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FOR PROTESTANT REFORMED YOUTH

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WHO IS CREATIVE?

BEACON LIGHTS

Contents

Editor's Comments - David Harbach 1
EDITORIAL
Proverbs for Young Pilgrims - Who is Creative? - Ed Lotterman 2
TRUTH VS. ERROR
God's Omnipotence - Rev. R. Harbach 3
FOCUS ON CHRISTIAN WOMEN
The Joys of Conception: The Joy of a John (A Gift) - Mrs. H. Brands 7
CRITIQUE - A Look At Selfishness - Ben Wigger 9
Enthusiasm For Covenant Instruction - David Rau 11
Response 13
. . .And Reply 14
What's Happening - Paula Faber 15

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Mrs. H. Brands, Paula Faber, Rev. C. Hanko, Rev. R. Harbach, John Kalsbeek Jr., Bernie Kamps, Rev. D. Kuiper, John Ten Haaf, Dean Wassink, Ben Wigger

Forms 3579 should be returned to:
BEACON LIGHTS
4930 Ivanrest Ave. S. W., Apt. B.
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EDITORIAL OFFICE: Dave Harbach
4930 Ivanrest Ave. S.W., Apt. B,
Grandville, MI 49418

NEWS EDITOR: Paula Faber
4190 Burton S.E., G. R., MI 49506

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SUBSCRIPTION DUES:

MICHIGAN: Grace Faber
4190 Burton S.E., G. R., MI 49506

OUTSIDE MICHIGAN: Vonda Klamer
10143 Wilson Ave. S.W.,
Byron Center, MI 49315

COLLECTIONS: Mike Lotterman
1382 Su-Lew Dr. S.W., G. R., MI 49504

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EDITOR'S COMMENTS

by David Harbach

I failed to keep my promise of putting the answer to "Who Am I?" in the June/July issue. The basic reason for omitting the answer was that I had received only two responses. Since then, three more people have responded, all with correct answers. In all three people from Grand Rapids responded: Dave Moelker (former editor), Mrs. J. M. Faber and Miss Elsie Kuiper; Susan J. Moody writing for her mother Mrs. Myron Moody, Sr. from Skowhegan, Maine; and Mrs. David Watson from New Zealand. Thank you for responding.

I would like to share two thoughtful comments with you. Miss Elsie Kuiper wrote, "I have read this whole issue already and found it very interesting and instructive." Mrs. Watson wrote "Thanks to all those who work so hard to produce this top-quality magazine for our covenant youth; and to those who regularly and faithfully contribute articles of such wholesome topics." Thank you for the encouragement ladies and for the picture of your family Mrs. Watson.

The answer to the puzzle is the "Whale" mentioned in Genesis 1:21; Job 7:12; Ezekiel 32:2; Johan 1:17, 2:1, 2:10 and Matthew 12:40. If you read the poem over again you'll see how all the parts of the poem fit in with the truth gained from the verses of scripture.

The next puzzle is in the form of questions on "Bible Knowledge". Mrs. Dave Moelker thought that a series of papers her daughter Kristi did in school would be of interest to our readers. Her daughter Kristi thought so, too.

BIBLE KNOWLEDGE

1. Which books begin with, "In the beginning . . ."? _____ and _____
2. There are ____ books in the New Testament.
3. How many books of the Bible are names for women? ____ What are they? _____
4. How many books have only one chapter each? ____ What are they? _____
5. Which book has the most chapters? _____ How many? _____
6. Which book does not contain the word "God"? _____
7. There are _____ books in the Old Testament.

In which book would you find:

8. David and Goliath _____
9. The Ten Commandments _____ _____
10. Samson _____
11. Nicodemus _____
12. The battle of Jericho _____
13. The Sermon on the Mount _____
14. The tower of Babel _____

Proverbs for Young Pilgrims

Editorial

WHO IS CREATIVE?

by Ed Lotterman

Prov. 3:19: "The LORD by wisdom hath founded the earth; by understanding hath he established the heavens."

How glorious is the truth of creation!

Jehovah God, infinite, wise, and eternal has founded the heavens and earth in time. Made unto the glory of the Creator, the creature depends upon and is subject to the Creator. And as the potter has power over the clay (Rom 9:21), so also the Creator has control over the creature.

We wouldn't think anything, we wouldn't say anything, we wouldn't do anything in order to contradict the Glory, the Power, or the Wisdom of the Creator, would we?

Scripture tells us how God created. In our proverb we are instructed that wisdom and understanding are the means God used to found the earth and establish the heavens. God's wisdom and understanding caused creation. This must refer to Christ. Prov. 8:22-30 refers to wisdom being a possession of the LORD from everlasting. Wisdom was present when the heavens were prepared (vs. 27). This same wisdom declares in vs. 35 "Whoso findeth me findeth life, and shall obtain favor of the LORD."

And certainly Christ was present at creation. John 1 teaches that the Eternal Word, by Whom all things were made, also became "flesh, and dwelt among us."

Who among us would contradict either in doctrine or in life, that Christ, the Anointed, participated in the work of Creation?

But what is it to create?

Scripture gives us this definition in Rom. 4:17 "calleth those things which be not as though they were." This definition appears in Heb. 11:3 "things which are seen were not made of things which do appear." Ps. 33:9 yields yet another definition: "He spake and it was done, he commanded and it stood fast."

Which creature has such power?

But the clear Scriptural teaching of Creation is contradicted. The Church has long withstood the theory of evolution. Although even today, evolution is presented as fact. Young Pilgrim, you must be on guard against this theory! Many textbooks which you use have concentrated doses of this evil teaching. Nevertheless, we must be aware of and oppose evolution.

Perhaps it is because evolution has received the focus in our attempt to defend the truth of Creation, that other evils have crept in past our peripheral vision. I refer now to our often careless use of the term "to create".

