BEACON LIGHTS

They that go down to the sea in ships, that do business in great waters; These see the works of the Lord, and his wonders in the deep.

Psalm 107:23-24

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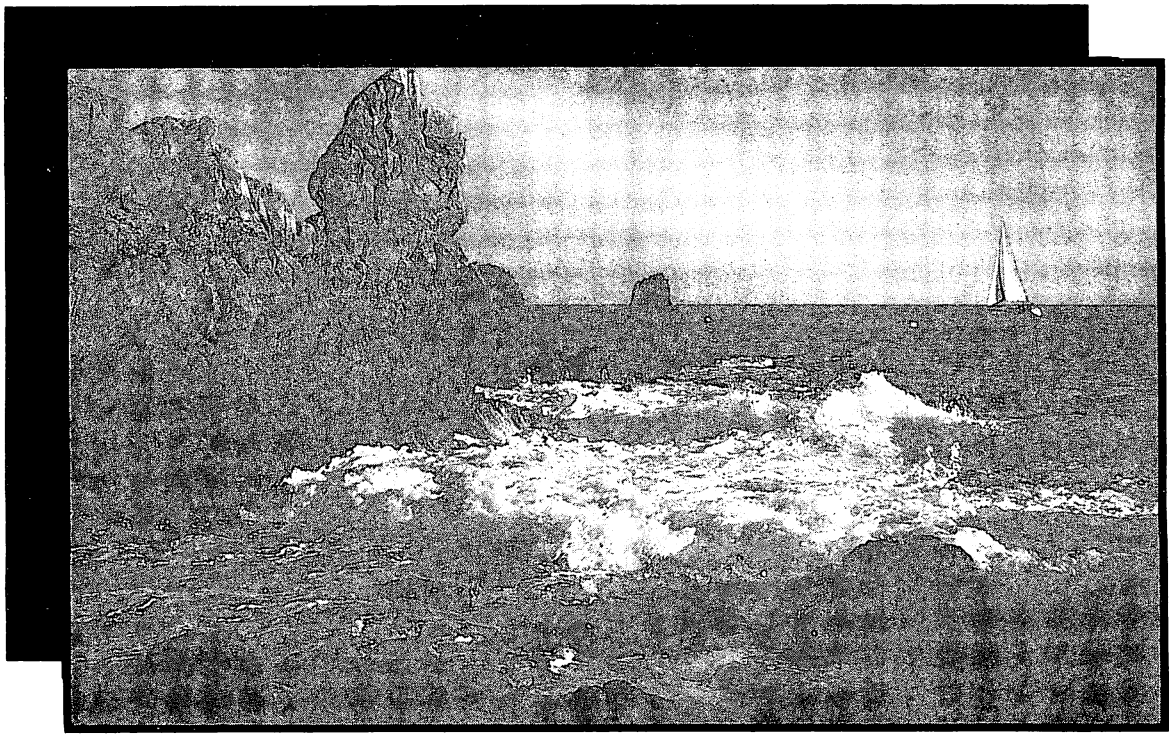

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Common Sense: Why We Don't Have It

by Steve Spencer

Has a teacher or a parent ever said to you, "why don't you just use your common sense," or have you ever said, "if he would just use his common sense . . .?" In our everyday language we often invoke the notion of common sense. Yet when you use this term have you ever thought about what it really means?

The idea of common sense implies that people have the ability to figure things out, to understand what is going on in a situation, and to discern a proper course of action. After all, the first part of this term is "common" implying that this ability is something that everyone has; it is common to all. The second part of this term is "sense" which suggests that this ability allows people to perceive or understand. Together these two terms imply that all people have a common ability to perceive and understand our world. When one breaks down this concept, it is plain, the idea of common sense is unbiblical, worldly, and dangerous.

The Bible teaches us that we are totally depraved, that all our thoughts are vain and unprofitable. Psalm 94:11 says, "The Lord knows the thoughts of man, that they are vanity." In Job 5:13-14 we read, "He taketh the wise in their own craftiness: and the counsel of the froward is carried headlong. They meet with darkness in the daytime, and grope in the noonday as in the night." The Apostle Paul summarizes these passages in I Corinthians 3:19-20 "For the wisdom of this world is foolishness with God. For it is written, He taketh the wise in their own craftiness. And again, The Lord knoweth the thoughts of the wise, that they are vain." The Belgic Confession summarizes this teaching by saying when man fell into sin he had "thus become wicked, perverse, and corrupt in all his ways, . . . for all the light which is in us is changed to darkness. . . Who can speak of his knowledge, since the natural man receiveth not the spirit of God? In short, who dare suggest any thought, since he knows that we are not sufficient of ourselves to think anything as of ourselves . . ." Likewise the Canons of Dordt teach us that after the Fall, man has "entailed on himself blindness of mind, horrible darkness, vanity and perverseness of judgement . . ." This biblical notion stands in striking contrast to the worldly notion of common sense. God teaches us there is no ability in man, certainly no ability that is common to man, to perceive and understand our world. Worldly wisdom tells us that there are some things that everyone just knows. God tells us man knows nothing apart from what He reveals in scripture.

Why do I say this is a worldly concept? This concept shows its worldly character in that it elevates man and claims for man something that belongs to God. In I Corinthian 1:20 we read that "Where is the wise? where is the scribe? where is the disputer of this world? hath not God made foolish the wisdom of this world?" When people claim that they have common sense that allows them to perceive and understand the world they make a claim for themselves that God establishes as foolishness. Indeed, social psychology, which I teach, has numerous example of the foolish and self-serving nature of common sense. If you ask people, "Do opposites attract?" they will say, "certainly that is common sense." However, if you ask them, "Do birds of a feather flock together?" they are equally likely to say that this

statement is common sense. Clearly only one of these statements can be true. If you ask a married couple who work together on a task, let's say washing the windows, how much they each put into the task, both the husband and the wife are likely to claim that they did more than half. And Lake Wobegon, Minnesota isn't the only place where people believe all the children are above average. Almost all of us when asked how nice or smart we are will say that we are above average. Sinful human nature, time and again, makes the claim that it knows more than it does and that it is better than it is.

Because common sense has this worldly, unbiblical character it is a dangerous concept. We are tempted to try to use our common sense; afterall, we put more faith in our ability to perceive things than is justified. I have heard people make the claim that on issues where the Bible does not provide clear mandates then people should rely on common sense. Although at first this may seem to be a reasonable position, on further reflection it can lead one astray. Although the Bible does not give us clear instructions for all the minute details of our lives, for example whether we should eat at a restaraunt for dinner or eat at home, it does provide basic principles for all our actions. We must never turn to our own knowledge and perceptions to guide our actions. Our whole life must be an attempt to live according to God's law. This is true wisdom. As in Proverbs 3:5 God tells us that we must "trust in the Lord with all thine heart ; and lean not unto thine own understanding." For the Christian, dependence on common sense is forbidden. We must walk in the God's way not our own.

