessed the healing of the lame man at the temple gate. Peter points out that this man was made whole by Jesus Whom they had crucified but God had raised up. Peter charges them, "Repent ye therefore, and be converted, that your sins may be blotted out." (Acts 3:19) On the basis of these and other passages we can only conclude that repentance is of extreme importance. Unless we repent, we perish. Without repentance there is no forgiveness of sins. Do you repent daily of your sins?

Usually when we think of repentance we tend to think of sorrow. You sin and are sorry. Repentance is grief and remorse over sin. Now this is certainly true. However this is not all. There is more to true repentance than simply sorrow over sin. Besides, not all sorrow experienced in connection with one's sins is necessarily a part of true repentance. Down through the ages many tears have been shed as a result of sin. But more often than not these tears did not lead to the forgiveness of sin but to greater damnation.

That leads us then to the question: what is true repentance of sin? How must we react to our sin that we may find the forgiveness of God and escape the wrath to come?

There are three elements to true repentance. The first element is an acknowledgment of sin. Jesus once told the parable of the Pharisee and the Publican (cf. Luke 18:9-15). According to this parable both a Pharisee and a publican (tax collector) come to the temple of God at the hour of prayer. The publican has only one thing on his mind — his terrible sin. In deep shame and humility he stands in an obscure corner of the temple yard and not even daring to lift up his head prays, "God be merciful to me a

sinner". The Pharisee however does not acknowledge sin. This does not mean that he has no sin. Every man at best is a terrible sinner. This includes the Pharisee too. This simply means that the Pharisee refuses to acknowledge his sin. He has blinded himself to his sin. He lives in a dream world in which all he does is perfect. And so instead of acknowledging his sin before God he thanks God that he is not a sinner as other men are. The one therefore acknowledges his sin, the other does not. With the one we find repentance, with the other we do not. It is also interesting to note that Jesus concludes this parable by saying, "I tell you, this man (i.e. the publican) went down to his house justified rather than the other."

When we speak of acknowledging our sin we mean three things. First, we must acknowledge our sins to ourselves. This is very difficult to do. It hurts our pride to admit even to ourselves that we have failed or done something wrong. Consequently, we tend to justify ourselves. How conveniently we blame circumstances or others for our own sinful behavior. Or perhaps we are inclined to minimize the seriousness of our own sins. What others do may be terrible; but what we do is not quite so bad. Let us call this what it really is — a refusal to repent!

Secondly, we must acknowledge our sins to one another. This is called confession of sin. In James 5:16 we are told, "Confess your faults one to another." How often do we not hurt one another by our actions? How thoughtless we often are and selfish in our dealings with one another! When we are made aware of such sinful behavior we must readily acknowledge this to the person against whom we have sinned and seek his forgiveness. This too is difficult. It requires great humility. But if we refuse we have not repented.

Finally, we must acknowledge our sins to God. All sin is sin against God. And He is terribly offended by our sin. Therefore we must come to God in prayer every day and acknowledge our sins to Him. This confession of sin must in turn be specific, not general. We must not be satisfied with a general admission of sin before God. We have commited specific sins. These sins we must acknowledge before God one by one as we are made aware of them. To fail to do this for whatever reason is to fail to repent of one's sins.

The second element of true repentance is sorrow over sin. There are many who will readily acknowledge both to themselves and to others the fact of their sin but who feel no sorrow for sin. This becomes evident by their constant boasting of their sins and their delight in telling others of their sins. This is quite obviously not repentance. True repentance involves sorrow and grief over sin. One of the words that the New Testament uses for repentance means to change one's mind. Repentance is a change of mind about one's sin. This certainly implies regret and sorrow over our sinful behavior.

In this connection we must be made aware of the fact that not all sorrow connected to sin is the sorrow of true repentance. The Apostle Paul makes this clear in II Cor. 7:10, "For godly sorrow worketh repentance to salvation not to be repented of: but the sorrow of the world worketh death". Notice, there is a godly sorrow in connection with sin and the sorrow of the world. The world also sorrows because of sin. But their sorrow is altogether different than the sorrow of the godly. This is quite evident from the fact that the one works repentance to salvation whereas the other works death.