The question above is appropriate. We wouldn't think anything in order to contradict the Glory, the Power, or the Wisdom of the Creator, would we? Such thoughts are rooted in original sin. The serpent beguiles Eve, "And ye

shall be as gods." Ever since the fall of man in Paradise, the creature assumes for himself the power which alone is to be attributed to the Creator.

But how is this power, which belongs to the Creator, denied Him and claimed by the creature?

The "thing to do" today is to be "creative". We participate in "creative crafts" for example, do we not? Or, "creative arts". Or, "creative design". Or, "Creative writing". Moreover, we allude to these various activities, using the term "creative", in such a casual manner that without thinking, spiritually thinking that is, we usurp a power which belongs only to the Creator! Who among us can be creative in writing or crafts, or arts and so on?

Scripture presents a simple fact that God alone can create! When we use Scriptural terms then we ought to use them in a spiritually sensitive manner. Hearing of the creatures' performance of these various activities as being "creative", the spiritually sensitive one covers his ears and shouts "No! I do not want to hear it!"

We ought not to be careless in our attitude toward these things, Young Pilgrims, lest our spiritual sences become dull and we too worship the creature rather than the Creator! (Rom. 1:25) And, understand that this happens, for who receives credit for the product which is produced as a result of these activities which are being termed "creative"?

How serious is this careless use of the term "to create"?

It is this serious, Young Pilgrim, that it is a denial of faith!

The Scriptures maintain that God alone has the power to create. Heb. 11:3 connects this to faith. "Through faith we understand that the worlds were framed by the Word of God, so that things which are seen were not made of things which do appear." When we engage in an activity which today is called "creative", we use things which **do** appear in order to produce a finished product. Then we have not created anything at all.

By faith we believe that "the LORD by wisdom hath founded the earth, by understanding hath he established the heavens." May we maintain this not only in doctrine but also as this truth is revealed in our lives.

Truth vs. Error
GOD'S OMNIPOTENCE

by Rev. R. C. Harbach

"Alleluia! For the Lord God omnipotent reigneth!" (Rev. 19:6).

These words are recorded in that final piece of the vision which begins at Rev. 17:1. There begins the picture and history of Babylon, the Great Whore. In chapter 18 we have her glory and the lament over her ruin. Then in chapter 19:1-10, the doxology to God for her judgment and overthrow. This doxology is sung in three sections by the angels of heaven, the church in glory and again by all the inhabitants of heaven, angels and glorified men. A fourfold

Alleluia (the only place in the NT where this word is found) goes up to heaven in praise to God for His judgment on Babylon. The doxology sounds as loud as all earth's cataracts, as mighty thunderings. The "scene is not upon the earth, but in heaven, and pictures the beginning of the eternal day. By this time the power of Satan has been broken — truly a demonstration of the power of God!" (Weeber in **The Consummation of History**). "Praise ye Jehovah because the Lord God, the Omnipotent One, did reign." The verb receives the emphasis, "did reign the Lord God the Omnipotent!" **Did reign** means back in all past history the Lord God Omnipotent reigned as King in His kingdom of power. The Lord Jesus Christ, the King of kings, the Lord did sit as king on His holy hill of Zion where He has ever since reigned over the church and the world.

In our **Reformed Dogmatics** God's omnipotence is defined as "that virtue according to which He is able to accomplish whatever He pleases." (Ps. 115:3; 135:6). Omnipotence is that perfection of God's being by which He has the power to execute His sovereign, irresistible, invincible will. Charles Hodge says in his **Systematic Theology**, that omnipotence is that "God . . . can do without effort, and by a volition, whatever He wills," and that that "is the highest conceivable idea of power." H. Bavinck, **The Doctrine of God**, says, "God's sovereignty is revealed in His omnipotence . . . He possesses absolute power in regard to everything, so that nothing is able to stay His hand . . . nothing is too hard for Him; all things are possible with Him . . ." A. W. Pink, referring to Hab. 3:4, "there (in His hand, rch) was the **hiding** (rather than the displaying, rch) of His power," says that God's omnipotence is so great, so uncontrollable, so inconceivable, that what He has concealed in His hand is far more of His infinite might than that revealed in His works in nature! "Well may we exclaim, 'Thou hast a mighty arm: strong is Thy hand, high is Thy right hand.' " (Ps. 89:13).

The divine plural name **Elohim** is accurately expressed in the word **Godhead**. The name means, "the Putter forth of all power." **El** means "Mighty One." He is El Elohim, God of gods, or the Mighty of mighties. **El Shaddai** is "the Almighty God." This name, **the Almighty**, appears 31 times in the book of Job (more than in all Scripture), while **Adonai** appears in Job only once (28:28), and **Jehovah** appears there 32 times. (Charnock is in error when he says **Almighty** appears in Job "I think about 32 times (31 is correct) and **Jehovah** but once, Job 12:9" (32 times is correct). Adonai, my Lord is the Master above all who has all in subjection to Himself. **Power** is also the **name** of God. The Son of Man sitting at the right hand of Power (with a capital "P"), reveals God's name to be Power (Dynameoos, from which we get our word, **dynamite**).