From The Editor

Welcome to another issue of the *Beacon Lights*! It is with regret that the staff, and especially I, say that Daniel and Sharon Kleyn have resigned. Daniel's work in the seminary, and their work with the Reformed Free Publishing Association made it impossible for them to continue working for the *Beacon Lights*. Their hard work, guidance, and dedication will be missed.

There are many inspiring and thought-provoking articles this month. Steve Spencer wrote the editorial for this month, giving me a break for which I am most thankful. The second half of Calvin Kalsbeek's speech from the 1995 Young People's Convention is included this month, so if you started to read his speech last month, I would encourage you to continue reading it. We also have the first part of Pastor Mahtani's convention speech. Whether or not you heard the speech, I would recommend that you read it.

I received a most moving article written by a saint from Singapore. Tam Boon Hwee fought a long and brave fight against cancer, but the Lord took her home two months ago, leaving her husband and four children. We would do well to remember this family in our thoughts and prayers.

Both John Huizenga and Tom Bergman begin a new series of articles this month. John's rubric deals with science and scripture. This relationship has been quite controversial in the past, and many Christians have become disillusioned by the "authority" of scientists. John's series is designed to show how science is to be viewed from a Christian perspective. Tom Bergman's rubric is an acrostic of CHURCH FAMILY. He included his first article this month, which is "The Christian's Tour of Duty." Reverend Hanko also included an article this month which is to be the first article of a few articles. He takes the setting of his theme from an Old Testament story. That is all I'll tell you. You will have to read the article to discover the rest!

Pastor Bruinsma submitted an article for Mike Feenstra's Dating and Marriage rubric. Pastor Bruinsma first used this as a speech at Hope College for a conference about that subject. We also

have a speech by Pastor Gritters, and that will be included in an upcoming edition.

We have a Christmas story by Mr. J.P. de Klerk from New Zealand. It is an interesting story, and appropriate for this time of the year. Barb Dykstra included a book review on Gertrude Hoeksma's book *The Farbers*, and there is also an order blank on the last page for this book. We must not forget, of course, Connie Meyer's "Little Lights."

I would like to clear up one thing about my editorial in October. I stated that I think it would be good to have a denomination-wide family conference. I think that this should be a conference separate from those which already exist, i.e., the Young People's Convention and the Young Adult's Convention held in Loveland Colorado. Both of these are a valuable asset to our denomination, and I do not wish to downplay their contributions. May God be with you in the coming month.

Bible Quiz

1. Jesus was born in:
   a.) Nazareth b.) Galilee
   c.) Egypt d.) Bethlehem

2. What was the name of the prophetess who waited to see Jesus at the temple?
   a.) Apphia b.) Elizabeth
   c.) Anna d.) Mary

3. What did Elizabeth's neighbors and cousins want to call her son?
   a.) John b.) Peter
   c.) Jesus d.) Zechariah

4. Joseph and Mary presented Jesus at the temple after how long?
   a.) Three days b.) Eight days
   c.) Forty days d.) Ninenty days

5. Why did Joseph go to Galilee instead of Judea after he returned from Egypt?
   a.) He was afraid Herod would kill him
   b.) He was from Galilee
   c.) He was afraid Herod's son would kill him
   d.) Galilee is closer to Egypt than Judea

6. Which prophet said that a virgin would be with child?
   a.) Isaiah b.) Hosea
   c.) Jeremiah d.) Malachi

7. Which prophet said that Christ would be born in Bethlehem?
   a.) Malachi b.) Isaiah
   c.) Micah d.) Hosea

8. Which prophet said that Christ would come from Egypt?
   a.) Micah b.) Habakkuk
   c.) Isaiah d.) Hosea

9. Why do many Christians celebrate Christ's birthday on December 25?
   a.) Christmas replaced the Jewish tradition of Hanukkah
   b.) December 25 is nine months after the spring equinox
   c.) The shepherds visited Christ on New Year's Day—one week after His birth
   d.) Tradition holds that this is when Christ was born

10. The tradition of celebrating Christmas with a Christmas tree comes from:
    a.) Martin Luther, who used a lighted tree to represent the glory of heaven to children
    b.) German citizens who used a decorated tree in a play to depict the tree of life
    c.) An old tradition that Joseph, Mary, and Jesus hid behind a pine tree when fleeing Herod
    d.) The Roman custom of decorating homes for Kalends

Answers on page 10

Daniel: Godly Choices

Part 2

by Calvin Kalsbeek

This is the conclusion of the speech Mr. Kalsbeek give at the 1995 Young Poeples Convention.

Young People, be not deceived! In Daniel, God provided a powerful example for us to follow. Daniel understood that if in the beginning of his sojourn in Babylon he joined the activities of Babylon, in the end his lifestyle and that of Babylon would be no different. You can be sure that if Daniel and his three friends had from day one eaten of the king's meat; when it was time to bow before the king's image, they would have been kissing the dirt along with all the rest of the Jews that were there. The same is true for us, if we participate in Babylon's films and music now, sooner or later Babylon's lifestyle and ours will be indistinguishable. Further, Babylon's way of thinking will have an impact on every decision we make.

Let's look briefly at two of most important choices you are in the process of making, or will be making, in the next few years of your life to illustrate this.

One of those decisions involves choosing your life's calling. If you buy into Babylon's lifestyle as expressed in its movies and music; money, fame, and power, will be what motivate you, rather than serving the God who has saved you. Oh, it may not happen over night, but it will happen. Maybe it will happen the way it did with a young man of Oaklawn, Ill. A recent issue of *The Banner* reported that he signed to play baseball for the Dodger's class A team in San Bernadino. "He didn't play on Sunday when he was growing up but he does now. Still he doesn't have a problem with Sunday games, he said, because they don't start till after 3 PM and don't interfere with his attending worship services." How silly! How foolish! Sounds a lot like Babylonian blather doesn't it?

Young women, what about your life's calling? I'm convinced that there is no group under the attack of Babylon more than you are today; and there is no group more important to the church than you are. I suppose Satan knows that, which is why his attack on you is so fierce. You very really experience it don't you? It's career time! Careers, careers careers, that's all you hear. Every where you turn it seems there is pressure to do everything but be a wife and stay-at-home mother. (Not that long ago, that was the only kind of mother there was.) Believe me, the church can do without secretaries, dental assistants, doctors, lawyers, nurses, and even teachers; but it cannot do without godly mothers, mothers who are willing to give their lives to the service of God in this way. Think about that, please!

