BEACON LIGHTS

He lives!

He lives!

Christ Jesus lives today!

You ask me how I
know He lives?

He lives within my heart!

"He Lives" by Alfred H. Ackley

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BEACON LIGHTS STAFF
Editor-in-Chief - Peter D. Faber
Associate Editors - Bruce Miedema
Finance Manager - Brian Kuiper
Secretary - Becky Kalsbeek
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Book Sales - Allen Brummel
Lisa De Young
Lora Ellerbroek
Kristin Engelsma
Steve Lotterman
Melissa Speidel
Thelma Westra

EDITORIAL OFFICE; Peter D. Faber
2241 Anderson Dr.
E. Grand Rapids, MI 49506

COLLECTIONS: Brian Kuiper
4431 Riverbend Dr. S.W.
Grand Rapids, MI 49504

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Address Change: POSTMASTER
Joel Zandstra
6157 Balsam Dr.
Hudsonville, MI 49426

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Book Orders: Beacon Lights,
P.O. Box 375
Jenison, MI 49428

SUBSCRIPTION DUES:
ALL AREAS: Joan Hanko
719 Parkside
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SCHOLARSHIP FUND TREASURER
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1926 Alba
Wyoming, MI 49509

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Self Denial: A Command of Christ

by Brain Kuiper

Hopefully by now you have read my article entitled "Unfaithful Servants" in the March issue. If you haven't read it, please do so before you read this one.

In that article, I wrote about our oftentimes wayward walk as young people. I ended by exhorting God's people to watch and wait, for the coming of Christ is at hand. This isn't an exhortation from myself, but it is an exhortation given to us by Christ Himself in Matthew 24. I would now like to take a closer look at our walk on this earth and at how we must go about this waiting.

What must our walk on this earth consist of? What is it that we must do to separate ourselves from this world? We must want to be different from the world. We must want the world to see that we are different. We must want wayward Christians to become like one of us. We as young people must not hinder other young people from coming to our church because they see that our walk differs from our teachings. If we are a hindrance to others, are we properly walking as Christ has instructed?

Perhaps the most clear instruction that Christ gave to us was when he told us to deny ourselves if we are going to follow Him. He says in Mark 8:34-38, "Whosoever will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow me. For whosoever will save his life shall lose it; but whosoever shall lose his life for my sake and the gospel's, the same shall save it. For what shall it profit a man, if he shall gain the whole world, and **lose his own soul**? Or what shall a man gain in exchange for his soul? Whosoever therefore shall be ashamed of me and of my words in this adulterous and sinful generation; of him also shall the Son of man be ashamed, when he cometh in the glory of his Father with the holy angels." Here plainly and explicitly the Savior tells us how we are to serve Him.

Deny yourself.

Deny. This word typically has an ugly meaning for human beings. Self denial goes directly against our pride. We live in a society which teaches us to look out only for ourselves. We are told to better ourselves in the world in any way possible. We are told to work hard so that we can accumulate and acquire as much material wealth as possible. Every ad or billboard that we see is designed to make us desire earthly possessions. We are constantly looking above ourselves to find someone who is better off than we are. We then try to bring ourselves up to his level.

Therefore, when Christ tells us to deny ourselves, we are faced with a problem. We are told to obey Christ, but on this earth we will be looked at in a funny way. We will be called strange. People, we are like the rich young man of Mark 10 who approached Jesus and asked what was necessary to have eternal life. Jesus tells the man to keep the commandments, and the man tells Jesus that he does this. Jesus then tells the man in verse 21, "One thing thou lackest: go thy way, sell whatsoever thou hast, and give to the poor, and thou shalt have treasure in heaven: and come, take up thy cross, and follow me." We read in vs. 22 that this grieved the man since he was very rich. He did not want to part with his earthly riches in order to have eternal life. Do we too feel that denying ourselves of earthly riches is too great a cost? Is this any cost at all compared to the price which Christ paid for us?

What does this denial consist of? As I have said we must deny ourselves of earthly, material riches. We must also deny ourselves of those things which would associate us with the world or would hinder us from serving God. Notice this point. Anything which would hinder us from serving God.

Therefore, if our entertainment hinders us from serving God, we must deny ourselves of this entertainment. If we have to be home at 10:00 on a Saturday night so we stay awake in church, we must tell our friends this. If we cannot properly date and serve God at the same time, we must break off this relationship. If our clothing causes others to stray from serving God, we must wear other clothing. If we by our language aren't serving God, we must clean it up. If we have been blessed with earthly riches, we must give of these riches to the needy. Jesus didn't exclude young people when he told the young ruler to give to the poor. The list is endless, but I trust that you get the point. People, this self denial must be a constant thing. We must deny ourselves not only of bad things, but also sometimes of things which of themselves aren't bad. Things that normally are good, but for a time may hinder us in our walk. We must always be looking at our lives and seeing if we are living for Christ

This isn't easy. It can be humbling and embarrass-

ing at times. However, we must be proud of our walk. I Peter 5:6, "Humble yourselves therefore under the mighty hand of God, that he may exalt you in due time."

The time to act is now, young people. We must walk the new life of regenerate people even when we are only teenagers. Otherwise when we are 40 or 50, we will look back on our actions as young people and cringe. We will surely be ashamed if we lived a bad life. Rather, let us walk surely even now. Proverbs 10:9, "He that walketh uprightly walketh surely: but he that perverteth his ways shall be known."

The reward is great. However, it isn't immediately realized. Set your sights on the heavenly reward and on heavenly riches, young people. Indulge yourselves with the things necessary for the heavenly kingdom. Then, we will be selfless on earth. We will be living a good life for Christ with our eyes fixed on heaven and on the eternal reward we so eagerly desire.

NOTES

First, a word of thanks to everyone who has written for the BEACON LIGHTS in the past few months. Occasionally an article will appear in my mailbox from someone who we did not even ask to write. You can tell that these people have something important to say and it is something that we need to hear. A special thanks to these people who have taken the time to write.

Second, a word of welcome to Daniel Kleyn who has joined our staff and will be an associate editor. Daniel, a member of Hope P.R. Church, is currently studying at Grand Valley and the Lord willing will be attending our seminary. He has written for us several times already and again in this issue he writes in our Question and Answer column. Welcome Daniel!

Third, we need questions. Not many people today ask for questions. Usually people ask for answers but for our Question and Answer column to continue, we need more questions. Please send us a question today!!

It's A Blessing To Grow Old!

by Sheri Brummel

Mark the perfect man, and behold the upright: for the end of that man is peace. Ps. 37:37

Guys and Girls, society likes to make growing old sound I like a horrible, awful thing: You'll get wrinkles, your body will deteriorate, in some cases the mind also deteriorates. . . . Obviously they focus on the outside of a person. That's always a tempting way to look at life.

We're going to grow old too! And when we do, we'll definitely be ecstatic that we trusted in God and found a refuge in His scriptures.

Old people are given a special calling by God as witness to the young people. They have lived full lives, and will show us insight into actions we could take. Often something stupid on our part can be avoided by talking with one of these people. We have to respect the elderly and recognize their wisdom.

Young people, it's our duty to approach the elderly knowing that we can learn from them. The Bible is our proof. . . . They shall still bring forth fruit in old age. Ps. 92:14. We cannot deny that on the whole, the elderly are more experienced than we concerning the art of living.

Imagine that you are 80 or 90 years old right now. You would still have the innocent trusting heart of a child. . . that's the way any child of God is no matter his or her age. As a small child runs to his father when hurt so the Christian runs to his eternal Father in prayer. What a wonderful thing. I've learned by experience that it's incredibly enjoyable to visit with the elderly. They are people with fun personalities who like to share interesting thoughts and feelings with us.

I feel privileged every chance I get to converse with them. Their generation is so different than ours. We are used to instant gratification. When they were growing up they had to work harder for their necessities. They suffered during the depression like nothing we've ever felt before. The fact that our generations are so different from each other makes it a pleasure to visit with the elderly.

Our generation didn't have to fight for the Protestant Reformed Church. If you don't fully understand why our church is so important, go today or as soon as possible to someone older, and ask them to explain it all to you. Believe me, it's not a boring narrative. If you love God, it will make you praise Him, thank Him, and understand the importance of church holding a pure, Biblical doctrine! There are not many churches like ours.

Make it a priority in your life to be close to the elderly. Dwell in communion with them for the Lord further our education on their account. Thank God for them, and show it by befriending the often lonely aged.

Lying: A Prevalent Evil

by Rev. K. Koole

You Liar!

Have you ever called someone that? Probably. Most of us have. And usually with great disgust, and apparently good reason. How we hate to have people lie about us, or deceive us by lying.