God's omnipotence is seen in the creation of the universe, His making it out of nothing. Creation implies and presupposes before its existence **nothing**; providence implies and presupposes **something** in existence. Before the heavens and the earth (Gen. 1:1), there was, as to any creature, nothing; there was no physical matter in existence. Matter is no eternal. No creature has any of God's incommunicable attributes."The eternal Father . . . of nothing made heaven and earth, with all that is in them" (Heidelberg

Catechism, A. 26). "The Father by . . . His Son hath created of nothing, the heaven, the earth and all creatures" (Belgic Confession, XII). This is God calling the things not being as being (Rom. 4:17). Divine omnipotence appears in the providential work of upholding all things in their being by the word of His power (Heb. 1:3). It is seen in His works of redemption, in the incarnation of Christ, in His birth of a virgin (Lk. 1:35, 37); in His miracles, wonders of amazement at the mighty power of God (Mt. 11:5; Lk. 9:43); and "by the power of His Godhead (to) sustain in His human nature the burden of God's wrath" poured out in the death of the cross, then to raise Him from the dead by the exceeding greatness of His power (Eph. 1:19).

This power is original to the nature of God. "Power belongs unto God" (Ps. 62:11), to His very being. This divine power could not be distinct from Himself. (Otherwise His simplicity would be destroyed.) It belongs to Him in the infinite energizing of His essence. Just as the Godhead cannot be communicated to the creature (to make the creature God!), so neither can essential attributes be so communicated. From this it follows that omnipotence cannot be communicated to the humanity of Christ (to make even His humanity deity!). Divine essence is incommunicable to humanity.

The union of the two natures in the divine Person of the Son of God is without confusion of the natures and without any change of them into one another. The divine nature is not turned into the human, nor the human into the divine. These natures are not mixed to form a third, making Christ a **tertuim quid** (a third something). Omnipotence unites the Infinite and the finite together and forever in one Person. If we had not the Bible, nor the Apostles' Creed, nor the Nicene Creed, nor the Athanasian Creed, nor the Chalcedonian Creed (cp. Belgic Confession, IX, last sentence), and had only the works of the philosophers, then our ideas of God and His nature would be confused and shot through with garbled errors, would not stand in the unity of God, nor in the trinity of God, would be caught up in a false monotheism or in polytheism, yet knowing absolutely nothing of the union of the two natures of Christ. Then we would have no more than "science (knowledge) falsely so called" (I Tim. 6:10), or the vagaries (freakish ideas) of philosophy, either that of false humility's Agnosticism or false pride's Gnosticism.

We rightly say that God's power is infinite, that He is almighty, and so can do anything and everything; for nothing with Him is impossible. On this basis it is said that God's power is absolute. But at this point we must be careful. For we do not mean that, (1) God can do the contradictory, (2) He can do anything contrary to His being and nature (contrary to Himself). Nor do we feel completely satisfied in saying, "there are some things which God cannot do." It might be better to say that since God will not and cannot do anything contrary to Himself, that there are some things which simply cannot be done; they are impossible. To make the contradictory true is impossible. It is impossible to cause a thing to be and not to be at the same time, or to make good and evil one and the same thing, or to make a thing not to have been that has been. "It is impossible for God to lie" (Heb. 6:18), for this would be contrary to Himself,

and "He cannot deny Himself" (II Tim. 2:13). God cannot die; He cannot love sin; He cannot make a stone so heavy that He cannot lift it, for that would be to make another infinite. God cannot make another God.

God, Who created the heaven, earth and all creatures "of nothing" did so by a mere word. "God said, Let there be light . . . God said, Let there be a firmament." This word is simply the **thought** of what God willed, expressed in command form: "He spake and it was done, He commanded, and it stood fast" (Ps. 33:9); "He commanded and they were created" (Ps. 148:5). The moment He willed it, they were created. This is God's creative calling. "He calls those things which are not, as if they were" (Rom. 4:17), or "calls the things not being as (into) being." To create is to call into being. This is God's omnipotence. "Let there be light" is the cause of that creature; "and there was light" is the effect. By one word (act) of His omnipotent will the world came into being. The words, "Let there be light, and there was light" are literally, "Let be light, and let be light!" (yehi or vayehi or!) Notice the same words repeated with only the conjunction connecting them, showing that in the very instant of the utterance, of the thought, of the divine word, light leaped out of darkness into being!

Islam was spread over the world by horse-power, army-power and sword power. Christianity uses not military forces or tactics, has no purpose to subject men but to God only, covets not the property of others, nor the riches of cities; does not invade the rights or rulers, nor the liberties of the populace. The gospel changes men's hearts, not necessarily their government, ransoms men's souls rather than to enslave them. The gospel came not with the material powers of the world, but with the powers of the world to come (Heb. 6:5), namely, the death, resurrection, ascension and coming again of Christ, the mighty God! Islam conquered a tottering, effeminate, decaying world (such as our nation now is). Yet world-wide the gospel stands in the true church right alongside of Islamism in whatever countries it is found. The kingdom of Satan will not gradually fade away, but continue to the end of the world when then he and his forces will be cast into the lake of fire (Rev. 19). Papists falsely sing of their Pope, "He's got the whole world in his hands." For the infallible Word tells us that the Father has given all things into Christ's hands! (Jn. 13:3). Falsely also sings any particular race or government when it insists, "We shall overcome — some day!" The redeemed Church of Christ alone is destined to win the day: Thou art, O God, our boast, the glory of our power;

Thy sovereign grace is e'er our fortress and our tower.
We lift our heads aloft, for God, our Shield, is o'er us;
Through Him, through Him alone whose presence goes before us,
We'll wear the victor's crown, no more by foes assaulted,
We'll triumph through our King, by Israel's God exalted.

". . . the more fully and thoroughly God's people are instructed in the true knowledge of God, the more efficient they will become in the holy, spiritual art of prayer." p. 12, **In The Sanctuary**, Rev. H. Hoeksema

Concerning the Lord's Prayer: "We may notice that the prayer presupposes a certain subject and a certain standpoint of that subject: the Christian as he stands in the midst of this present world.." p. 22, **In The Sanctuary, Rev. H. Hoeksema**

". . . the sense of our real need is quite different from what we usually, in our earthly-mindedness and carnality, conceive it to be."

p. 14, **In The Sanctuary**, Rev. H. Hoeksema

The Joys of Conception

Focus on Christian Women

THE JOY OF A JOHN [A GIFT]

by Mrs. H. Brands

The ages and ages of repetition cannot dull the beauty and excitement of the common scene.