What about the choice of a husband, or wife? Young men, is your exposure to Babylon's lifestyle going to have an impact on your choice here? Are Babylon's standards, the pretty faces and the shapely legs, your standards? Or is it more important that she with you loves the Lord? Young men and young women, where do you look for friends of the opposite sex? Are you looking in Babylon, or Jerusalem? Are you looking at the beach or at a singspiration? The circuit in town, or the Young People's activity of your church? Studio 28, or the Bible class at Southeast PRC? The dance hall, or Hudsonville Choral Society? Top of the Rock, or the Spring Retreat? Common sense should tell us in which of these places we are more apt to find a godly mate. And it's really not that difficult to distinguish the meat from the pulse, is it?

Just an aside, in my opinion, many of us give up looking for a mate in the right places too soon. We get to be 20 or 21 and decide to look elsewhere. We use an excuse like, "I know all the girls in our churches so well they're like my sisters." Or, "they're so immature." Let me tell you something 18 and 19 year-old guys. Don't write off those 15 year old girls in the row in front of you. When you are 23 or 24, they will be 19. A few years can make a lot of difference. (Believe me, I know this from experience.) My point is, be persistent; keep looking in the right places and the Lord will bless your faith-

fulness. He always does! His faithfulness to Daniel and his three friends was not an exception, it's the *rule*. You remember what happened at crunch time, don't you? King Nebuchadnezzer "found them ten times better than all the magicians and astrologers that were in all his realm," (Dan. 1:20). Be consistent! Be persistent! God will bless it!

THE POSSIBILITY OF MAKING DANIEL'S CHOICE OURS

So far we have examined Daniel's choice and have tried to apply the standard he used in making that choice to the choices we make. But let's get *real*! It seems like everything is stacked against us, i.e. Satan, this world, and a sinful flesh that is attracted to it. It seems impossible for us to succeed, especially in the day and age in which we live. Let me assure you, brothers and sisters in Christ, nothing could be further from the truth. We do not fight Babylon for victory, we fight *in* victory! That was true for Daniel, and that's true for us. That was true from the beginning where we were promised that the serpent's head would be crushed.

In fact, to gain that victory our sovereign Lord is pleased to use Babylon. Think about that once. Without Babylon there could be no battle of faith! Without Babylon we could not share in the sufferings of Christ (Col. 1:24). So, according to the sovereign good pleasure of our God, Babylon's purpose is to serve the church. But, He also gives the Church that which is necessary to achieve the victory. Let me site some examples: For one thing, God gives us parents, how important they are in helping us resist the king's meat. Sometimes we would rather not have their help. Sometimes we desire to leave the home for more independence. This is a serious mistake. Many times we put ourselves at risk by leaving home and trying to go it on our own. Secondly, God provides friends. We cannot over estimate their importance as we battle Babylon. Later on this morning we will be discussing the topic," Choosing Friends and Maintaining Friendships." Hopefully in the process of our discussions we will see how important friends are for our spiritual welfare. We need only look at the experience of Daniel and his friends, how they stood together, and what a blessing that was for them. In addition God provides the Church, which equips us to fight Babylon, and where we are continually reminded of the victory that is ours, a victory which was won at the cross when sin and death were conquered. It's no wonder then, that we fight *in* victory!

But what about those of us who are already on a steady diet of king's meat and wine? For you let me tell a story: Once upon a time farmer Jones was talking to his neighbor about Titan, his prize work horse. Mr. Jones had many good things to say about Titan, particularly about how strong he was, and how well he worked in the field, but he had one major complaint: Titan ate too much. Jones went on to explain the remedy he was using to correct Titan's appetite problem. It seems Mr. Jones was supplementing Titan's diet with sawdust. Each day he would add more sawdust and give the horse less grain. Jones bragged to his neighbor about how well this feeding program was working. Furthermore Titan seemed oblivious to what was going on. About a month later the neighboring farmer observed that the pasture where farmer Jones kept Titan was empty, so he asked about it. Jones replied, "The new feeding program was working fine, but just when I had Titan on a total sawdust diet the dumb horse keeled over and died." If you're on a diet of king's meat and wine, be warned. Titan didn't know any better, but you do! The king's meat is spiritual sawdust! With Daniel oppose it! Use Daniel's example for encouragement!

Yes, Daniel had to leave Jerusalem, the foundation of peace, and go to Babylon, the gate of the Satan. And so do you. It doesn't matter that you would prefer not to go. It doesn't matter that your parents would prefer to shield you from Babylon. It doesn't matter that you are still very young. It doesn't matter that you are spiritual citizens of Jerusalem. God, according to His sovereign good pleasure, has placed you in Babylon. Accept the reality of that! Now make Daniel's choice your choice! Reject the king's meat, eat pulse! Reject the king's wine, drink water!

Mr. Kalsbeek is a member of Hope Protestant Reformed Church and a teacher in Covenant Christian High School in Grand Rapids, Michigan.

My Encounter with Cancer

by Tan Boon Hwee

Cancer History

September 1992	Operation to remove malignant tumor in right tear duct.
October 1992	Operation to remove one neck lymph node and bone between right eye and nose in case tumor has spread to these areas.
June/July 1993	Radiation to right jaw as tumor has spread there.
July/August 1994	Tests confirmed irradiated tumor has grown again. Operation to remove part of right jaw recommended.
November 1994	Operation to remove right jaw bone, all the right neck lymph nodes and some facial nerves but facial skin retained.
February/March 1995	Several tumors on right facial and neck skin discovered.
March/April 1995	Radiation to right side of face and neck.

When I first knew I had cancer, only a few friends (not even my parents) were informed. Around that time, my mother told me about the death of one of her close church mates, due to cancer. That sister had been very zealous for the Lord, and was instrumental to my mother's spiritual growth. She told me how this woman had to go in and out of hospital, and towards the last stage, underwent a major operation before her death. I told God then, "Lord, I don't want to go through all that and still die of cancer in the end! I'd rather die earlier!" Little did I know, that God in His providence, has chartered the course for me to go in and out of hospital, for tests after tests and treatments after treatments that traumatize and weaken me more and more.

Besides coping with the stress of cancer, my family and I had to go through exceptionally more trials, especially after my radiation in 1993. While we try to rejoice in tribulations, there were times when I developed a kind of numbness to protect myself from more emotional pain. Our marriage and family life also became affected. As we look back now however, I can only say that God's ways are unsearchable, His grace has no measure and I am but a wretched sinful creature.

When my jaw tumor reoccurred last year, I was very sure that psychologically and physically, I wasn't ready for the jaw surgery. Through circumstances which we are sure it's the Lord's leading, we had known of a health institute in USA. When we called them, we were told "come *before* the surgery." We prayed earnestly for God's will to be done. I asked God to give me one more chance. "Help me. I cannot achieve this on my own. Grant me the miracle of 2 cures:

(i) to change the undesirable traits in my personality, so that my children can see in me, a better mother, and my husband in me, a better wife.

(ii) To grant me a cure from cancer whether through surgery or alternative means."