Then again, has anyone ever called you that? Again, probably. Justifiably? Hopefully not. But even if there was reason for it, who is going to admit it? The one guilty of lying will usually have to lie again in order to deny it and to cover it up. It is one of those sins that is begotten by sin, and it begets many children. Lying is the 'glue' that holds the fabric of falsehood, sin, and evil together.

You lied! It is probably the most common accusation made in life. And not without reason. It is most likely the easiest sin to commit. And not only easy, but in a world where sin rules and no one wants to admit they did wrong, it is necessary, that is, necessary if one is going to avoid admitting, 'Yes I did wrong. I deserve reproof.' And who wants to do that?

Eve used fig leaves to cover her transgression, and we use the lie. In the end it is about as effective, meaning, not very effective at all. It tends to become unraveled in the end.

Still the instinct of human nature is to turn to the tissue of the lie when in trouble. It seems the best way to avoid the guilt and shame that goes with having some wrong-doing found out. It is our own human nature as well, and therefore continual words of warning are in order. It is a reflex we must be keenly aware of. It is only the grace that comes to one thru faith that enables us to resist this inclination, this reflexive response.

Lying is, of course, but one transgression of the ninth commandment, "Thou shalt not bear false witness against thy neighbor." According to the Heidelberg Catechism the commandment forbids more than lying about another; it also forbids backbiting and judging or condemning any man rashly, or unheard. Not all these things fall necessarily in the category of lying. In the instance of condemning a man unheard, what we say might, in the end, prove to be true. But, at the time we said it, we did not really KNOW it was true. We were then guilty of having made a condemning statement without proper evidence. This too is contrary to the spirit of the ninth commandment, which has to do with love for the neighbor and love for truth, that is, truth that is constructive. (Some truth is also destructive, such as spreading about one's faults. This is no better than lying about that person.) In fact there are lies that do less damage than backbiting truths.

Still the primary transgression of the ninth commandment is lying, i.e., stating what we know to be false. And this is what we want to zero in on in the remainder of the article.

We said the sin of lying is common in society, (so common that courts of law must place men under oath in an attempt to get some truthful statements); but what is interesting is how frequently this sin is recorded in the Scriptures. Undoubtedly you have more instances in Bible History of individuals violating this commandment than any other. (unless it is that of idolatry).

Let us draw up a partial list of instances that come readily to mind.

As we might suspect, the first liar is Satan, he being the father of it. History begins with The Liar calling God a liar. "Yea, hath God said. . . ? . . . Ye shall not surely die." And with that blasphemy the history of death and of sin and grace begins. And you have Abraham's lies concerning Sarah to Pharaoh and then to Abimelech. Jacob's early life seems one tissue of deceit, especially his lying to blind Isaac, claiming to be Esau. Jacob's sons in turn lied to him about what they had done to Joseph, their brother, selling him into slavery. And Potiphar's wife lied about Joseph as well.

In a different category you have the lies of the midwives, sparing Israel's first-born baby boys, and Rahab's 'likable' lie. But they are 'untruths' nonetheless. And as well, you have the lies of Achan, (a lie of silence), and of David, pretending to be Uriah's friend, while all the time he was plotting his destruction. And you have the lie of that she-devil, Jezebel, who thru false-witnesses brought about Naboth's murder.

We have by no means exhausted the list. Think of the false-witnesses at Christ's trial, and the lying

charges they brought. And there are the lies of Ananias and Sapphira, who fell dead at Peter's feet. And so one could go on. But we will stop our recitation here.

It is clear, the sin is common, not unknown even to the saint, and that it comes in a bewildering variety of shapes and hews. Never are we so imaginative and 'creative' as when we must 'save' ourselves thru a lie. It is a sin we must work hard to root out, or in the language of Ephesians 4:25, to put off. It is part of the essential character of the Old Man of Sin. He (ours) is a liar.

Having listed a number of instances of lies recorded in the Scripture we could do well to categorize a couple of the reasons why people resort to lies, that is, what their purpose is. To understand why lies are told is to understand why they are sin; why they are so detestable to God; and why the Catechism calls them the very work of the Devil.

First, and worst, you have the lies that aim at injury and hurt of someone else. The lies of Jezebel and Potiphar's wife, and of those who falsely accused Christ are of this category. These are lies that find their root in envy and hatred.

Such lies are not unknown to us. Someone else is happy, and we, because we are unhappy resent their success and happiness. We are determined to ruin it, or at least to bring them down a few pegs, that is, to our level (so they know what it feels like, we tell ourselves). How best to do this? Spread a few falsehoods about them, slander their character. Exaggerate something they may have done once (or maybe never) as though they do it all the time. And so poison the mind of others towards this someone we are seeking to hurt.

This is very effective in hurting or destroying another. And it is a double sin. Not only have we been guilty of a falsehood, but the mind of one or perhaps of many have been poisoned towards this individual. Murder has been added to falsehood. We rejoice in another's hurt. This is evil personified and is the antithesis of Christian love. Indeed, if we have been guilty of this we owe it to the person to ask his or her forgiveness for our detestable behavior, and, as well, we ought to seek to clear that person's good name with others led astray by our foolish comments. Would we not expect them to do this for us, if they had so wronged us? So, we ought to do this for them.

So that is the first type of lie, and the worst, destroying our neighbor's (even our "friend's") good name by means of falsehood. Obviously, this is not love, but hate of the worst sort.

Let me just state in this connection that this is why the falsehoods of the mid-wives and of Rahab concerning the spies must be placed in a different category. This is why a man of no less stature than Rev. Hoeksema could say about Rahab's 'cover—up' that there was something, about that lie that he liked. The purpose of both those lies, and those of the midwives in particular, was not to hurt and destroy their neighbor, but to protect and to spare them, namely, the helpless infants of Israel. What motivated them, then, was love for the neighbor, and not enmity or envy. They were not trying to spare themselves, but to spare another. Nor were they trying to circumvent justice, that is, just punishment, (which would be misguided love, like that of a parent lying to protect her spoiled, disobedient child), but these midwives were withstanding gross injustice. These considerations put even their lies in a different light. The point is, while all lies must be reproved, not all are equally evil. There are those people whose 'truths' are more injurious and evil in intent than other people's lies. Hopefully, we are not of that group.

A second category of lying would be cover-up, protection self by refusing to take proper blame. This species of lying does not usually involve hating someone else (though in the process others can be hurt), but this kind of lie does have everything to do with self-love. We do not want to admit that we have done something wrong. It is the refusal to acknowledge some sin, or that we have failed to keep our word, or that we have done something we are ashamed of. We do not want others to know how self-seeking we have been. An example that comes to mind is Gehazi, the servant of Elisha, who first lied to Naaman because he selfishly coveted those free changes of garments and that gold, and then lied to Elisha about where he had been. He was self-centered all the way.

This comes pretty close to home. How often have not our parents asked us where we have been, and we reply, "We haven't been any place (that is, that we shouldn't have been)". But we have. And God knows it, of course. But still we lie and seek to protect ourselves. This is a serious matter. This kind of lie can become a besetting sin, something a person becomes addicted to. We find ourselves lying regularly to cover where we have been, what we have been doing.

We must be warned. A trail of lies can not be hid forever. The word gets around. Pretty soon others know they can not really trust us. Our word is worthless. It is a horrible reputation. And it is hard to shake, even when we are at last telling a truth.

But the point is, it is completely incompatible with being a Christian. We must break with such an addiction. At stake is the very sincerity of our repentance before God, and His willingness to receive such repentance.

Proverbs 20:13 is very clear, "He that covereth his sins shall not prosper: but whoso confesseth and forsaketh them shall have mercy."

Remember, lying is the very antithesis of repentance. And repentance is the evidence of true faith. From a positive perspective Ephesians 4:25 is also instructive, "Wherefore, putting away lying, speak every man truth with his neighbor, for we are members one of another."

Sometimes the truth hurts, also the truth that we have been guilty of lying. But as God's word tells us, "Faithful are the wounds of a friend." If we have been guilty of less than the truth let us admit it, and return to the way of truth, which is the way of wisdom and real happiness.

WRITING CONTEST

The New Heavens and New Earth: What's It Worth?

by Connie Meyer

You are living in a house that is shabby, run-down, and has been in constant need of repair for as long as you can remember. The floor is rotting, the roof sprouts a new leak every time it rains, and there's no doubt that soon it will be beyond repair. In fact, your landlord is having it condemned, and a demolition crew is due to arrive anytime. You'll have to be prepared to leave at a moment's notice.