A young husband and his wife, after all the exhausting hours of labor are finished, forget the pangs of childbirth in the wonder of viewing their new baby. A "first" baby maybe holds the most charm and mystery and wonder in experience, but each additional baby also holds its own unique wonder and mystery. A real, living, breathing human person is this baby! Bone of our bones and flesh of our flesh. Even if we have studied every book on birth available to understand what is happening, the mystery and wonder and uniqueness of a baby's birth is unsurpassed.

And as a Christian husband and wife experience this thrill of the birth of a baby, what are their thoughts?

I cannot even imagine a Christian going through this experience without one thought being uppermost: "What a gift God has given us!" For that's exactly what each baby is: a gift. No amount of family planning, no amount of human cleverness can produce a baby; a baby is a **gift**, a gift of God.

This is one reason why I like the name "John" - ancient though the name is - and all its variations so well. Anyone studying our family names will see "John" in several forms: Jon, Jonathan, Jeanne, Janelle. We have also used "Nathan" and "Dorothea", names with similar etymologies. All of these have the meaning of "gift" or "gift of Jehovah" or "gift of the sovereign God." I find it impossible to realize that I am pregnant or to go through childbirth without this being my overwhelming realization: God is giving to us a gift, a precious gift.

What then of the non-Christian,

the person who does not love God? What can he feel at a moment such as this?

The worldly person will feel a similar excitement at the wonder of life, but his excitement will lack the holy wonder of Godliness. The unbeliever looks at his new child and says, "Aha! Our planning paid off! Didn't we do a great job? And now . . . once more . . . one boy and one girl is our goal." His thoughts, though excited and even marveling, are all self-centered and fail in any sense to see the work of God in the birth.

Furthermore, the excitement of the moment of birth soon wears off in the daily drudgery and demands which a baby presents. Then all the baby "gives" its parents are sometimes, problems — problems — problems. Sometimes a responsive child of the world gives his parents a sense of wellbeing by a natural affection, but never can worldly parents experience the holy wonder of knowing that God has given them a holy gift.

God's gift is not just a gift to the parents of the child but to the entire Church. As Christian parents hold their newborn child, much of their wonder lies in this thought: "Through my children God promises to build His Church! Though I am a sinner, worthy only of hell, yet He loves me and will from my seed build His Church in Christ. What a gift of grace!"

For this reason, too, the immediate desire of Christian parents is to bring that new baby to the church for baptism. The baby is not theirs, not really; he is God's child. The baptism, although it may occur two or three weeks after birth, is really a part of the baby's birth. It is acknowledging before all God's people that God has added another child to His Church, to the realm of grace, that this is His child, a gift to us of God.

What a joy is such a birth for a child of God! If in pride we brag up ourselves, marvel at what a beautiful baby "we" have brought into this world, glory in our expectations of this baby's potential for being smarter than all other babies who ever lived, then there is only carnal, worldly excitement. But if we recognize God at work, then this birth with all its excitement humbles us, draws us into prayer, and leads to new joy in God's works.

This wonder of birth being God's work is something a Christian woman experiences so keenly. The moment she realizes she is pregnant, she cannot help but feel that something is being done in her—not her own doing, but a gift. **She** could not in **her** own power create that life in her; it's a gift! And as she goes through childbirth, the very pangs of birth reinforce this to her: **she** cannot give life to that struggling baby; **she** is so weary; no, as she helplessly experiences the pains of birth, **God** brings forth a living child! Birth, in its physical as well as spiritual aspects, is the work of God from start to finish.

We as Christians rejoice in the conception and birth and rearing of our children. For we see God at work, in us and through us, physically and spiritually, giving us the personal gift of usefulness in His Church and giving to the Church new life, building Christian homes and building His Church. We joy in His work and in His using of us in performing His work. May God make us humbly dependent on Him alone so that our joy may have a sure, lasting foundation.

Critique

A LOOK AT SELFISHNESS

by Ben Wigger

All of us are old enough to know that there are many serious problems which the world as a whole faces seemingly without any solutions in sight. And we all know that, besides these problems, there are also many problems which we also face on a daily basis. This world and our own sinful nature constantly plague us, and we live in sin from day to day.

One of these problems which we have to deal with, both in our own lives as well as in the lives of others, is the sin of selfishness. When you stop and analyze it, it seems that this sin of selfishness is one of our most serious problems, and to be delivered from is one of our greatest needs.

On the one hand, we Christians have by Grace been given the capacity to be so much to each other. We can be kind, loving, considerate, and helpful to one another. But all too often we do just the opposite and become harsh, inconsiderate, hurtful, and utterly selfish.

All of us are plagued by this sin to a greater or a lesser degree. The sin of selfishness does not have to be taught or learned. We all possess it from birth as a result of the fall of our first parents, Adam and Eve. Just stop and consider a small child for a moment. They are classic examples of this. They know how to whine, pine, pout and throw temper tantrums to get their own selfish way.

Be honest with yourself for just a moment, and you will have to agree that by nature we all care more about ourselves than we do about others. We are often more than willing to lie, cheat, steal, injure, take advantage of, and even crush one another to get our own way.

The Word of God gives us many different accounts of the incredible lengths that both wicked men as well as believers would go to and how much pain they would inflict on others to get their own way. King Ahab and King David are both good illustrations of this very fact.