I didn't want to go all the way to USA if it wasn't the Lord's will. God opened the way. I was introduced to a program, which I subsequently followed to see if it worked for me while I delayed the operation which was scheduled in early September.

All through the subsequent weeks that followed, we requested for church prayer support as we sought for the Lord's will. My frequent trips to McRitchie Reservoir for exercise and meditations on God's Word were one of the most wonderful times

of my life as I got strengthened in the Lord. Later I was encouraged to go to Germany for another program which had worked for some terminal cancer patients. However, when I went for the operation in November 1994, I was ready—I had peace, as I was sure it was God's will for me. I wrote letters to my husband, sister and children. I spoke and sang "Jesus Loves Me This I Know" into a tape for my children to remember my voice. Even if I survived the operation, I might not be able to speak normally again.

Should I become inoperable because the tumor had intruded an artery leading to the brain, I trusted in God's grace to prepare me for death. Yet on the other hand, I told God "I want to live on, despite the sufferings. You know it's not because I love the world and want to hang on to enjoy life more. I just want to be able to fulfill my role as a mother to my four young children and nurture them in the Lord, and be a helpmeet to my husband." I thank God for carrying me through the surgery and for the church members' prayers and encouragements.

Never in my life had I been in such a terrible state of health. Emotionally, I was very vulnerable. What carried me through were my constant meditations on these verses in the Bible.

> *Psalm 118:17-18: "I shall not die, but live, and declare the works of the Lord. The Lord hath chastened me sore: but he hath not given me over unto death."*
>
> *Psalm 118:24: "This is the day which the Lord hath made, we will rejoice and be glad in it."*
>
> *Psalm 37:5: "Commit thy way unto the Lord; trust also in him; and he shall bring it to pass."*

I thank God that I need not go for speech therapy after the surgery. One of the things which I struggled and managed to overcome was the disappointment over the loss of control over the right side of my mouth due to the removal of some facial nerves. I had told my surgeon while we wrestled over the issue of my operation. "It's not the fear of deformity that makes me reluctant to go for the operation. I believe by God's grace He'll help me to overcome it. It's the belief that having gone through previous operations and treatment, this major one (at this advanced stage) will bring my health all the way down and make it very hard for my body to continue to fight cancer." So after the operation, when I saw my crooked mouth, I prayed to God sadly "I was prepared to accept deformity and disability. Now I cannot even have my radiant smile to brighten my face." However, faced with the reality of death, my crooked mouth, bad scarring, impaired hearing and stares from people, are nothing.

My struggle to regain health after the operation was uphill, lonely and ridden with assaults from Satan. At one stage when my sufferings seemed beyond me, Satan mocked me. "You wrote in your testimony before the operation that God has taught you to accept the fact that if all that you've suffered, or will suffer were to bring just one person to repentance/revival, it would still be worth it. Is it really worth it? Weren't you talking 'big'?" I am not in my dying moments yet, and I still believe that God can heal me if He wills. I have learned to surrender my all, be prepared to die if that is His Will and stop questioning "God must you make me die as well so as to bless others?"

At one stage, I was devastated by thoughts like, "Why struggle on to prolong your life, and make others suffer? Give up the will to live. You are not indispensable. Let someone else who may do a better job take over." By God's grace, He has enabled me to overcome these.

I thank God for the little ways He shows that He still remembers me, cares for me and provides grace for every need. A card or note will arrive from someone. Once even a stranger gave me words of encouragement. Recently a child sent a letter to me. My tears just rolled down as I read her letter.

During my recent radiation, I couldn't talk for nine days as my ulcers hurt terribly and my vocal chords were affected. With the temporary break in radiation to the neck area, I could talk again. Now I treasure every moment I can use my speech to instruct my children, and instill values in them, to praise God, etc. I thank God for every additional day He gives me and for the little things that I can still enjoy or do, like chewing a soft fruit, going for a walk, enjoying the breeze. What matters more is no longer "Has my tumor shrunk or grown?" but, "In what way can I please God today and live life to the fullest?" I'll need much, much more grace to face the increased sufferings in the days ahead.

Through these years of battling cancer, I am fully aware that it had also been a spiritual warfare. That I had been able to come thus far, is a testimony to God's grace. He strengthened me through His Word, and some books that were given to me. He prepared me years ago. Firstly he gave me a firm foundation as a young Christian in my teens when I attended a counsellors' training course where I was challenged to memorize God's words, to seek to encourage and to help others, thus helping my own spiritual growth. Often, the verses that

encourage me now, were verses that I had memorized as a young Christian.

I must also thank God for giving me a mother whose strength in her own afflictions has been a great example to me. All her sharing with me when I was a little girl made lasting impact. I feel that a mother's sacrifice is not in vain. I am also thankful for a supportive husband whose love and spiritual steadfastness are some of his gifts to me that I will always treasure till death do us part. We must all face death one day. What really matters after all?

I would like to share a song that's especially meaningful to me.

Be Thou my vision, O lord of my heart;
Naught be all else to me, save that Thou art;
Thou my best thoughts, by day or by night,
Waking or sleeping, Thy presence my light.

Riches I heed not, nor man's empty praise;
Thou mine inheritance, now and always:
Thou and Thou only, first in my heart,
High King or heaven, my treasure Thou art.

Tan Boon Hwee was taken to glory early in October, leaving a dear husband and four children ages 3 through 11. She was a member of First Evangelical Reformed Church in Singapore.

Answers to Bible Quiz on page 5:

1. D. *Luke 2:4*
2. C. *Luke 2:36-38*
3. D. *Luke 1:59*
4. C. *Luke 2:22 and Leviticus 12:2-4. Mary was unclean for seven days, and then had to pureify herself for thirty three days. Seven plus thirty three is forty.*
5. *Both B (Luke 1:26) and C (Matthew 2:22).*
6. A. *Isaiah 7:14*
7. C. *Micah 5:2*
8. D. *Hosea 11:1*
9. B. *Christmas is on December 25, nine months after March 25, the old day for the spring equinox. The spring equinox was considered a time of renewal and rebirth, a concept associated with the conception of Christ. Thus, Jesus was assumed to have been born nine months later. Christians celebrated Christmas on December 25 as early as 336 A.D.*
10. *Actually all the answers are correct, but most authorities say that the one which most influenced our modern day Christmas tree is B, German citizens who used a tree to depict the tree of life in a play.*

Creation through the Spectacles of Scripture

Creation through the Spectacles of Scripture

—An Introduction—

by John Huizenga

The *Beacon Lights* is introducing a new rubric entitled "Creation Through the Spectacles of Scripture." Anything from plants to planets, from stars to psychology, even physics or mathematics are possible topics. The scope is broad, but not just any article on creation will do. What follows are some guidelines for the rubric.