Where will you go from here? Your landlord has assured you that he is getting an absolutely beautiful residence ready for you. He's spoken of stained glass windows, massive mahogany woodwork, golden fixtures, and priceless furniture. But you can hardly imagine it. You've lived in this house all your life, you've never traveled beyond its vicinity, and you've never seen stained glass, or mahogany, or gold! Oh, not that you've had it so bad here. Often the sun would cast a cheery golden glow through your window, often multi-colored wildflowers would spring up near your door, and most of the time the place had given you shelter enough.

Right now though, all you can do is wait and get ready. Yet you ask yourself, how? None of your possessions will be worth taking along to such a grand place, so you need not pack them. Your landlord said you'd receive new clothes there too, so you don't have to pack those either. Ah - but their way of living! At such a place, their manners and customs will be different. It will take much practice to learn that, so that is what you can do.

Oh no! Another floor board just broke beneath your feet, bruising your heel and leaving a painful welt. Where is that demolition crew anyway? They must not realize the condition of this place. . . .

* * * * *

It's been three months. Good thing you don't have to worry about your clothes, because the elements have soaked and torn them into shreds by now. The roof of the house caved in three days ago, and you huddle under a few boards that are still half attached to the wall. You're amazed that no one has come for you yet! Neighbors laugh and mock, "Ha! You'll die waiting! No one is coming, you fool!"

But you wait anyway. The landlord has never lied to you in the past, and you don't suppose he'd start now. Besides, where else would you go? Maybe you just need to practice that way of living a little more.

Yes, that's it. Practice, practice, practice. Practice makes perfect. Everything in its time. Practice, practice.

He's here!! They've come!! It's time!! You rush to the limousine that's parked at your door, its plush comfort waiting just for you, and the flood of joy and relief is overwhelming as you climb inside. Then before you continue on, you catch one last glimpse of the old house - but suddenly it's gone! The wrecking ball has smashed it down in a moment. You notice your neighbors watching now too, and the look on their faces can't be described. You close your eyes - savoring the softness and warmth - then when you open them again, you've already arrived at the mansion gates! And it's all it was supposed to be, and more. Much more!

The gardens contain colors you never knew existed! The pools are fresh and clear, the wildlife is wonderfully exotic, and the whole atmosphere simply exudes peace. And when your eyes meet the mansion itself, well, "magnificent" would be entirely inadequate a description. . . .

* * * * *

One question for you before this tale ends: is it worth it? Is it worth the pain, the ridicule, the wait? Is it worth it?

Q. • Are those who ask Dr. Kevorkian to assist them in ending their life justified in doing so because of the pain and suffering they live with?

A. • Those who are asking Dr. Kevorkian to assist them in ending their life are committing suicide. They are no less guilty than persons who commit suicide without the assistance of a person such as Dr. Kevorkian. They, as well as Dr. Kevorkian himself, are guilty of breaking the sixth commandment, "Thou shalt not kill".

Now it is true that these people are experiencing much pain and suffering. Those who have committed suicide in this way have done so because of the ailments of old age, or because of sickness, such as cancer, which has given them great pain. This does not mean, however, that they may put an end to their life.

God is the giver of life, and the only one Who has the right to take life away. Job confessed this when all his children died, for he said, "the Lord gave, and the Lord hath taken away; blessed be the name of the Lord" (Job 1:21). Those who take their life with the aid of Dr. Kevorkian are denying and undermining this idea of the sanctity of life.

Man has no right to decide when he wishes to end his life. When a person does so he sins greatly, for he is no different from the one who commits suicide by taking a gun and shooting himself. God alone is the one Who has the right to end our earthly life. The sanctity of life has already been denied through the issue of abortion, but sad to say it is also becoming denied through the issue of euthanasia.

Another problem with those who end their life through assisted suicide (as well as through any other form of suicide) is that they are being ruthlessly selfish. All they think about is themselves. They have no thought for the family they leave behind. This family has to live with the fact that their loved one committed suicide, and this causes great anguish and much hurt. The person committing suicide thinks only of relieving himself from the pain and suffering of this earthly life.

Those who commit suicide do not acknowledge that the pain and suffering that they are experiencing are a result of sin. They deny this and selfishly think that by ending their life they can put an end to their suffering and pain. But God will hold them accountable for this great sin. Will they really escape suffering and pain by ending their earthly life?

- Daniel Kleyn

The answer in the March issue was written by Daniel Kleyn.

SCHOLARSHIPS!!

Anyone interested in applying for a scholarship for the 1993-1994 school year should contact Jay Kalsbeek immediately to receive a topic. All articles must be received or postmarked by June 1, 1993.

Jay Kalsbeek

4946 Ivanrest

Apt. B

Grandville, MI 49418

Ph. (616) 530-3884

Netherlands Reformed Congregations

by Tom Bergman

The Netherlands Reformed Congregations, or NRC (not to be confused with Dutch Reformed), are a relatively small denomination professing to stand fast in the Reformed tradition. Located primarily in America, the NRC of this paper parallel an equivalent denomination back in the Netherlands. Netherlands Reformed Congregations are churches coming out of a strong Reformed heritage, yet have some shortcomings that are of serious consequences to the child of God.

NRC: Tracing the Roots

During the Reformation, a strong Reformed tradition began to emerge in the Netherlands, as evidenced by the Synod of Dordt in the early 17th century. The Canons of Dordt, one of our Reformed confessions, surfaced in this period. But, gradually the church (then, the State Reformed Church of the Netherlands, or Hervormde Kerk) came to be operated by the state rather than church government. The state called and regulated synods, appropriated ministers, etc. No separate church government was filling this role. The state controlled the church, and in many cases **was** the church. By the mid-19th century, the state church and many associated with it displayed themselves as quite apostate. Heresy and greed infected the church in the Netherlands.

Despite persecution, a series of splits from the state church occurred. Most significant are these resulting groups:

1834 - Secession (Afscheiding) under Rev. De Cock

1839 - Churches Under the Cross

1841 - Ledeboerian Congregations

1886 - Doleantie under Dr. A. Kuyper

Incidentally, the Christian Reformed and Protestant Reformed Churches also determine their roots in the Afscheiding and the Doleantie.

The Founding of the NRC

Netherlands Reformed Congregations came out of the union of some of Rev. De. Cock's Afscheiding, Rev. Scholte's "Churches Under the Cross", and Rev. Van Dyke's branch of Ledeboerian congregations. The joining of these was brought about by Rev. G. H. Kersten in 1907, and represents the official founding of the NRC. Since then, a portion has moved to the United States, Canada, even New Zealand, also calling itself Netherlands Reformed. Presently, Netherlands Reformed Congregations (outside of the Netherlands) have approximately 10,000 members compiling 25 congregations in the United States, Canada, and New Zealand. The NRC 1992 yearbook reports of 6 ministers (plus one student and three emeriti) and a missionary. The NRC have also established 13 of their schools worldwide. Classes East, Midwest, and Farwest comprise their synod.

A Troubling Confession

I myself have a certain relationship with a member of a Netherlands Reformed Church. Countless hours have been spent talking about spiritual matters with her, with ministers and my elders, as well as both present and former members of the NRC. The following is what I have gathered from this and troubles me.

The main distinction lies in the NRC view of the covenant. While NRC hold to the infallibility of Scripture, the confessions of the truths of Scripture (Heidelberg Catechism, Belgic Confession, and the Canons of Dordt), and five-point Calvinism, there is significant disparity with respect to Protestant Reformed beliefs.

To understand this, we should look at the truths of total depravity and regeneration. We must see how this affects us and our lives.

All creatures are by nature, totally depraved. By nature, all we do is seek to rebel against God (Proverbs 17:11). Yet the Almighty chose to save some. We don't know why. We can't understand why other than that it was God's eternal pleasure. We certainly didn't earn it (Ephesians 2:8, 9). "Herein is love, not that we loved God, but that he loved us. . ." (I John 4: 10). It was His eternal good pleasure to promise believers that He would be God unto them and to their seed after them (Genesis 17:7). The name Jehovah, by which we may know God, means exactly that. This is the covenant of grace. This is why we baptize. The Lord saves His people, working first in their hearts the work of regeneration.

Regeneration is that work of the Holy Spirit in our

hearts that makes us born again. We are changed, made new unto Christ (I Peter 1:23). This is not a license to say that all children of believers are saved. God does not promise that in His Word. But, it may not be ignored that God's promise is a covenant of friendship with believers and their seed. This is why we baptize infants. They are included in the covenant of grace (Mark 10:14-16).

NRC dogmatics profess personal/experiential regeneration to be the correct view, in light of Scripture. That is, they emphasize speaking only of regenerated or saved persons once they evidence the fruits of regeneration and conversion, i.e. the inward workings of misery, deliverance, and the outward workings of gratitude in love toward God and others (Luke 3:7-9, John 3:3, etc.).