Ahab wanted Naboth to sell him his vineyard so it could be added to the palace complex. When Naboth refused to sell to Ahab, Ahab had Naboth killed so that he could have the inheritance of Naboth. The heartbreak, the pain, and the grief that Naboth's family suffered was of no concern to Ahab; having his own way was all that mattered.

Another example of selfishness at work is that of David taking Uriah's wife. David, as the king, lacked nothing. He should have been happy for Uriah because his wife was fair and lovely. But the sin of selfishness took hold of David and he was no longer content not to have Uriah's wife. David wanted his own way and he even had to resort to murder to get it. Uriah was entitled to better treatment from the king. All that David did in this regard was steeped in selfishness.

You have no doubt seen it in your

own life, as well as in these examples from Scripture, that when love and concern for others is lacking, selfishness soon follows.

Selfishness is a boy saying "I'll take my ball and go home if I can't pitch". It's an employer squeezing his employees for all he can get and paying them less than they are worth. It is a young person with the ability to help, refusing to help someone in need.

Selfish people are the root cause behind every home which is broken up by divorce. Because of it children are abused, women are raped, businesses are broken into, prisons are filled, and the innocent victims are injured.

Selfishness is the root cause of all relationship problems, whether it's between a criminal and the state, an employer and his employees, a husband and his wife, a teenager and his parents, a teenager and his or her friends, or whatever. We are all selfish by nature.

What we are really doing is shoving God aside and setting ourselves up as the only reason for our being. What a terrible mistake to make! And thanks be to God for delivering us, His chosen ones, from such a wicked action.

Now of course there is nothing wrong with striving to improve ourselves. But when all we think about is "self", we are way off base. There is a world of difference between a person who cares deeply about the happiness of others as well as his own, and the person who cares only about himself. One finds happiness and fulfillment through giving, the other finds emptiness through getting.

The only one who can change all of this in our hearts is, of course, Jesus Christ. When He enters our hearts He makes us a new creature, old things have passed away and all things have become new.

This does not mean, however, that with Christ in our hearts and lives every shread of selfishness is forever erased. We will have to wait for glory for that fact to become reality. However, we Christians nevertheless wish it were so, but Scripture and our own experience teach us otherwise. But by God's grace in our hearts we yield ourselves more and more to His control.

Some people have the mistaken idea that if they don't protect their own rights, if they don't look out for themselves, they will never be happy. But just the opposite is true. The person who lives to please Christ and keep His commandments, who pours out his life in the service of others, is the one who finds fulfillment and peace.

Jesus said: "He that loveth his life (lives it unto himself) shall lose it; but he that loseth his life for my sake (devotes it to the service of Christ) shall find it." Only as we die unto ourselves and devote our lives to the service of Christ and of others can deliverance from selfishness be achieved.

The quality of our life here that we enjoy and the happiness we bring to others depends on the spirit by which we are dominated, the Spirit of Christ or the spirit of self.

Concerning prayer: ". . . I may mention especially three elements that are paramount: true humility, truth in our inmost heart, and childlike confidence."

p. 15, **In The Sanctuary**,Rev. H. Hoeksema

ENTHUSIASM FOR COVENANT INSTRUCTION

by David Rau

Another school and society year is upon us. We are all undoubtedly delighted for this opportunity to study God and His creation. We can hardly wait to talk to our friends about spiritual matters, to discuss God's Word, to exchange views of the greatness of God, and to listen and learn about God's plan for the church. After all, this is what enthusiasm is all about, isn't it?

Sadly, this probably is not the prevalent attitude. We have a lot of wrong reasons to enjoy the new learning year. Our thoughts are not centered on God, but rather on our social life. Is that girl going to notice me? Will that guy ask me out? Whose clothes have all the appropriate labels stuck on them? These are questions that really do not matter. We are sinning when we seek first the things of this world.

We are continually sinning. We have such an easy time justifying our sins. After all, we cannot attain perfection in this life, so we don't really try. We go carelessly on our sinful way. We casually mock the teachers God has placed in authority over us, even making jokes about them. We forget to listen to God's word- "Let every soul be subject to the higher powers." God is not mocked. Aren't we trying to do just that? Why must we continue in these sins? God's judgment rests upon those who refuse to repent.

We go to the movies and to drinking parties and casually brush these sins aside saying, well, I know I'm sinning, but we have to do something. We can't be perfect all the time. We will straighten out later. Yet scripture says that a drunkard cannot enter the kingdom of heaven: it's that simple. Why can't we understand that? Why can't we live what scripture says? James 1:23 commands "Be ye doers of the Word and not hearers only."

We willingly spend all night in front of the T.V. set and let our minds be rotted with that worthless, mindless, godless drivel; but let a teacher lay a couple of hours of homework on us, and listen to us scream. When is the last night that you studied God's word all evening? What is wrong with us? Are we becoming like the church at Ephesus that lost her first love? (Rev. 2) Doctrinally that church was strong, they defended the truth, and they did good works. Yet because they had lost their first love, God said He would remove their candlestick out of their place except they repented. Have we lost our first love for the truth, and for covenant instruction?

What kind of music do we listen to? Is it God-glorifying? Does it spiritually refresh and nourish us? At rollerskating parties, what do we want to hear? Is it the worst possible popular hits? Oh, we can usually justify ourselves. We are good at that. God doesn't require that, but He does require repentance.

The world around us is very tempting and very sinful. It looks and

feels like such fun. The world says, if it feels good, do it. Wanting to do something is justification for doing it. We also are guilty of this. I felt like doing it so I did it. "It isn't wrong" we say. We have no idea what it is to deny ourselves. We do and we get whatever we want. We forget that as Christians we are to deny ourselves. We hide our true motives under the broad category of Christian liberty. Mark 8:34 "Whosoever will come after me, let him deny himself, take up his cross, and follow me." Are we disciples, followers of Christ? Then deny yourself the pleasures and lusts of this world.