In the first place, the articles will reflect the Protestant Reformed distinctive emphasis on the sovereignty of God. We maintain strongly the absolute sovereignty of God in salvation. When considering the creation, we need to carry that emphasis through by emphasizing the distinction between God as Creator and the creation as creature.

Such an emphasis will make these articles distinctly reformed. Broadly speaking, they will be distinct from anything found in scientific magazines produced by secular men. Almost everything written today about the wonders of creation emphasize in one way or another the great accomplishments of man or the greatness of the creature in itself. The creature is exalted to the position of Creator. Man has so exalted himself in the realm of science that we as Christians also are prone more than we think to wonder at the accomplishments of man in science rather than discover the glory of God in creation. Our goal in this rubric is to publish articles that will put science and the creation in the proper perspective.

Emphasis on God as the sovereign Creator will also make these articles distinct from writers who write from a Christian perspective, but yet are so enamored by the capacity of man to understand science that they compromise on their doctrine of scripture. This problem is especially evident when men give science the final authority to outline the early history of the world. Though some scientists may concede that God created the bare materials out of nothing, they often are so confident on science and scientific theories that they abandon Genesis 1 and try to explain how God formed the various creatures by means of an evolutionary process. Since the evolution idea is in sharp conflict with the plain teaching of Scripture which says "and God said, let there be...," the book of Genesis is explained as mere mythical stories with a moral message about the relationship between God and the world.

Often the scientist is unwilling to listen to the preacher who points out to him the serious problems which such an explanation raise with regard to salvation. The proud scientist is unwilling to reexamine his data and theories. The scientist who comes with his "scientific method" ought to be humbled when the Creator tells him that he has reached the wrong conclusions with his data and calculations. By nature, man wants to exalt his own abilities and we must be reminded continually that God is sovereign over salvation and also the creation. In this rubric, we are determined to maintain a reformed doctrine of Scripture which recognizes the Creator's absolute authority to describe the wonder of the act of creation which no science is able to dissect.

We borrow the title of our rubric from John Calvin. Calvin uses the analogy of "the spectacles of Scripture" to define the relationship between the Scriptures and science. He notes that the creation indeed reveals the glory of God, but that our spiritual eyes are so corrupted by the fall that we are unable to behold God's glory without the aid of Scripture. The Scriptures are essential for the proper understanding of every aspect of creation. Only with a proper understanding of creation are we able to glorify God as He demands when we consider the creation. We must use these spectacles and never attempt to modify them to suit man-centered goals.

In This rubric we would like to use the spectacles of Scripture to their full advantage. When we view creation through the spectacles of Scripture then we as believers acknowledge God as the Creator of all that we see, and we stand in awe of Him and give Him all praise. Calvin writes "There are as many miracles of divine power, as many marks of divine goodness, as many proofs of divine wisdom as there are individual things, either great or small" (Inst. I.xiv.21). We would like to publish articles that express that divine power, goodness and wisdom.

Calvin also points out in the same section that those who contemplate the creation through the spectacles of Scripture must "learn to make such an application to themselves as thoroughly to affect their hearts." Making such an application is probably the most difficult part. It involves finding the relation of the creation through the spectacles of Scripture, then we see Christ. Exactly how we see Christ in creation will be left to future articles in this rubric.

The creation and our redemption is so profound we can only expect to scratch the surface. Yet we are assured that when we look at creation through the spectacles of Scripture our labors will be fruitful. This rubric gives us an opportunity to express the power, glory and wisdom of God found in creation and explore the relationship between the physical creation and our redemption. All interested writers are invited to contribute.

John is a member of Southwest Protestant Reformed Church in Grandville, Michigan.

Christmas Hymn

Christmas is the time to sing
Praises to our heavenly King.
Jesus Christ, the Son of God,
Whom the saints and angels laud,
He was born in human frame,
At the time appointed came.
Shepherds in the fields that night
Were assured by angel bright
That no fearful time was this,
But a moment of great bliss.

Hist'ry's focal time was here,
God in flesh did now appear.
He—that Babe in manger bed
Was in truth the church's Head;
He the sacrifice would be
On the cross of Calvary.
So we celebrate this day!
May we sing and may we pray,
With uplifted hearts may raise
To our God a hymn of praise.

Thelma Westra

Watching Daily At My Gates

by Rev. J. Heys

December 1

Read Revelation 22:12-21.

Having entered the last month of this year, we have the awesome truth that we are closer to the end of this present world. For God has planned a certain day when Christ Jesus, our Saviour, will return. And, as we read a moment ago, He will come quickly with His reward. On that day His elect will not become afraid, but will be comforted fully. Does it comfort you that Christ is soon coming? Or does it fill you with terror? On that day God's promise to all His elect will be fulfilled; and they will enter with body and soul into an endless joyful life with their body and soul. Just look up all the blessedness presented in this last chapter in the Bible.

December 2

Read Isaiah 9:6.

Do you appreciate the truth which you read yesterday? You read the very comforting truth which we should consider, and for which God's elect are thankful. The believing children of God are spiritually those who love God, having a new spiritual life. And the Almighty God will send His Son as the Prince of Peace. Yes, this world is coming to its end. But look forward, and sing a new song to Jehovah, for the wonders He has wrought. Christ Jesus, our Saviour, when He returns brings to this earth a wonderful salvation of our bodies as well as our souls. Christ, the Prince of Peace, is scheduled to come and bring all the elect into heavenly glory with body and soul.

December 3

Read Psalm 25:14.

Has God revealed to you His covenant with its promise? If He did His secret is made known to you. For His secret will be fully revealed when His Son returns to glorify all His elect. Your physical eyes cannot see the rich blessedness of God's covenant. But the souls of His elect, born again people, will sing with their hearts. They will sing: "All that I am I owe to Thee. Thy wisdom, Lord, hath fashioned me." The awesome truth is whether we sing that truth with our hearts, as well as with our lips. We owe God thanks for every bit of our hearts, as well as with our lips. We owe God thanks for every bit of our salvation. God's wisdom saves our souls as well as our bodies. And He does not at all save our bodies, unless He has already saved our souls.

December 4

Read Psalm 66:16.

What our God does for us through His Son is what really counts. In the verse quoted above we read of some awesome blessings. What counts is what God does for our souls. Salvation is by no means merely what God does to our bodies. It is indeed a precious part of our salvation; and we need bodies in order to serve Him in love. But there will be no blessedness for our bodies unless our souls are blest. If our souls are not saved, our bodies will have to be cast into hell. He certainly will glorify our bodies so that our glorified souls may serve Him in love. Do you want salvation of your soul, so that you may use your body in acts of love of God? Then, indeed, you do want salvation.

December 5

Read Acts 5:31.