Therefore, they pray for this working in their heart. If they do not yet have faith of their salvation in Christ, they pray for it because it is what they desire. Through the preaching they are instructed to pray for that highest good: friendship and fellowship with God. They desire the salvation which is only through Jesus Christ.

For example, at times when Netherlands Reformed young people make profession of faith, they confess the NRC doctrines to be true. In the same breath, they confess their lack of a true, living faith. They want it, but haven't yet had the experience that would give them full assurance of redemption through the blood of Christ. This is the message preached in Netherlands Reformed congregations.

But wait! That is not the proper understanding of total depravity. This isn't Scriptural, nor is it found in the Reformed confessions. Man bound by sin and death can only seek to rebel (Prov. 17:11). He cannot pray. He cannot desire salvation.

Sinful man certainly cannot pray in and of himself. Prayer is the chief part of thankfulness. Our confessions are quite clear on this. Lord's Day XLV lays it out plainly:

Q. 117. What are the requisites of prayer, which is acceptable to God, and which he will hear?

A. First, that we from the heart pray to the one true God only . . . secondly, that we rightly . . . know our need and misery . . . thirdly, that we be fully persuaded that we are unworthy. . . .

There is no place for an unregenerate heart to be praying to the Almighty God of heaven and earth! Dead to sin, not born again, we cannot fill the requisites of prayer. By nature we hate God. Hating God, we love sin. Loving sin, we cannot want redemption from it in any way. To believe that we can is a doctrine that troubles me.

For further proof, see Peter's second epistle, II Peter 1:1-10. Read it, and focus on verses 8-9.

The covenant of grace is God's promise to believers. Unbelievers want no part of it. There is no experience to desire and wait for. Covenant children can't experience, they can't understand (see baptism form), yet they are partakers, "for of such is the kingdom of God" (Mark 10:14). That is the comfort - knowing that it is not of ourselves. We could not do it. Yet we have assurance of the work of Christ in John 17:6: knowing the manifest name of God - and He glorified in it. This is the essence of salvation which is hungered and thirsted after by a heart made new in Christ.

It is my hope and prayer that you, the reader, have a little bit better understanding of what lies around you. May this urge you to study Holy Scripture, and be more ready and able to defend your beliefs, D.V. Let it be known, I did not intend to misrepresent anyone, but I welcome all replies. See the editor for address.

WRITING CONTEST

Turtles

by Renae Karsemeyer

A turtle is an interesting animal in God's creation. God has given turtles unique characteristics, that are different from other animals, to stay alive.

Their hard shells protect their soft bodies from animals that eat them. Although turtles are slow on land, God gave them webbed feet, so they can swim fast in the water. On land animals can catch them easier.

There are many kinds of turtles. One example is a sea turtle. They are found in the sea or on the shore by the water. Some turtles swim as far as several thousand miles to reach the beaches where they nest.

The shell that protects the turtle from danger is like God protecting His people from the devil and his wicked followers. Turtles are cold-blooded and do not like cold things. Just like we, as Christians, do not like wicked things or ways.

Watching Daily At My Gates

April 1

Psalm 119.:1-8,11 Do you have God's Word hidden in your hearts? Is it hidden there to keep you from sin? That was the Psalmist's confession in verse 11. Many of us have learned large portions of Scripture. Why? Was it because we wanted to be armed against Satan when he came to beguile us into sin? We still must hide away God's word in our hearts. The best time to memorize is when a person is young. The best time to hide God's word in our hearts is now. Sing or read Psalter 322.

April 2

I Peter 3:8-16 Now that God's word is hid in your heart, are you ready to give an answer to anyone who asks after your salvation? God promises His people the Spirit and with that promise assures them that they need not fear when their faith is called in question. But He also gives the command to learn the Word. Without the Scripture in our hearts we will not be able to answer one question. Even Christ made Satan flee by saying, "It is written. . . ." Sing or read Psalter 332 especially stanzas 3 and 4.

April 3

Revelation 10:8-11 John was instructed to take a little book, eat it, and use it. That little book is God's word. We, too, must take the little book, eat it, and use it. Eating it is to take it into our being. We must diligently study the Word of God. It must become part of us. Then we must use it. We must not confine our use to just those we call our friends. We must use it all the time. As churches we must "prophesy again before many peoples, and nations, and tongues and kings." As individuals we must support the work of missions in whatever way God has given us. Sing or read Psalter 177.

April 4

Zechariah 9:9-17 Palm Sunday. A day quite often misunderstood. We often see a triumphal entry. But Christ as He left the city in the days to come wept over that picture of the church. "Blessed is he that cometh in the name of the Lord" are great words, but they must be shouted with the cross in view. Most of the throng that day looked for a saviour not a Saviour. How about us? Do we look back on our Saviour? Do we look ahead for His return? Sing or read Psalter 318.

April 5

Matthew 21:17-22 The last week of Christ's life is often called the Passion week. Quite a fitting name when you consider how much Christ loved us. We also see how much the Father loves us when we see how much His Son suffered in these days. Look at the great gift of faith given us in these verses. We must exercise that faith as the last verse teaches. We pray faithful prayers; the Father hears; He answers us. What a gift! This is what was in the manager on Christmas. Sing or read Psalter 185 especially stanzas 1-4.

April 6

Matthew 21:28-32 Which son are we? Many of us have been privileged to have been brought up by God-fearing parents, to have attended a church faithful to the Word, and to have had the blessing of faithful covenant instruction. What is our answer to all of that? Do we hear the Word of God with our lips but not with our hearts? Or are we the son who with all of those privileges needs the grace of God to prick our hearts so that we repent and do the will of the Father? Sing or read Psalter 111 especially stanza 4.

April 7

Mark 13:28-37 On Tuesday evening and into Wednesday Jesus and His disciples rested on Mount Olives. Jesus taught them about His return at the end of time. The disciples needed this as they still were looking for a return of the earthly kingdom of the Jews. We, too, need this. We must know that Christ will return, this earthly kingdom will pass away, and He will establish the heavenly kingdom of the new Jerusalem. That is why we must constantly watch and pray. Sing or read Psalter 29.

April 8

John 15:1-10 On Thursday Jesus continued to fulfill the signs of the Old Testament as He and the disciples celebrated the feast of the Passover. He also showed the church how to celebrate His death in the New Dispensation. He gave to us the sacrament of communion. In the verses you read, we see that we have a calling to bear fruit because of the work of Christ in us. The summary of that calling is in verses 8-10. Read those verses again and ponder their meaning. Sing or read Psalter 368 especially stanzas 3-5.

April 9

Luke 22:54-62 One of the saddest episodes of Good Friday is Peter's denial. But yet it is one of the very necessary episodes of that day. Peter and the church had to learn that "it is not of him that willeth, nor of him that runneth, but of God that sheweth mercy." We must know that God's way is always best. Peter wept because he saw his dreadful sin that day. Do we weep when we see how our sins caused Christ to suffer the hellish agonies of the cross? Sing or read Psalter 47 especially stanzas 1, 4, 8, and 9.

April 10

I Corinthians 15:50-58 Jesus was in the grave over the Jew's Sabbath. His closest followers must have experienced the longest Sabbath ever. Why? Because they had forgotten the word that He would arise after three days. Instead of that Sabbath being a day of joyful anticipation, it became one of extreme sorrow. What about us? Do we wait for his return with joyful anticipation? Are we waiting for Him to return on the clouds of heaven? Do we abound in the work of the Lord knowing that we have the victory? I hope so! Sing or read Psalter 407.

April 11

Mark 16:1-8 Is there power in the cross? Can we find forgiveness through Christ's sacrifice? Peter did. First the angels made a special mention that Peter was to be notified of the resurrection. Then Christ Himself appeared unto Peter that day. This was all part of God's preparing Peter for the work He would do in the church. That message is just as personal to us as it was to Peter. Christ comes to us with forgiveness. Are we thankful for that forgiveness? Do we show it in our lives? Sing or read Psalter 47 especially stanzas 10 and 11.

April 12

Luke 24:13-33 This long passage has long been one of my favorite Easter stories. I picked it as our last meditation on the Passion Week because of a theme I have been developing this month. That theme is knowing God's word. Notice the travelers were discussing the things that had happened in the past few days. True they needed the word of Christ to open their eyes. We do too. We must study the Bible, but we need Him to open our eyes to its beauties. We have His word. Study that word, pray for divine guidance in that study, and then discuss the things that have happened and will happen with fellow believers. Sing or read Psalter 333.

April 13

Song of Solomon 2:10-17 This short book is a love song between a man and his wife. Solomon wrote it looking at the relationship between Christ and the church. Those of us in the northern states look at this time of the year for the promise of spring and summer. Quite often we use verses 11-13 as verses to help us look at spring. If we stop there, we miss a great deal. We must see in the beauty of spring the beauty of Christ and the church. God speaks to us in creation. We must listen to Him and respond. Sing or read Psalter 125 especially stanzas 1-3 and 5.