What is the difference between the two? In general the sorrow of the world is sorrow over the consequences of sin whereas the sorrow of the godly is sorrow over sin itself. There are many men today in the prisons of our land who are very sorry. It's probably true however that very few are really sorry that they committed

their crimes. They are rather sorry that they got caught, that they must suffer the consequences of their crimes. Were they to be released and given the assurance that any further crimes would be without penalty, they would gladly and without a second thought repeat their crimes over and over again. In like manner there are many who have the same kind of sorrow when it comes to their sins. All sin has consequences. There is not so much as one sin that you can commit without suffering some bad consequences. God is not mocked. Whatever a man sows, that shall he also reap (Galatians 6:7). Now there are many who when they sin are very sorrowful. But all too often they are not sorry about their sin but about the bad consequences of sin. They have sinned and are sorry because they know that God sends sinners to hell. And they are deathly afraid of hell. Or they sin and are sorry because their sin has ruined their reputation or caused them embarassment or got them into trouble of some kind. This is sorrow over the consequences of sin. It is also the sorrow of the world that works death. It is good to examine every day the sorrow we have when we sin. To the degree that this characterizes our sorrow we have not repented.

True sorrow of the godly is sorrow over sin itself. It is a sorrow one experiences when he knows that he has offended someone whom he loves. Through our sin we offend God. Every sin we commit is very offensive to God. The more spiritually mature a person becomes the more he becomes aware of that. Now, if a person sincerely loves God this will cause him to grieve. Think of all that God has done for us! He has chosen us to be His people. He has sent His only Son to die for us. He has showered us with blessings too numerous to count. And how do we respond? In our weaknesses we rebel against Him. We ignore His will. We trample under foot His Word. How offensive is our sin to Him. If you love God at all this will cause you to grieve. You will come to hate your sin. You will be driven to God in prayer to confess your sin, to plead on His mercy and to ask forgiveness for Christ's sake. This is godly sorrow that works repentance to salvation. It is a sorrow that leads us to the cross which is the only ground of our salvation. This is something in which we must grow, for which we must strive.

Finally, true repentance implies a forsaking of one's sin. This is the third element. This element of turning away from sin is implied in the idea of repentance being a change of mind about sin. If one is truly sorrowful for his sin, truly hates his sin for God's sake, this will manifest itself in a turning away from sin. No one has yet to commit a sin that he truly hates with all his being. We may say therefore that this last element is really the test of true repentance. Without a turning away from sin there can be no legitimate claim to repentance.

It is exactly at this point where many of us may experience difficulty. Perhaps there are certain sins into which we very easily fall. They are virtually irresistible. They control us and we are powerless to overcome them. Perhaps it is also the case that every time we fall victim to these sins that we are filled with guilt, grief and sorrow. We resolve never again to walk in them. But before we know it, there we are committing the same sins again and again and again.

What is the problem? The problem is that we have not come really to hate these sins. By nature we love sin. We love all sin. Due to the influence of our sinful nature we may have over the years even cultivated certain sins which we have come especially to love. Repentance means that we have a change of mind about this. We must come to hate these sins with our whole being. Only then can and will we ever be able to overcome them and cleanse our lives of them.

How do we come to this change of mind about sin? How do we learn to hate sin with our whole being so that we are able to turn away from it? We can do this only in the power of God's grace. In and of ourselves we are powerless to turn against our sins. It is all of grace. Therefore if we will truly repent we must daily seek the power of grace to repent. We find this grace in the preaching of the Word, in Bible study and devotions, in prayer. The young person who neglects these means of grace will find that he is powerless to repent of his sins. Nor will he be able to find the glad assurance of salvation in Jesus Christ. This sorry situation describes us only too well, doesn't it? Let us seek God's grace daily that we may truly repent of all our sins. Then we will find true joy as we find the full assurance of our salvation in Jesus Christ.

News From, For and About Our Churches

DOON CHURCH

The Doon congregation rejoices with Mr.

The Doon congregation rejoices with Mr. and Mrs. Gene Van Bemmel in the birth of a daughter, Jill Nicole.

Lois Van Den Top and Myron Klarenbeek were united in marriage April 13.

Leah Bleyenburg, Pamela Blankespoor and Steve Kamps made confession of their faith on April 24.

A Singspiration was held on April 13.

The Young People's Society sponsored a rollerskating party on April 26.

FIRST CHURCH, HOLLAND, MICHIGAN

Mr. and Mrs. B. Ten Broeke were blessed with the birth of a son, Seth Alan.

HOPE CHURCH, WALKER, MICHIGAN

The Hope Choral Society had an Easter Program on April 17.

The Federation Board Sponsored a Sub Supper on March 31 at Hope School.

The congregation rejoices with Mr. and Mrs. John Cleveland in the birth of a son, Michael John; with Mr. and Mrs. Russ Dykstra in the birth of a son, Nathan Dirk; and with Mr. and Mrs. Steve Kerkstra in the birth of a daughter, Jessica Renae.

Membership papers of Miss Shelly Van Meeteren were received from First Church.