Does your heart have the joy of that salvation realized by our Saviour? Do you have the joy of forgiveness of all of your sins? Especially do you have the joy of being given love of God? If you have that, you have been exalted by God's right hand, whereby He exalted Christ Jesus as our Saviour, in order to give us repentance and forgiveness of our sins. Are you aware of, and sure of that salvation? By God's grace we have that joy, and see Christ Jesus as our Saviour. Then we will be spiritually happy, and confident that all things are working together for our everlasting good, and fellowship with God in heavenly glory.

December 6

Read John 3:3-8.

That we are born again, and this time spiritually, is extremely important. Do you enjoy what we read in verse 3? Do you see the kingdom of God? Do you want to live in the New Jerusalem that is coming? The question is not merely whether you want to be saved from the punishment which you deserve. Mere deliverance from that punishment does not reveal love of God, but enjoyment of our flesh. Our text speaks of being born again, and this time born spiritually. Thank God for such a wonderful gift. God promises us a new spiritual life; and sent His Son for that blessedness. Have it, and you have a sign of God's love in you. God's love causes His elect to love Him. Have you found that love in you?

December 7

Read Genesis 2:16-17.

When created, Adam was told that a covenant relationship which he had would remain, if he did not commit one sin! God commanded Adam not to eat the fruit of one particular tree, and that he would die the moment he ate of that tree. Just read also in Genesis 3:17, that after committing his first sin, he would in sorrow live in sin. How necessary it is for us to pray to God for hatred of sin, and a constant desire to walk in love toward Him. Do you pray to God every day; and surely the minute you wake up in the morning, for spiritual strength? Keep in mind the fact that every day God's calling is for us to walk as His covenant children.

December 8

Read Genesis 2:16-17.

The day God created mankind He revealed what man's calling is. We are called to obey God, in all our thinking, willing and acting. He told Adam that one sin would bring death upon him. That does not merely mean that Adam would die physically. In fact he lived physically for nine hundred and thirty years. But spiritually Adam died the moment he committed his first sin. All his descendants came into being spiritually dead. How necessary then was it for our coming Saviour to come into our flesh by no act of a man. He was born of the Virgin Mary. He came in a way in which He could save us from our sin, and by God's grace.

December 9

Read I Corinthians 3:16.

Born again we enter into a most wonderful life. Our God through Paul assured us that we may become the Temple of God. And that we are this is because God comes to dwell within us. Does it become evident to you that God is in you, dwelling there in His love? The question is whether you experience that blessed, wonderful truth. What you do with the members of your body reveals that God is very truly dwelling in you. Do you every day use your hands, feet, as well as your mouth in works that reveal that God dwelleth in you? Does what you say reveal that you are God's temple, in which He is in His love?

December 10

Read Ezekiel 37:25.

Has God made a covenant of peace with you? The question is not whether He achieved peace, because you asked for it. Rather the question is whether God came into you and caused you to desire having Him as your Saviour. Was it because of what you did that God came into you? By nature we all do what Satan got Adam and Eve to do, namely, become their own gods. Just read Genesis 3:1-13. We do absolutely nothing that causes God to make us to be born again spiritually. By God's grace we do sing: "All that I am I owe to Thee, Thy wisdom Lord hath fashioned me," Psalter Number 383:1. Be careful therefore, and hold tightly on to the truth that God causes us to be born again spiritually. Thanks be to God Who giveth us the victory.

December 11

Read Psalm 34:8-10.

In these verses we are called to do what assures us that we have no want. Our flesh often lacks things, and we have great wants. But those who fear God have everlasting blessedness. When Satan got Adam and Eve to turn away from God, they lost all the blessings which God created for mankind. They still had physical life for a time. But they lost all the blessings that they needed physically, and spiritually. For the basic need for us is to enjoy God's love, and to use all things in order to glorify Him, with heart, mind, soul and strength. The basic need for mankind is to be able to walk in love toward God. Do you worship Him in love? That is our calling.

December 12

Read Psalm 111:10.

How wise are you? The question is not what the world taught you. But are you spiritually alive? Do you have the fear of the Lord? It is the beginning of wisdom. And fear, in this verse, is reverance, or if you will, it is respect. Fear here is awe. Basically the question is whether we respect God. We are wise when we love Him as our God. Do you keep His commandments because you love Him, as the one and only God? That fear, in the sense of respect, is His gift unto His elect. Did He choose you to become one who loves Him? Do you fear God from Whom all blessings flow?

December 13

Read Proverbs 28:13.

Do you confess your sins? And do you forsake them? Bear in mind that every sin is an act of hatred against God. Do you enjoy walking in hatred against God? Do you try to defend yourself in the sin you commited? We cannot prosper in any sin. When we reveal our hatred against God, we reveal that we deserve to be treated by God in His hatred. We cannot hide the smallest part of any sin. Trying to hide it is adding to that sin. And to enjoy God's mercy we must confess our sins. Fail to do so, we add to our sins. Confess your sins and you reveal that God did send His Son for your salvation. God's mercy causes His elect to confess their sorrow for their sins. Do you?

December 14

Read II Corinthians 8:9.

What a wonderful truth we find in this verse. It speaks of God's grace. Do you find joy in this truth? God sent His own Son into death on His cross, because He loves all His elect, and realizes salvation for every one of them. Christ Jesus, His Son, suffered His crucifixion not only; but He suffered the punishment for which our sins call. As our Head He could, and did do that! What a manifestation of God's grace! And the question is whether we do consider salvation to be a rich, precious gift. Do you merely want escape from its punishment? Or do you want deliverance from your love of sin? Are you eager to be holy, like Christ Jesus our Saviour? Is holiness riches in your judgement?

December 15

Read Proverbs 8:13.

How do you describe salvation? How rich are you spiritually? Do you hate evil? The awesome truth is that we either hate God, or we hate evil. We cannot love both of these. Do you appreciate the salvation which God has prepared through His Son? Or do you enjoy and seek what Satan got the human race to covet? By God's grace Solomon pointed out clearly that we either hate God or we hate evil. We cannot

desire both, and seek both of them at the same time, and in the same way. We hate what God hates, or we love what He loves and calls righteous. Is a change in your life coming, and also growing? We desire either...or. And we are Christians or Antichrists. The awesome question is what has God made us to be?

December 16

Read Romans 8:28.

Do all things in your life work together for good? Are you thankful for everything that happens in your life? If we are called for God's purpose, we will agree with Paul that all things work together for our good. Yes, sickness and death are evil treatment which are sent upon us and worked together for our good, if we are children of God. What happened to Christ Jesus our Saviour, worked for our salvation. He was crucified, and died on His cross. But through His cross and death He prepared the way for all the elect to enter with both body and soul into the coming, glorious kingdom of Christ Jesus or Saviour. Be thankful for what God did for us through His Son.

December 17

Read Romans 6:23.