April 14

II John Love, we know, is powerful. We also know that the world spends a lot of time talking about love. The world claims that we can cure many of the problems if we would just love better. God has given us a command to love as well. In Christ's summary of the law we are told to love God and our neighbor. Here in II John we are given the definition of the only love we are to have. Love is to walk after God's commandments. We can start with the Ten Commandments and then see how God has given commands for our whole life. If we truly love God and our neighbor, we will keep all of God's commandments. Sing or read Psalter 109 especially stanza 3.

April 15

Mark 12:12—17 For those of us who reside in the United States the date of April 15 has unpleasant connotations. It shouldn't. Even if we have to pay taxes, we should see that this is a way to obey a commandment of God. Christ taught His church to render unto Caesar that which is Caesar's. You have the same thought in Romans 13. Our cheerful obedience to our government is our obedience to the Fifth Commandment. Our cheerful obedience to government is our cheerful obedience to God. Sing or read Psalter 69 especially stanzas 1-3; 5 and 6.

April 16

Isaiah 48:12-22 Once again it is Friday night. Traditionally this is the night that young people go with their friends and enjoy themselves after a week of work or school. It is good that we stop and examine the activities we have planned for this evening. First we should examine the who. Who are we going with? Who is your date tonight? Then we should examine the what. What are we going to do with our friends tonight? Read verse 18 again; then read verse 22. Must we change our plans to make them God-glorifying? Sing or read Psalter 335.

April 17

Ephesians 6:10-18 In Chapter 5 Paul tells the church to be followers of Christ. He then goes on with practical applications of that truth. He concludes the epistle with the words of verse 10, "Finally, my brethren, be strong in the Lord, and in the power of his might." We must be strong in the Lord. Our own strength and the strength of others will fail us. Only in the strength of the Lord will we be able to stand. We must use His power. As we worship tomorrow let us listen to the command of Christ to be strong in the Lord in whatever we do and whereever God places us. Sing or read Psalter 403 especially stanza 3.

April 18

I Peter 5:5-11 Do you know your enemy? I don't mean the person with whom you have had words or even blows. He is not your enemy. Our enemy is Satan. Satan has been the enemy of God ever since he was cast from heaven. Satan has been the enemy of the church ever since the fall when God spoke the words of Genesis 3:15. After identifying the enemy we must fight the enemy. Peter tells us that we must be watchful and see what the enemy is doing. Paul in Ephesians 6 tells us that the enemy is spiritual and takes that type of a fight. Paul also tells us that the enemy is tricky. Did you notice him next to you in church to day? Sing or read Psalter 99.

April 19

John 19:33-38 The question of Pilate, "What is truth?" has been asked throughout the centuries. The child of God knows that God is truth. It is one of His attributes. Because God is truth, He imparts that truth unto His people. The highest form of that truth is that salvation is from Him alone through Christ. Jesus makes that clear in verse 37. Therefore to fight against the devil whose basic attribute is the lie, we must gird ourselves with truth. Sing or read Psalter 63 especially stanza 4.

April 20

Psalm 106:1-8 Part of the Roman soldier's armor was a metal breastplate designed to ward off the enemies' arrows and sword thrust. It protected the heart. A Christian also must don a breastplate to protect the heart. This is the breastplate of righteousness. This is a characteristic that we can only receive from God. To be righteous means that we walk in God's laws. To be righteous means that we will dedicate our lives to loving God and the neighbor. When we do that, Satan's arrows will fall harmlessly to the ground. Sing or read Psalter 290 especially stanzas 1-5.

April 21

Isaiah 52: 7-12 Any foot soldier from whatever historical era was concerned for his feet. His feet had to carry him from place to place as he hunted the enemy and then could not fail him as he faced the enemy. The child of God has footwear that will never fail him. We must have our feet shod with the gospel of peace. The gospel is the good news of Christ. That gospel is the news that our God reigns. We must study that gospel and we must take care that we see that it is spread to the four corners of the earth. Let not this part of our armor become weak, or else Satan will attack at this vulnerable spot. Sing or read Psalter 264 especially stanzas 1-3.

April 22

Hebrews 11:1-6 Ephesians 6 says, "Above all taking the shield of faith." Hebrews 11 defines faith clearly and understandably. Faith will give us the victory over Satan's fiery darts. Satan has many weapons. He will not hesitate to use any and all of them against you. Can you block them with the shield of faith? Your faith must be living. It is not the faith of dead doctrine, but rather it is a living faith that unites you to Christ. It must be evident in your life. By that evident faith you can please God as verse 6 of our text states. Please God and fight Satan; what a great combination. Sing or read Psalter 36 especially stanzas 1-3.

April 23

I Thessalonians 5:5-11 Salvation! What a beautiful idea. As we look around us, we can see sin and its effects. We can also see, that left unchecked, sin will drag us down to its level and Satan then will take us to hell. God has given us a helmet of salvation. It is a special helmet. This helmet is only for soldiers of the cross. It is not the helmet of our making; it is the helmet merited by the death of Christ on the cross. Paul put it on when he said that for the hope of salvation he was imprisoned. Take the helmet of salvation, put it on, and withstand all of Satan's blows. Sing or read Psalter 317 especially stanzas 2 and 4.

April 24

I Samuel 17:42-47 The fight of faith includes offense as well as defense. We are not only equipped with weapons to block Satan's blows, but we are also given the offensive weapon of the word of God. Many places in Scripture exhort us to use the word of God. As we well know, Christ himself fought off Satan with the words, "It is written." First we must learn that word, and then we must use it. David understood that as he faced Goliath. The church must be admonished to pick up the sword of the Spirit and use it every day. Sing or read Psalter 420 especially stanzas 1 and 6.

April 25

Ephesians 6:10-18 I wanted us to reread the words we have been considering the past several days. I especially wanted us to consider the words of verse 18. We cannot fight Satan unless we come to God in prayer. Again we can see in Christ an example to follow. In the garden of Gethsemane, He prayed to His Father for aid in His last battle on this earth. His final words were, "Thy will be done." As we enter the house of prayer today, let us pray for strength to always be fighting but also for strength to always be praying. Sing or read Psalter 34 especially stanzas 1,2 and 10.

April 26

Romans 8:31-39 Every child of God should spend time examining Romans 8. The verses you read form a summary of the chapter. What a beautiful comfort! "If God be for us, who can be against us?"! What can get in our way of knowing His fellowship? As we live in this world of sin and strife are we persuaded that nothing can separate us from the love of God? True, our sins do rise up against us, but God will show us mercy and take them all away. If our sins are covered need we fear any other enemies? Sing or read Psalter 431 especially stanzas 1 and 3.

April 27

Hosea 4:1-7 What a dreadful thing when God comes to His church and tells them that they are destroyed for lack of knowledge. Israel's leaders of old have had to face that denunciation of God. Leaders of the the church today will also have to answer to that question. Fathers will you be guilty of not leading your children to knowledge? Children and young people are you guilty of not learning the knowledge of Jehovah? God gives us many ways to obtain His knowledge. Are we using them? Sing or read Psalter 324.

April 28

Obadiah 17-21 The book of Obadiah is full of judgment upon the wicked nation of Edom for persecuting the church. But it is also full of comfort for the child of God as he realizes that God will bring judgment upon the wicked through the church. We see in verse 17 the deliverance from the wicked but also deliverance from our sins. We see this because there can only be holiness where there is no sin. According to the last verse, Christ's kingdom is coming. It it is not earthly but heavenly. Sing or read Psalter 432 especially stanzas 1 and 4.

April 29

III John 1-8 Every father, mother, grandparent, minister, elder, and teacher love to confess the words of verse four. They do that not because they are boasting in their work of teaching the truth to those whom God has given them. They do it because God's truth is followed and loved. Young people are you allowing good reports to be heard in the ears of those who teach and have taught you truth? If the people of the first sentence have joy, then also God in heaven has joy in your walk in His truth. Sing or read Psalter 311 especially stanzas 1, 4, and 5.

April 30

Micah 4:5-8 What a confession of faith we have in verse 5. "We will walk in the name of the LORD our God for ever and ever." As we close another month and find ourselves nearer to Christ's return, let this be on our lips. Let us walk in the name of Jehovah our covenant God. Times will become harder for Christians physically; we can make them easier spiritually by walking in the name of our God. Christ is coming; let us walk in His name for ever. Sing or read Psalter 53.