Just because we go to church twice on Sunday, attend society, and go to Christian schools is no guarantee of heaven. God commands us to walk as Christians. Not just when we want to, or when those in authority are around, but all the time. We are spiritually harming ourselves when we do not. We often say, just like the children of Israel, the people of God are we, the people of God; and go on our sinful way giving no more than a passing thought to our sin. This is a terrible attitude. God says repent.

Repentance is a godly sorrow for our sins. This involves more than tacking on "Forgive us our sins" at the end of our prayer. Our sins should bother us so much that we cannot fall asleep at night because of them - so that finally with tears streaming down our faces, we go before the throne of grace saying, forgive, oh Lord, forgive this wretched man that I am. We must hate our sin, not desire to continue in it. Only then do we come to a realization of our forgiveness: then we can find peace with our God.

We have to learn that it is possible to have good, clean, God-glorifying fun without joining in the world's sins. We seem to think at times that the only way to have fun is to sin. We had better forget that notion. Does this mean that we have to sit around all the time studying the Bible? No, but we should do a whole lot more of that than we do. We have to realize that being a Christian is hard work.

In Matt. 25:14-30 Jesus instructs us in the parable of the talents. In it we learn that we have a responsibility to use the gifts God gives us to the best of our ability and to God's glory. Further, we learn that Christ, the master, gives His people work to do. Christ leaves none of His people idle. We are to work for the glory of God and for the good of our fellow Christians. We are not to take the gifts God has given unto us, and hide them, or even just preserve them, but rather, we must develop them. This is our calling in our spiritual lives, and our calling as students.

Your teachers will help you develop your talents. Give the teachers your full respect. They have devoted their lives to the cause of covenant education. They are not perfect, but bear with their weaknesses. Listen to what they have to say. God has placed them over you for a reason.

God commands us in II Timothy 2:15 "Study to show thyself approved". This involves work. Being a Christian is not something that just mysteriously happens. It must involve a lot of hard work on our part. Do not neglect your personal devotions. We have to do things that by nature we don't want to do. The only way we will ever do them is through God's strength in us. The only way to receive the strength is through the preaching and diligent study. Only then can we say with the apostle Paul, "I have fought a

good fight, I have finished my course, I have kept the faith: Henceforth there is laid up for me a crown of righteousness.

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"Briefly, prayer is the activity of the believer whereby he acknowledges the living God as the sole and overflowing fountain of all good and approaches that fountain with the earnest desire to drink from its blessed water of life."

p. 12, **In The Sanctuary,** Rev. H. Hoeksema

RESPONSE . . .

Dear Rev. Houck:

We are writing regarding your article entitled, "Hannah's Prayer for Motherhood" found in the May issue of the **Beacon Lights.**

We question the spiritual encouragement is has for those who are kept, by God's will, from having children. We feel there is little comfort in this article for those who have been praying for years to be given covenant children. It seems you do not fully understand this text in the light of the whole of scripture. Your statements regarding the fact that Hannah had been given no children, "There could be nothing worse than that. How could she be happy? How could she eat and drink? . . . her life was unfulfilled . . . as long as she was childless, she could not rejoice." We feel these statements are not true. The Bible teaches to live apart from God is death. **That** is worse - to be separated from God - to be reprobate is worse than not being given children.

Your statement that not having children is an affliction, yes, that it is, but the Child of God prays for grace to endure this affliction and that we may learn to be content in whatever state we are in. (Philippians 4:11) Scripture teaches us that we are His and we have been washed by His blood - that we are saved through the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ our Lord.

We **must** rejoice when God's children are born in the Church in the sphere of the covenant. This means whether those children are born to us individually or to other covenant couples in the Church. We rejoice that God continues His covenant in the continued line of generations to be our God and we His people. Therefore, the responsibility to raise up our children in the fear of the Lord is not only the responsibility of the parents but of all those in the Church.

Yes, young women must pray for motherhood but they also must pray, "Thy will be done" for "We know that all things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are called according to His purpose." (Romans 8:28)

In Christ's Love,
Mr. & Mrs. Bruce Van Solkema

. . . AND REPLY

Dear Bruce and Rosanne,

Greetings in the name of Jesus Christ our Lord and Savior, Who is our only comfort in life and death.

Please forgive me for taking so long to answer your letter. I have been suffering from a ruptured disc in my back and therefore have been unable to sit and type.

If I understand your letter properly, you have two objections to my article, "Hannah's Prayer for Motherhood." First you question whether the article is a spiritual encouragement to those who have no children. Secondly you question whether I understand the text in I Sam. 1 in the light of the whole of Scripture. Specifically you feel that my statements about Hannah's opinion of her childless condition are wrong.

I hope that the following points will clarify my position and also help you see that my article is in harmony with Scripture and therefore ought to be edifying to all of God's people.

1. The general rule for the believing wife is that she be a mother who, by God's grace, bears and raises children of the Covenant. I Tim. 2:15 "Nevertheless she shall be saved in childbearing, if they continue in faith and charity and holiness with sobriety." I Tim. 5:14 "I will therefore that the younger women marry, bear children, guide the house, give none occasion to the adversary to speak reproachfully." Childbearing is the way of life which God has ordained for the wives of the Church. This, then, ought to be their desire and prayer. This is the emphasis of my article.

2. There are exceptions to this general rule. Children are given by God (Ps. 127:3) and sometimes God closes the womb so that a woman is barren. I certainly acknowledge this in my article. I say, "He gives and He withholds according to His good pleasure. If Hannah was to have the child she so dearly wanted, then God must do it."

3. I did not deal with barrenness in detail because the emphasis of the text (I Sam. 1) is motherhood. Besides that, the worldly attitude of many women (who refuse to have children) demands that we emphasize the duty of believing wives to be mothers.