To appreciate what you read yesterday, you must confess that our coming death is God's gift of eternal life, which is God's gift to all His elect. Indeed, death is coming, and we cannot prevent it, because we cannot stop God from doing what He has eternally decided to do to us. But hold on tightly to the truth that through death God gives us eternal life. That He gives us through Jesus Christ our Lord. And keep in mind the comforting truth that all things work together for good for those whom God eternally chose in Christ. Eternal life is God's gift through Jesus Christ our Lord. Sing again that glorious truth that "All that I am I owe to Thee," Psalter Number 383 verse 1.

December 18

Read Psalm 121:2.

Can you, and do you agree with the Psalmist, who stated that his help cometh from God, Who made the heavens and earth? Is that your comfort? Is God helping you, when you fall into this or that affliction? Do you think that God never makes a mistake? If you believe that, you are absolutely correct. Our God is the Almighty One, Who has absolute control over every creature in heaven and on earth. He made heaven and earth; but He also has absolutely all control over every part and thing in heaven and on this earth. God never slumbers or sleeps. And He sees absolutely every creature in heaven, on earth and in hell. What a wonderful help cometh upon us by God's grace.

December 19

Read Isaiah 44:22.

What a blessed promise from God is mentioned in the preceeding verse. We must remember that God has not forgotten those whom He eternally chose in Christ Jesus, His Son in our flesh. God has redeemed us, in fact the whole group of those eternally chosen in Christ have had all their sins blotted out, and will eternally be dealt with as His loved ones. He blotted out every one of our sins; and He is constantly enabling us to return unto Him. And He will send His Son to complete our salvation fully, in His love and almighty power. He will glorify us by making us serve Him in love, fully and constantly. What a blessedness lies ahead for us by God's grace!

December 20

Read Romans 8:37-39.

What, by God's grace we lie in wait to receive, is glory above every other creature, and everlastingly. And now already we are assured of being more than conquerors. And of that, by His grace, we are persuaded already in this life. No creature, by God's grace, can keep any one of God's elect from the glory promised, even though Satan strives powerfully to kill us spiritually, as he did succeed in Adam's and Eve's lives. Death, life, angels, principalities, powers, things present or things to come cannot separate the elect from God's love of Himself. Does this cheer you, comfort you, and by God's grace, cause you to fight the good fight of faith? Do you thank God for this gracious work which He performs?

December 21

Read Psalm 139:14.

By God's grace we are fearfully and wonderfully made. And when He has begun that salvation in us, we will thank Him for making us fearful and wonderful. Indeed God's work is marvelous. And one of the wonderful works God performed is that of making us knowing it and believing it. That work, David correctly states here, manifests itself by our thanks, and praise to God for that blessed gift. We do not earn one bit of our salvation. God works wonderfully and marvelously, making us His faithful, thankful children. Do you believe it and seriously sing your thankfulness for it? Does your walk of life reveal your trust in God, and thankfulness for what He does? By all means, get down on your knees and do that!

December 22

Read Luke 1:30-38.

An angel told Mary that she would have the birth of a Son, Who will be our Saviour; and that she give Him the name Saviour. She was told that He shall be great and be called the Son of the Highest Who will reign with a kingdom that will not ever end. Christmas then is not a day when we should be concerned with material gifts which others bestow upon us. Our calling is to be joyful because of what Christ Jesus will do, and does do in God's grace. Do you look forward to the coming?

December 23

Read John 14:6.

Indeed we plan to go to God's house to thank and worship Him for that blessed gift of His Son as our Saviour. The tremendous blessedness and beauty that God gives us through His Son is astounding. And each day we should look forward to praising God for the blessings which He causes to flow. He sent His Son so that we could come unto Him as the God of our salvation. Are you today looking forward to worshipping God on Sunday, because of what He realized for us through His Son? God is the way, and the life, whereby we are made able and willing to come to Him as our Father. He only is the way, the truth and the life; and by His grace He causes His elect to come unto Him through Jesus Christ, our Saviour.

December 24

Read Psalm 139:14.

The truth, which God's born again children can and do declare, is that, at this time of the year, they look forward to celebrate the birth of our Saviour. They will also confess that they were fearfully and wonderfully made. Take note of the fact that, by God's grace, we do confess this in praise unto God. By God's grace we were by wonderful works made. And tomorrow when we go to God's house of prayer we will observe what a wonderful work He performed by bringing forth His Son in our flesh. We will praise God for having been fearfully and wonderfully made as His elect. And by His grace we shall praise Him, for being fearfully and wonderfully made.

December 25

Read Matthew 1:23.

Today by God's grace we celebrate that wonderful work of God's grace, whereby He realized what is necessary for our salvation. He caused His Son to be born in our flesh, and that through the virgin Mary. Surely we could not bring forth a Saviour. By nature we cannot even want a saviour who would deliver us from our sins.We want to live in and enjoy sin. But by all means let your Christmas Day be filled with thankfulness to God for what He did on this day, which we call Christmas. Let your Christmas Day be filled with spiritual joy, for what God gave, not for what parents or friends gave you. Fill God's church with thankfulness and praise for what He did. Let salvation be the most precious gift for which you thank God today.

December 26

Read Psalm 23 in all its truth.

Were you yesterday strengthened in you faith? Did the gift of material things fill you with more joy than what God gives to His elect? Can you with David say what is in this Psalm? Did God give you this precious gift of His Son, as the almighty Saviour, Who will bring all the elect into everlasting glory? Do you every day run unto God with your heart and mind, and thank Him for what He gave all His elect? Is God's gift to His church far more wonderful than what people give us? Does your heart joyfully sing: "Surely goodness and mercy shall follow me all the days of my life: and I will dwell in the house of the Lord forever"? Is salvation a most blessed gift of God in your heart and mind?

December 27

Read John 14:1-3.

God had prepared for His elect His Son, as our Saviour. And through Him He has prepared a place for all the elect, where there are many mansions. The important thing is not whether we merely call ourselves Christians. Is our desire merely to be delivered from the terrible, everlasting punishment which our God casts on unbelievers? If we are truly Christians, we are like Christ, loving God and eagerly desiring to serve Him with all our heart and mind, and by all that which we do with our bodies. Are we like Christ, in the sense that we love God, and want to serve Him with every desire and act? As true Christians we want to flee from all sin and serve God with every thought, desire and act.

December 28

Read Psalm 27:4.

There is one thing that we desire, and which controls us in all our actions, if and when we are elect, born again children of God. As children of God we do desire to dwell with God on the Sabbath Day and to have sweet communion with Him, singing songs of praise concerning Him, but also unto Him. We do well to bear in mind that salvation is not simply deliverance from punishment. It by all means is deliverance from the love of sin wherewith we were born. We want to dwell with God in the sense of serving Him with heart, mind, soul and all our strength. We want that one thing in the sense that it enables us to learn how to walk in love of Him, and joyfully serve Him. That love of Him manifests our love of Him as our God, and as the only God in a world that has many idols who are loved and served.