The Lion

by Lois Kuiper

A lion is known for many different things. A lion is often called "king of beasts" or "Lord of the jungle". A lion is also known for its heavy roar. The color of the lion is a mixture of brown and yellow. A lion is also very strong, especially its teeth and claws. A lion is a flesh eating animal (a carnivore). We often find lions in Africa or in a zoo. That is what a lion is like.

The devil is called a lion in the Bible. I Peter 5:8 "Be sober, be vigilant, because your adversary, the devil, as a roaring lion, walketh about, seeking whom he may devour."

Jesus is called a lion also. Revelation 5:5. "One of the elders saith to me "Weep not, behold the lion of the tribe of Judah, the root of David,hath prevailed to open the book, and loose the seven seals thereof." But Jesus is stronger than the devil and will destroy him.

LETTERS

Dear Beacon Lights Staff,

Thank you for your excellent Christ-centered youth magazine. We especially enjoy the new look for this year. The pull-out devotional guide is a great idea! We are looking for Rev. Van Overloop's tape of his lecture on Sex and Dating. Is it possible to get it yet? How much is the tape? Please let us know. We thank you for your time.

Mrs. Kooienga and family

Thank you for your encouraging letter. A tape is in the mail to you. If anyone else is interested in a tape please send a request and $3.00 to:

Southeast Protestant Reformed Church
Evangelism Committee
1535 Cambridge S. E.
Grand Rapids, MI 49506

Dear Beacon Lights Staff,

We appreciate very much the generous donation to our building expansion fund. It is encouraging to know that the young people of our Protestant Reformed Churches take this kind of interest in our seminary.

We expect, D.V., to enroll three men from our churches and one from the Evangelical Reformed Church in Singapore next fall. This will bring ouR total enrollment to 13. Of these, two men are from the Evangelical Presbyterian Church of Australia, one, the pastor of the Orthodox Christian Reformed Church in Allendale, is auditing two classes, and the rest are intending to enter the ministry of our churches. Add to this the fact that our library continues to grow and you can readily see that we need the addition. Your gift will help us reach this goal.

Pray for us that we may be faithful in committing the truth to faithful men who shall be able to teach others in our churches and sister churches. (II Timothy 2:2)

Cordially in Christ,
Prof. Robert D. Decker
Protestant Reformed Seminary

Called To Feed Those Called To Eat

by Dave Moelker

There are times in the life of God's people when they need counsel. There are times, often when they least expect it, that the child of God seems far from God and in deep distress. Troubles may overwhelm his soul and depression may separate him from the joy of his salvation.

These times fall not only on the "older" generations but also on covenant youth. Lost job. Marks that are bad. A dislike of school especially the authority of the teachers. Bad attitudes. Sins of gross proportion drag into deep holes of gloom. Didn't make the team. Confused. Hurt. Don't know which career is for a Christian. The list could go on and on. Surprisingly as it may seem, this list or the results of what this list suggests can become work for those called to feed the flock of God. God has placed in His Church overseers called to feed the flock, to take heed to their spiritual care.

As a young person you are a part of God's flock, His Church.

Have you ever observed the feeding of livestock?

At a time, which is usually the same every day a farmer will begin his routine of feeding his animals. Whether he raises chickens, cows, horses or sheep, there are certain things which he does each time which will give the signal to the animals what is about to happen.

When its feeding time, the animals are hungry.

When this time comes, the farmer is prepared to give some food which is right and proper nourishment for his particular type of animal.

He has a place where the grain or silage is stored. And a means by which it is placed before his livestock. Let's take sheep for example. They may be in another part of the barnyard or holding pen. When they see their keeper coming with the same food in the same way he did the day before and the day before that, they come running from wherever they are to get the nourishment that they need.

They come. They come running. They know inwardly that they need his help through his providing them with their food.

Feed the flock. The flock of God.

Such is the admonition given to the Elders of the Church of Jesus Christ. Look at I Peter 5:2 where we read "Feed the flock of God which is among you, taking the oversight thereof." This article is about that. The nourishment, the care of, the helping of the people of God. It is also about their need of that care and their recognizing of that need and coming to the elders for a filling of that need.

The Scriptures use this picture many times when it refers to the elders and their relationship to the church which they are placed as overseers. Look at Acts 20:28 where Paul tells the Ephesian elders to "Take heed therefore unto yourselves, and to all the flock, over the which the Holy Ghost hath made you overseers, to feed the church of God. It also uses this figure in I Peter 2:4 referring to the returning Christ as the Chief Shepherd.

Christ,the Chief Shepherd, has entrusted His sheep to undersheperds, your elders. They are called to watch over souls. Not just any souls, but those only of the Church of Jesus Christ. Your soul. That is a difficult task for them. They know that they each have their own weaknesses which they must constantly be battling with, plus the added responsibility of watching for weaknesses in members of the body of Christ. Your elders sometimes lie awake nights grieving for the fact that one of the sheep is not acting like a sheep but is going away from the flock and is not feeding with the other sheep. They can grow weary in the strain of the demands of dealing with the needs of a congregation. But they know that they must give an accounting someday to the Chief Shepherd and they

*Elder at Hope Protestant Reformed Church and Former Editor of the Beacon Lights

desire to do that with joy in that day.

Your elders know too, that you are watching them. I Peter 5:3 says being examples to the flock." Shepherds would never lead sheep down a dangerous path. They would never go anywhere or do anything to endanger the sheep. Shepherds know that the sheep will follow them. The sheep trust them. The sheep are accustomed to his faithful watering and feeding at a certain time of the day and are always aware of what the shepherd is doing. The elder lives with that thought, too, everyday. He has to conform his own life to set standards and live and practice them each day so that he himself is a fit leader of the sheep. He scrutinizes his own actions so that they do not conflict with his calling to feed the flock entrusted to his care. It takes work. And God uses weak vessels upon which He bestows the honor of flock feeder. Your elders have to often struggle against themselves to accomplish their tasks.

But what about you,the sheep? We have very briefly discussed the elder in his relationship to the flock entrusted to their care. We have also seen that they labor in weaknesses of their own. Do you trust them with your care? Would you obey such weak men?

The Apostle Paul in Hebrews I: 17 doesn't give the option of even asking the question of whether or not to give them our trust or obedience. He puts it this way: Obey them! They rule over you. Submit yourselves to them! For they watch for your souls. No options. No choice. Alright, you say, "I'll obey them. But how do I submit myself to them?" We have been drawing from our example of a shepherd caring for a flock of sheep to make certain points of the relationship of elders to the members of the body of Christ. To continue to use that analogy we may notice that sheep stay in the flock.

It is important that young people feel a part of the Church in which they have a name and place. The Body of Christ is in need of them also to be complete. They must see it as their calling, especially as those who profess belief in a Covenant of fellowship and friendship with the living God, to find their strength in the fellowship and communion of the saints. Christ, through the elders and teaching elder, your pastor, calls you to worship each Lord's Day and on special occasions. You submit yourselves to them and through them to Christ by being present at these worship services.

In the second place, your elders come to call at least once each year in what the Reformed tradition knows as Family Visitation. It is important that you are there, too. In this way you submit yourselves to the inspection of the elders. They do this work to put their finger on the pulse of the congregation in their own homes. They are there to bring the Word to each family in their own specific circumstances of life. They are not prying into your life, but taking heed to the flock, watching for your soul for which they must give account.

In the third place, you submit yourselves to them by faithfully attending catechism. This too, is a means by which God gives grace to His people as they grow in the knowledge of Him. The consistory visits these classes now and then thereby showing that they are also responsible for the instruction there.

Finally, a way in which you submit yourselves to them is when you find that you cannot speak to your parents or anyone else about something that is plaguing you, and you need to speak to someone. Of course, the pastor is there and by all means you should seek his counsel but your elders are, too. Make use of these men and their gifts. They are called by God to labor in His church with weaknesses but also strengths which they will use to listen with concern to your problems and give counsel. True it is that they must earn your trust. They are not to be busy-bodies with the secrets of others. Shame on them if they violate that trust, but shame on the flock as well if they let this notion keep them from confiding in their elders.

In conclusion then, we know that God, in the building of His Church has promised that the gates of hell would not prevail against her. With the faithful preachers of the Word He has given overseers entrusted with keeping the preached Word pure. Feeders of the flock who must feed the flock by watching for their souls as they that must give account in the judgment day. We believe too, that it is profitable for God's people to obey and submit themselves to the good rule of the Elders. The Presbyterian preacher Samuel Miller, around the turn of the 19th century left these thoughts as to our calling towards one another as elders and members of the church: "Every consideration which has been urged to show the importance and duties belonging to the office of Ruling Elders ought to remind you of the important duties which you owe to them.