The Young People's Society sponsored an Omelet Breakfast and Car Wash on May 7. They also sponsored an Activity Night at the Dow Center at Hope College on May 13.

A Singspiration was held on May 15.

HUDSONVILLE CHURCH

The Hudsonville congregation rejoices with Mr. and Mrs. Gary Holstege in the birth of a son, Ross Alan on March 28; with Mr. and Mrs. Ed Hoekstra in the birth of their son, Ryan Matthew; with Mr. and Mrs. Terry Kamminga in the birth of their daughter, Brooke Ellen; with Mr. and Mrs. Paul Vander Laan in the birth of their daughter, Jamie Lyn; with Mr. and Mrs. Dave Van Haitsma in the

birth of their daughter, Erin Leigh; with Mr. and Mrs. Randy Miedema in the birth of their son, Gerald Lee; and with Mr. and Mrs. Rich Feenstra in the birth of their son, Douglas Kenneth.

The Jr. Young People's Society sponsored a Spaghetti Supper on April 27.

John Mulder and Joan Bodbyl were united in marriage on April 15.

The membership papers of Mr. & Mrs. Zuverink and 1 baptized child were received from Holland; and the papers of Mr. David Van Haitsma were received from First Chr. Ref. of Hudsonville.

HULL, IOWA

Hull received the membership papers of Janet Mouw from the St. Paul Lutheran Church of Sheldon.

Janet Mouw made public confession of faith on April 24.

Gayle Brummel and Terry Bonestroo exchanged wedding vows on April 22.

Hull School held a Visitors Day on April 8. The school was opened to parents, grandparents and friends of the school. The Ladies Guild sponsored a singspiration on April 24.

A Father/Son Banquet was held on March 7.

The Young People sponsored a Car Wash/Bake Sale on March 19.

An Easter Singspiration was held on April 3.

SOUTH HOLLAND CHURCH

Mr. and Mrs. Peter Poortenga were blessed with the birth of a daughter, Deanna Rae; Mr. and Mrs. John Dykshorn were blessed with the birth of a son, Joshua Wayne; and Mr. and Mrs. Keith Bruinsma were blessed with the birth of a daughter, Sheila.

The Ladies Auxilary sponsored a Salad Luncheon on May 4.

An Easter Singspiration was held on April 3.

A Spring Lecture was held on May 16. Rev. Houck spoke on "The History of the King James Bible."

The school band gave a program on May 19.

LOVELAND, COLORADO

Mr. and Mrs. Igor Solanyk made public confession of their faith on February 27.

The membership papers of Richard and Sharon Tolsma and 2 children were received from Edmonton.

The young people sponsored an Easter Singspiration on April 3.

SOUTHEAST

The young people held a Potluck Supper on March 24.

FAITH CHURCH

Faith was blessed with the births of a daughter, Jill Christine, to Mr. and Mrs. David Griffioen; a daughter, Mandy Lynn, to Rev. and Mrs. Bruinsma; a daughter, Christiana, to Mr. and Mrs. Heyboer.

FIRST CHURCH, GRAND RAPIDS

The membership papers of Mrs. Rich Dykstra were received from Cascade Chr. Ref.

The Jr. Young People's Society sponsored a Car Wash/Bake Sale at Adams School on April 23.

Adams Street Chr. School held their all school program on April 22.

ACTIVITIES IN THE GRAND RAPIDS AREA

The Spring Lecture was held on May 5. Rev. Joostens spoke on "The Church's Calling in Missions."

The Men's and Ladies' League Meeting was held on April 12. Prof. Hanko spoke on "Organ Transplant. . .Is it Biblical?"

The Mr. and Mrs. League meeting was held on April 19. Prof. Hanko spoke on "Development in Personal Devotions".

A concert was given by Covenant's band on April 28.

0131
MRS. OSCAR FABER 10
725 BALWIN - ROOM 209
JENISON MI 49428

The Chamber Choir o[illegible] a program in Kalamazoo on May 6.

Hope School's Kindergarten program was May 5.

OUR GIANTS

Goliath was a giant
Whom David came to fight.
This giant defied Israel,
And boasted of his might.
But David came up boldly,
And with his little sling
Declared that he to Israel
A victory would bring.
Now David had much courage,
But he had faith as well,
And with a stone the mighty
Philistine giant fell.

We too are faced with giants,
Bad habits, large and small,
And if we are to conquer,
For courage it will call.
But we need more than valor
The victory to see;
Our faith must in Jehovah
The God of Israel be.
For our strength is as nothing,
No battle can we win
Save in the name of Jesus,
The Victor over sin.

Clara Fennema