4. Barrenness must be viewed as an affliction sent by God which does indeed cause much grief and sorrow.

a. This was true of Hannah. Words such as "grieved", "bitterness", "affliction", "sorrowful in spirit" are used to describe her condition. (See I Sam. 1:8, 10, 11, 15.)

No, Hannah's condition was not worse than going to hell. That however is not the point. As a believer bound for glory, she considered her condition to be a great affliction. She was looking for the promised Seed and longed to be a mother in Israel.

b. This was true of other barren women of the Church. See Sarah Gen. 16:12, Rebekah Gen. 25:21, Leah Gen. 30:31-32, and Elizabeth

Luke 1:7 & 24 - 25.

c. Isa. 54:1 refers to the joy of fruitfulness over against the sorrow of barrenness.

Thus sorrow is indeed a proper and natural response to this affliction even today. It is proper to pray that this affliction be removed if it be God's will (I Sam. 7:11, Gen. 25:21). Even a barren woman ought to long for motherhood.

5. In the midst of the sorrow of this affliction, the godly also are comforted and filled with the peace and joy of their salvation. This is the way it is with all affliction. It comes from the fatherly hand of our Covenant God and is for our good and our salvation. The sorrow of barrenness does not conflict with the joy of our salvation. We are all saved through the sufferings of this life. (I Peter 4:13 & Rom. 8:17).

6. Thus, regardless of our condition, regardless of the affliction God sends to us, we must learn to be content. We submit to the sovereign will of God for us.

I believe that these points demonstrate that my article is in harmony with all of Scripture and therefore ought to be edifying to all. Even a barren woman ought to rejoice in and agree with an article that presents the teaching of Scripture on motherhood.

I hope that this will be helpful to you. May the Lord bless you as you consider these things once again.

In the service of our Lord,
Rev. Steven Houck

WHAT'S HAPPENING

by Paula Faber

NEWCOMERS:

God Blessed:

-Mr. and Mrs. G. Gaastra, of Redlands Hope Church, with a son, Scott Allen, on May 20.

-Mr. and Mrs. R. Van Voorthuysen of Redlands Hope Church with a son, Mark Everett, on May 30.

-Mr. and Mrs. G. Hoekstra of Hull Church, with a daughter.

-Mr. and Mrs. R. Grevengoed, of Hull Church, with a daughter.

-Mr. and Mrs. C. Zandstra, of South Holland Church, with a daughter, Dana Joy.

-Rev. and Mrs. A. den Hartog, in Singapore, with a son.

-Mr. and Mrs. J. Hoogendoorn, of Doon Church, with a daughter, Heidi Jo.

-Mr. and Mrs. P. Van Egdom, of Doon Church, with a son, Joel Glendon.

-Mr. and Mrs. B. Rutgers, of First Church in Grand Rapids, with a daughter, Sandra Lynn.

-Dr. and Mrs. D. Looyenga, of First Church in Grand Rapids, with a daughter, Caitlin Erin.

-Mr. and Mrs. L. Bruinsma, of Redlands Hope Church, with a son,

Craig Dean, on May 7.
-Mr. and Mrs. T. Thompson, of First Church, in Grand Rapids, with a son, Timothy John.
-Mr. and Mrs. C. Schimmel, of Hudsonville Church, with a son, Mitchell David on May 18.
-Mr. and Mrs. M. Zuverink, of Hudsonville Church, with a son, Ross Michael, on May 2.
-Mr. and Mrs. H. Langerak, of Hope Church, with a son.
-Mr. and Mrs. J. Heys, of Loveland Church, with a daughter, Sonya Ann.
-Mr. and Mrs. P. Dykshorn, of South Holland Church, with a son, Nicholas Charles.
-Mr. and Mrs. D. Kamminga, of Hudsonville Church, with a son, Ryan James.
-Mr. and Mrs. R. Doezema, of First Church in Grand Rapids, with a son, Keith Robert.
-Mr. and Mrs. H. Rutgers, of Byron Center Church, with a son.
-Mr. and Mrs. J. Kol, of Byron Center Church, with a son.
-Mr. and Mrs. B. Zandstra, of First Church in Grand Rapids, with a daughter, Patricia Lynne.
-Mr. and Mrs. B. Kamps, of Hudsonville Church, with a son, Justin Eugene.
-Mr. and Mrs. D. De Vries, of Grandville Church, with a daughter, Kari Lynn.
-Mr. and Mrs. J. Bol, of Faith Church, with a son, Adam Kent.
-Mr. and Mrs. F. Iwema, of South Holland Church, with a daughter, Sarah Lynn.
-Mr. and Mrs. Randy Boone, of Southwest Church, with a daughter, Michelle Lynn on March 12.
-Mr. and Mrs. J. Kuiper, of Southwest Church, with a daughter, Amanda Joy, on April 12.
-Mr. and Mrs. R. Feenstra, of Southwest Church, with a son, Gerald Randal, on April 13.
-Mr. and Mrs. D. Butler, of Southwest Church, with a daughter Tammy Joy, on May 4.
-Mr. and Mrs. G. Boverhof, of Southwest Church, with a son, Brent Allen, on May 25.
-Mr. and Mrs. D. Bodbyl, of Redlands Church, with a daughter Amanda Mae, on June 4.
-Mr. and Mrs. J. Jabaay, of Redlands Church, with a son, David James, on June 5.
-Mr. and Mrs. B. Meelker, of Redlands Church, with a son, Brent Jacob, on July 6.
-Mr. and Mrs. P. Van Baren, of South Holland Church, with a son.
-Mr. and Mrs. N. Kooiker, of Hull Church, with a son, Casey Allen.