Remember, at all times, that they are your ecclesiastical rulers: rulers of your own choice, yet by no means coming to you in virtue of mere human authority but in the name and by the appointment of the great Head of the Church and, of course, the ministers of God to you for good. In all your views and treatment of them, then, recognize this character. Obey them in the Lord, that is, for His sake, and as far as they bear rule agreeably to His Word. Esteem them daily with your prayers, that God would bless them, and make them a blessing. Reverence them as your leaders. Bear in mind the importance of their office, the arduousness of their duties, and the difficulties with which they have to contend. Countenance and sustain them in every act of fidelity; make allowance for their infirmities; and be not unreasonable in your expectations from them.

May God grant His blessing upon the feeding of His flock.

Wrestling With God

by Rev. C. Hanko

I was in a dreadful hurry, because I was late, and, wouldn't you know it, I had all the traffic lights against me. I sat tugging at my steering wheel, trying to coax the light to change.

I stood in the wrong lane at the cash register of the supermarket. This seems to happen all the time.

It always rains when I wash my car. And when I want it to rain it stays away.

When I stop to think about it, I realize that this is but a symptom of my real problem. I try to run my life as if I were the supreme authority over all the circumstances of life, and am unhappy when things do not go my way.

The real problem is, that I lack submission, surrender to my God. I forget to pray: "Thy will be done". And therefore I fail to heed God's warning, reminding me that those red lights and that waiting line at the market are not in my control, but in His hands. He is telling me, "Wait on the Lord, commit your way to Him." But I do not always listen.

This reminds me of Jacob, who was so eager to receive the birthright blessing, that he could not wait for the Lord to give it to him. He thought he had to help God and that even with cunning trickery.

I have an idea that he had purposely prepared that mess of pottage, knowing that Esau would soon return from his hunting trip with a craving hunger. He knew his brother, and he also knew his enormous appetite, as well as his delight in the aroma of a steaming pot of soup. The stage was all set for Esau's arrival. And it worked. It even revealed Esau's scorn for anything that was spiritual and heavenly. He much preferred a mess of pottage, a present satisfaction, to the things of God's kingdom.

God was on Jacob's side, and was caring for Jacob, even when Jacob and Rebekah were pulling off that piece of treachery on father Isaac. It was the Lord who interfered and caused Isaac to come to his senses, to admit God was right, and maintain over against his favorite son Esau, I have blessed Jacob "and he shall be blessed". (Gen. 27:33).

No, Jacob could not wait for the Lord to bless him. He was always running ahead of the Lord. Then I think of young people, who are gradually getting older, and still have not found a life mate. They grow concerned about their future. I have known some, who for fear of not finding a mate, plunged into an unhappy marriage, sometimes marrying into a lot of grief, sometimes joining lives with an unbeliever.

They threw themselves away, as it were. They forgot to wait on the Lord, who gives to every man his wife, and to every woman her husband.,

But you say, doesn't God join two persons together in an unhappy marriage? I must agree that such a marriage is also in God's providence, but not in His favor. The Lord often causes us to experience the bitter consequences of our foolish mistakes. Yes, we may be forgiven, but the consequences are still there.

Consider what a grief Jacob had when he and his uncle Laban were competing in their deceptive tricks. The Lord blessed Jacob in spite of, not because of them. That is what He had to learn at the Jabbok, when the Angel of the Lord wrestled with him, yet refused to harm him, until Jacob won out with prayer and supplication. Of this night Jacob was reminded by his crippled hip the rest of his life.

There are people for whom the Lord has planned no mate. That is not all bad. A single life of contentment is certainly far better than a married life of constant misery. Besides, there is also a very important place in God's church for single people. How very useful many of these have been and are in God's kingdom. Paul felt that he could serve the Lord best by remaining single. The prophetess Anna was a widow for eighty four years, yet served a useful life in the church. And what would we ever do without those who serve as teachers in our schools and fill in other useful positions?

The same applies to married couples without children. It is true that a home without children hardly seems complete. What a joy children are in the home, and what a pleasure to their parents even in later life. Yet also couples without children serve a purpose that those with a family never can. Maybe the Lord does intend them to remain childless, so that they can serve him better in that capacity.

The solution to our problem is always in prayer. God tells us in His Word to make all our needs known

to Him in prayer and supplication with thanksgiving. It is not only proper, but even requisite that young men and young women who desire a mate ask the Lord to bring them one of His choice. Dating, going steady, engagements, and marriage should all be accompanied by much prayer. Every step of the way you must know that you are walking in the way of the Lord.

The same holds true for couples who have no children of their own. whether they continue as they are, or whether they adopt, this should be done by way of prayer and supplication under the guidance of the Lord. We may never venture out without Him. David said, "I have set the Lord always before me: because he is at my right hand, I shall not be moved." (Psalm 16:8) And Asaph said, "Thou hast holden me by my right hand. Thou shalt guide me with thy counsel, and afterward receive me to glory." (Psalm 73:23b,24)

That same rule applies to our whole life. Our lives must become lives of prayer, constant communion with God, committing all our way to Him. What a grief we save ourselves by seeking His guidance, and submitting to His will. That was the secret of Paul's life, as he tells us, "I have learned, in whatsoever state I am, therewith to be content." (Phil. 4:11b).

I must be reminded of that when I am driving my car and when I am standing in line at the check out counter. No, it is better that I have that in mind at all times.

WRITING CONTEST

Athens: Then and Now

by Susan Adams

Athens is the capital city of Greece. It is located on a plain near the southern coastline. Greeks first occupied Athens around 1900 B.C. The earliest settlements began on the large, flat-topped hill of Acropolis, which was protected by steep slopes on all sides except the west. The city eventually grew around the fortified hill. Athens was one of the first city - states, an independent region including a main city which governed itself. In Athens developed the first democratic government.

The people of Athens first tried to build their society on their city-state. Their city and its government was supposed to give their lives meaning. This failed since the city was not adequate to be a base for their society.

The Athenians worshiped many gods. They believed that these gods had human forms and made mistakes, were limited in power, but supposedly lived forever. Some Athenians realized that their gods were childish and unworthy of worship. So they turned to philosophy and tried to discover the meaning of life.

Paul came to Athens on one of his missionary journeys. He fled from Berea when Jews came to persecute him. As he waited for Silas and Timothy, he saw that the city was "wholly given to idolatry." Paul debated and argued with Jews in their synagogues and idol worshippers in their temples, in the market, or wherever he was.

Athens was one of the first Gentile cities to hear the Gospel preached. Paul was encountered by Epicureans and Stoics, philosophers who were searching for happiness and the meaning of life. The Bible explains, "For all the Athenians and strangers which were there spent their time in nothing else, but either to tell or hear some new thing." This shows what a great hold philosophy had on the people of Athens. Then Paul stood up on Mars Hill and began to preach. He rebuked the Athenians for their superstitions. He eloquently explained who God is and how to worship Him. God was now commanding all men everywhere to repent. Some thought he was introducing a new, strange god because he spoke of Jesus. They questioned him further about this "new doctrine". When the people heard of the resurrection, many mocked and did not believe. But God had His people here, too. A few followed Paul.

Many of the ideas and thoughts of the world today can be traced back to Athens. Like the Greeks in Bible times people today are searching for life's meaning and the way to happiness. They search for something to trust in: no longer do they put their hope in images but in things like money, health and youth. As in ancient Athens, today's world worships man in humanism as well as worshiping the human body and the human mind. We as God's people not only reject the many gods set forth by the Athenians, but we also reject the confidence of today's man in man and the passing things of this world. We know that Christ is our only comfort in life and in death because He has given us a new spiritual life and mind.

A Most Wonderful Gift

I have a gift
It was given to me
not wrapped with ribbons or bows
no, it's not even tangible
it is the most glorious gift
anyone could ever give
Only, no one could give this gift
No one human-
Only God
He gave me this gift
And because of this gift
I can live my life
to the fullest for Him
This gift is the gift of faith.

Thank You, God!

- Linda Pikkert

BOOK REVIEW

by Tom Bergman

Lloyd-Jones, Dr. Martin (1988). Safe in the World. Crossway Books: Illinois; 157 pp. $11.00 (hardcover).

We all need the preaching to hear the Word (Romans 10:14). Often, it is helpful to use other readings and devotionals to help us in understanding the Word of God. These aid our feeble minds with God's truths before us.

Safe in the World, a collection of sermons by Dr. Lloyd Jones, helps us understand the truth of our pilgrimage on this earth. The topic is addressed in John 17:6-19, a section of Christ's prayer for His own. The author expounds the text in a series of twelve sermons given at the Westminster Chapel in 1952-1953. In a nutshell, the book proclaims the sovereignty of God, and the assurance of salvation in Christ because of His sovereignty. Not of this world, yet safe in it.

In strong favor of the book as recommended reading, I point out its emphasis of the sovereignty of God. Of course, Christ's prayer cannot be studied without this vital truth, and with it, the preacher makes these studies chilling, and very real. Another good aspect of the book is its focus on the work of salvation. It is highly focused, very Scriptural (replete with KJV reference texts), and very good for us to read and understand with respect to our life and safety in this world. Two of the sermons (chapters) are exceptional: "Not of This World" (v. 9) and "The Name of God" (v. 6-8). All this makes Safe in the World an excellent study of Jehovah's wonderful work of grace.

My only criticism is the book's readability. I'm sure these were twelve powerful sermons, but their being transposed into book form makes the reading a bit slow.

Once again, I recommend Safe in the World for everyone. (See also Saved in Eternity, by Dr. Lloyd Jones on John 17:1-5). It is God's Word preached, and it is delightful to be treated to twelve extra sermons. So enjoy it for yourself. The book is a great study guide/devotional and sharpens our perspective concerning our safety as God's chosen living in a world of sin.

Depression: A Spiritual Illness

by Mark DeKraker

Do the responsibilities and cares of this life seem at times to be too much for you to bear? Have you ever felt despair, or what we might call "the blues" due to the circumstances of your life? Many, if not all of us, would probably admit to experiencing feelings such as these at one time or another. One might wonder if a Christian can experience depression, and if so, what can be done to overcome those anxious, despairing feelings. To further examine these questions, it would be helpful to look at how the world views depression, and compare this to what we find in God's Word.

Depression is an affective disorder, meaning that the primary disturbance is in the mood of the person. It differs from "normal", mood swings in the degree or extreme nature of the mood, as well as in the duration of the mood. There are four basic types of depression. The first is "normal" depression which is considered to be a normal emotion. It is characterized by feelings of sadness, despair, frustration and unhappiness. The second type of depression is grief. Again, this is considered to be normal, an appropriate response to an identifiable external loss. Grief typically subsides over a period of time. The third type of depressing is called "mild" depression which is more severe than a normal mood swing. It typically persists for a longer period of time, and the reason for the depression is less obvious. Finally, there is severe depression, during which the person may loose contact with reality, or may experience suicidal tendencies.

Depression is a disorder which is characterized by numerous symptoms. There may be sleep disturbances, loss of appetite, anxiety, symptoms of physical illness, and either extreme inactivity or agitation. A person who is suffering depression usually has more than one of these symptoms, but not all symptoms are typically present at one time.

According to the world's view, there are a number of factors which are etiological, or help to explain the causes for depression. Genetic make-up is one explanation given. Biological reasons, such as a chemical deficiency, is another. Environmental stresses, and specific life events are factors which are believed to play a very big role in depression. Work stress, school stress, and specific events in one's life would be included in this category. Finally, there are what the world calls psychodynamic factors, which would include low self-esteem.

Treatment of depression depends on the degree or severity of the depression. A more mild depression might be treated with medication while more severe depression may require hospitalization. A treatment technique which is less commonly found today than in the past is the use of electro-convulsive therapy, which removes the patient's memory of events which have recently happened. Still another form of treatment is counseling, and it is not unusual to combine more than one of the treatment techniques in an effort to reduce depression. Even so, it is estimated that 50% of those who experience depression will develop it again at some point in their lives, while 15% become chronically depressed.

Knowing then what the world says about depression, how should the Christian view depression in the light of God's Word? While there is no mention of depression specifically in the Bible, it does speak about being filled with anxious care, which often accompanies depression. The Bible tells us to cast our cares upon God in I Peter 5:7. In the sermon on the mount, Christ tells us that we must not be consumed by earthly care, but to seek first after the Kingdom of God, and He will supply us with earthly necessities (Matthew 6:25-34). From these and other passages, we can learn the following. First, because we live in a world which has been cursed by God, and both by nature and action, we sin against God, we too, can experience the spiritual illness of depression. When we are filled with earthly cares and depression, it is the result of a lack of trust in God and His providence. This lack of trust in Him is in reality, sin. Secondly, our cares and resulting depression are most typically regarding things over which we have no control. "Which one of you by taking thought can add one cubit unto his stature? (Matthew 6:27). Finally, when we put our trust in God, He will provide us with what we truly need in this life.

One might think that the Biblical instruction regarding anxiety and depression would be more easi-

ly applied if we lived in those times. But what about in today's world, when life is fast paced and the responsibilities are many? We should bear some things in mind if this is what we think. God commands us to cast our cares upon Him. When we do not, we sin. God's Word can not in any sense be thought of as limited by time, or appropriate only for those living in Biblical times. Secondly, can we really say that we have more to be concerned about or depressed about than those in Biblical times? In Psalm 43, David writes, "Why art thou cast down, 0 my soul and why art thou disquieted within me?" And in Psalm 55, David speaks of the terrors of death, fearfulness and trembling, and horror that overwhelmed him. Remember, this is King David, whose life was in danger both from worldly enemies and his own son who sought his throne. Certainly, the cares and responsibilities during Biblical times were no more trivial than those of today.

How then, must the Christian deal with depression? Medication and Christian counseling have an appropriate place in treatment, but God has provided a fool-proof cure. his cure is found in Philippians 4 and was the subject of a sermon Professor Decker gave at Southwest some years ago. "Be careful for nothing but in every thing by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known to God, and the peace of God, which passeth all understanding shall keep your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus." This is not instruction to be care-less, rather, we must have proper care and concern for things and the circumstances of our lives. We are instructed to let our needs be made known to God in prayer. One cannot properly pray to God when the heart is full of anxious concerns. Prayer must be made with thanksgiving, knowing and believing that God will answer our prayer. God will provide a peace which passeth all understanding and He will keep our hearts and minds through Christ. This thought is echoed in the words of Psalter #150. "Thy burden now cast on the Lord, And He shall thy weakness sustain; the righteous who trust in His Word, Unmoved shall forever remain."

If you have some great honour coming to you, if you are expecting to meet some great personage - a king or a queen or somebody in a very prominent position - you will be preparing for it days and weeks and perhaps months ahead. You will be preparing yourself, preparing your clothes, preparing your deportment, discovering what you have to do, what to say, and especially what not to do. Your whole life will be governed by the expected event, everything else will recede in importance and in significance. The prospect will dominate your life and you will live for it and prepare for it. That is precisely the argument of the New Testament: "Every man that hath this hope in him, purifieth himself, even as he is pure" As Christians we do not really belong to this world; we are "strangers and pilgrims" in it. Such is the biblical argument.

I have often used a simple, almost childlike analogy to bring out this point. It is what parents always tell their children when they send them to a party at Christmas time or some other time: "Now remember that you behave yourself." And for this reason the children have to remember who they are, that they are the representatives of the whole family. Now that is the kind of argument that should work with the Christian. When he is confronted by the devil, and the principalities and powers, he should not be deluded, or misled. He realizes what is happening. He says, "I do not belong to you, I am no longer a citizen of your kingdom. I am a member of Christ's kingdom. My citizenship is in heaven and I am preparing myself for heaven." That confession puts life and vigour and strength into him.

- p. 70, 71, "The Christian Soldier" by Dr. Martyn Lloyd-Jones, Baker Book House 1977

Dear Readers,

The staff at the Beacon Lights would like to continue to provide its readers with the Church News. We have received many comments that most of you have missed it in the past few months. At this time we are currently looking at a new format that would rely on individual participation over against bulletin clerks providing the information. At this time it would be up to you the reader to mail us the information. This way the news printed would be as up to date as possible, based on the information you have supplied to us.

We at the Beacon Lights look forward to your eager participation and prompt response so that a long anticipated rubric will quickly reappears.

For example:
Birth:
Name of child
Parents names
Birthdate
Appropriate Scripture text (optional)
Siblings names (optional)
Grandparents names (optional)

Engagement:
Bride's name
Groom's name
Parents names
Wedding date/site
Newlywed's future address

Mail all information within 1 month to:
Lori Ellerbroek
14320 Pine Creek Drive
Holland, MI 49424

Yours in Christ,
The Beacon Lights Staff

Theme: **SPIRITUAL YOUTH IN A CARNAL WORLD**

SPEECH 1: **In Entertainment** (Rev. A. Spriensma)
SPEECH 2: **At Work** (Rev. K. Koole)
SPEECH 3: **In Dating** (Rev. R. Van Overloop)

Text: Ephesians 5:8-21 "Walk as children of light . . . . Proving what is acceptable to the Lord. . . . Redeeming the time; for the days are evil."

DATES: August 2 - 6

Dordt College
Sioux Center, Iowa

There will be separate housing on campus and some separate activities for older young people.