MEMBERSHIP TRANSFERS:

-Hope Church received the papers of Mrs. M. Kamps from the First Netherlands Reformed Church.
-Hope Church received the baptismal papers of Miss Brenda Everse, from the First United Methodist Church of Holland.
-Hope Church received the papers of Mr. David Gunnink, from the Coopersville Christian Reformed Church.
-Hope Church of Redlands received the papers of Mr. and Mrs. A. Karsemeyer, from our Faith Church.
-Hope Church received the papers of Mr. Ryan Feenstra from our Southwest Church.
-South Holland Church received the papers of Mr. Paul De Young from the First Reformed Church in South Holland.
-First Church of Grand Rapids received

the papers of Mr. and Mrs. J. Poortvliet, from the Lowell Christian Reformed Church.

-Hope Church received the papers of Mr. James Towie Smith from the LaGrave Ave. Christian Reformed Church.

-Byron Center Church received the papers of Rev. and Mrs. B. Gritters and family.

-Hope Church of Redlands received the papers of Mr. Brian Blyenberg from our Edgerton Church.

-Grandville Church received the papers of:

-Mr. and Mrs. Carlyle Miersma from our Hope and Hudsonville Churches.

-Mr. and Mrs. Mitchell Dick from First Church.

-Mr. and Mrs. Rich Dykstra and son Nathan from our First Church.

-Mr. Jim Vander Woude from our Loveland Church.

-Hudsonville Church received the papers of Mrs. Jill Lubbers from our Hope Church.

-Redlands Church received the papers of Mr. and Mrs. Dennis Griess and family from our Loveland Church.

-Southeast Church received the papers of Miss Ann Veldman and Mrs. Nell Philips from our First Church.

Grandville Church received the papers of:

-Mr. and Mrs. Mitchell Dick from our First Church in G. R.

-Mr. and Mrs. R. Dykstra from our First Church in G. R.

-Rev. and Mrs. J. Kortering and two baptized daughters, Ellen and Carol from our Loveland Church.

-Mr. and Mrs. Bert Maring from our Faith Church.

-Mr. and Mrs. R. Van Til and 3 baptized children from our Southwest Church.

-Mr. and Mrs. Rich Van Til and 2 baptized children from our Southwest Church.

Hudsonville received the papers of:

-Mr. and Mrs. D. Vander Schaaf from our Southeast Church.

-Mr. and Mrs. W. Clason and 4 baptized children from our Southeast Church.

-Mr. and Mrs. B. Dykstra and 2 baptized children from our Hope Church.

-Mr. and Mrs. C. Kamps and 4 baptized children from our Faith Church.

Faith Church received the papers of:

-Mr. and Mrs. G. Scholten and Faith from our First Church in Holland.

-Mr. and Mrs. R. Bos and 3 sons from our First Church in G. R.

Byron Church received the papers of:

-Mrs. Joan Noordyke from our First Church in G. R.

CONFESSION OF FAITH:

-Karen Buiter and Judith Poortenga made public confession of faith on July 1 in South Holland Church.

-Mr. Tim Thompson made public confession of faith on May 6 in First Church of Grand Rapids.

-Mr. Victor Solanyk made public confession of faith on July 1 in Hope Church.

-Mrs. M. Kamps made public confession of faith on July 1 in Hope Church.

-Kathy Feenstra and Julie Van Dyke made public confession of faith on May 13, in Southwest Church.

-Tim Hoving, Leon Kamps, Julie Schipper, Todd Timmerman, and John Van Baren made public confession of faith on June 3 in Southwest Church.

-Cynthia Bonzelaar made public confession of faith on June 24 in First Church of Holland.

-Kenneth Smith, Laurie Kuiper and Arlene Van Den Top made confession of faith on May 27, in Faith Church.
-Twyla Bleyenberg made public confession of faith on July 29 in Hull Church.

MARRIAGES:

-Larry Van Putten and Pamela Pastoor were joined in marriage May 26.
-Phillip Warnicke and Luanne Woudenberg were joined in marriage.
-Marc Kamps and Hilda De Groot were joined in marriage June 24.
-Duane Huisken and Esther Van Baren were joined in marriage on June 29.
-Todd Timmerman and Susan Landheer were joined in marriage on March 17.
-Ron Smit and Cheryl Groenendyk were joined in marriage on April 6.
-Dave Orzechowski and Bernadette Thomas were joined in marriage on June 15.
-Mark Looyenga and Sara Engelsma were joined in marriage on July 20.
-Dave Dekker and Brenda Haak were joined in marriage.
-Gary Visscher and Beth Boer were joined in marriage.
Todd Miedema and Cindy Vander Vennen were joined in marriage on August 9.
-Marc Kamps and Hilda De Groot were joined in marriage.

ACTIVITIES:

-The Young People's Society of Randolph Church sponsored a Easter Singspiration on April 22.
-The Young People's Society of South Holland Church sponsored a Pancake breakfast and car wash.
-The Young People's Society of Hope Church sponsored a weiner roast picnic on May 24.
-The Young People's Society of Hope Church sponsored a casserole supper.
-The Federation Board sponsored a singspiration on May 27 in Hope Church.
-On May 20 the Chamber Choir and their alumni presented a concert in Faith Church.
-The Choir of Covenant had a concert at Hudsonville Church June 3.
-Friday, June 29 the Hope's Sr. Society sponsored a night of sports activities at Grand Valley Field House.
-The Federation Board planned a canoe trip July 14.
-The young people of South Holland and Randolph Churches had an outing in Wisconsin.
-The Young People's Convention took place August 6-10 at Calvin College in Grand Rapids, Michigan. The host society was our First Church in Grand Rapids.

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ARIE GRIFFIOEN
1392 SW-LEW S.W.
GRAND RAPIDS MI 49504
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