December 29

Read Isaiah 49:16.

We are by God informed that He has engraved us upon His hands. And therefore our walls are continually before Him. Yes, all things are before Him in the sense that He sees everything that we do. We can hide absolutely nothing from Him, even though we foolishly, and sinfully try to hide our sins. The comforting truth is that He is preparing absolutely every one of His elect to be a particular part of His Church, of which Christ Jesus His Son is the Head. Our calling therefore is to fight the good fight of faith constantly and willingly. By God's grace we will want to do that, and begin to do so. Be thankful often for what He has led you to do spiritually.

December 30

Read John 14:27.

What a blessed, comforting truth did our Saviour here declare. God leaves peace with His elect. Therefore we have no reason to fear what happens to us day by day, because of what Satan and those of his kingdom do. Absolutely every unbeliever, not eternally chosen by God, is used by Satan in his attempt to turn us away from God, and from our walk of love towards God. God gives us peace already in this life. After we are born again, Satan does not succeed as he did with Adam and Eve. God sent His Son to buy peace for us; and He also keeps that peace in every one of His elect. Put your trust in Him, and do not let Satan turn you away from God in any of your thoughts, desires or acts.

December 31

Read Hebrews 11:13.

What we should bear in mind, and consider on this last day in the year, is that the elect children of God are pilgrims and strangers on this earth; bearing in mind that the child of God's life is unique, and very different from the life of the unbelievers. These children of God look forward to the heavenly fulfillment of God's promises. And by faith these believing children of God believe that they are going to an everlasting blessedness in Christ's Kingdom of Heaven. Does the end of this present year assure you of the end of this whole godless world of sin? Live in faith, and die with the confidence, yes, of entering the everlasting blessedness of being citizens of Christ's glorious kingdom.

Their Own Christmas Eve

by J.P. de Klerk

Because they did not want to attract the attention of the secret police, who still kept an eye on the Christians, the people of the village decided to keep Christmas early December that year, before loads of snow would make the roads almost impassable in the Northern part of the Soviet Federation.

For this occasion Anna Sinyavshy and her boyfriend Sasha had chosen a house that was situated at a spot far into the woods and from where you could see everybody coming. Humanly speaking, they found it safe. They knew that in spite of all the talk in Moscow about "glasnost," the names of the Christians were jotted down by KGB-agents, who could use them later any time.

Therefore also their church had remained underground...

The congregation counted sixty minors all told. The minister, who dressed himself like a farmer, had recently become thirty years old. The four older brothers of Anna had been in a psychiatric prison, because they had been caught spreading booklets with the Gospel according to Matthew. The judge had told them they had to be cured of their "brain disease" by psychiatrists of the government...

The father of Sasha had been in a camp for hard labor in Siberia a long time, because he had been unemployed for a fortnight and so the police entered him in their books as a vagabond, a workshy good-for-nothing, who had to be taught to use his hands. All the other members of the congregation knew that this was a lie, but he had never made a secret of his faith...

As a result, these men would not come home for Christmas. They did not trust the assurances in the newspaper about the new freedom of religion; there was not enough proof around to let down their watchfulness...

Anna saw that about fifty children of different ages quietly found a place at the planks, which were supported by piled-up old bricks, in the big living-room of the decayed building.

On the beams above them two paraffin lamps were suspended. Anna had covered up the windows with cardboard and pieces of threadbare curtains, so that nobody outside would see the light...

The minister said, "Children, you know that the police will not be pleased if they hear about our Christmas Eve celebration and harass me. Therefore, tell nobody that we have been here tonight. This is our very own observance of the birth of Jesus Christ, our Lord. It is our secret. Agreed?"

The children nodded yes.

After this he told them the whole story about what happened in Bethlehem and surroundings centuries ago, as it is written in the Scriptures. Outside the first snow started to fall...

Anna threw with caution two more big blocks of wood on the fire. She saw all the faces of the children listening, clean, excited, some of them with knitted woollen caps on their heads. She saw healthy red cheeks as well as fearful hollow eyes. One suppressed a coughing fit with his hanky.

In the background there were the women, mothers with head shawls. Outside were the fathers, who were keeping a good watch, tucked away between the trees and bushes...

Fyodor Lenskov kept watch over the door, which he kept locked, but he wanted to hear the Christmas-message again...

When the children started singing, the mothers as well as Anna joined them. It was wonderful for all of them to hear the well-known songs again. The faces showed a very special joy and happiness, which made them forget fear and sorrow.

Anna felt her eyes brimming with tears because of emotion.

The minister said, "Jesus Christ is still the greatest gift of God to us."

He had written the words of the songs on big pieces of paper and held these up in the air for those who did not know them.

There was no organ, no orchestra, no choir conductor, but there was faith, joy, hope and thankfulness.

There was God, the Omnipotent, the Almighty, the All-Powerful, with His grace, His Love and His fidelity, that passes all understanding...

It was like a mixture of the past and the present, glad and sad memories coming together in the shadows of the room, and the light of the Glad Tidings shining over all...

Anna extended a helping hand with distributing the small bags with apples, walnuts, dried pears and lumps of sugar, carefully selected and affectionately brought together.

The children understood; their parents sacrificed this because they loved them. It was a tradition for several generations which one day they would continue themselves.

Far away in the Kremlin in Moscow, Christmas was not recognized and never mentioned...

The mothers put ingredients aside a long time in advance, to be able to bake cookies for the celebration. It was difficult to get flour and fat, you had to bargain; the shops were empty most of the time...

Only a few families had a Bible, and kept it at a safe place.

Religious literature was more scarce than blankets and sheets...

In the center of the village stood the ruin of the church, moss-grown, a playground for birds and rats. The generals in the Kremlin had given it back to the Christians, without compensation and without building materials for restoration. It helped the people to remember the martyrs for the faith...

For Anna, Sasha, Fyodor and all the others, it made Christmas the more important in their lives, strong in the faith and still watchful. The enemy could come back...

J.P. de Klerk lives in Ashhurst, New Zealand and is a member of the Protestant Reformed Church of New Zealand.

Guest Article

Daniel— A Faithful Prayer Life

Part 1

by Rev. Jaikishin Mahtani

"Now when Daniel knew that the writing was signed, he went into his house; and his windows being open in his chamber toward Jerusalem, he kneeled upon his knees three times a day, and prayed, and gave thanks before his God, as he did aforetime." Daniel 6:10.

Usually when we think of Daniel, we think of Daniel's boldness. We think of Daniel in the lion's den. We think of Daniel's friends when they were cast into the burning fiery furnace. We think of the beautiful truth of the Scriptures: dare to stand alone. Indeed Daniel and his friends, in the midst of the Babylonian captivity, found the courage of faith to be faithful to Jehovah. Surely all of us would yearn to have that kind of boldness, to be able to stand fast for the Lord amidst the questioning of the ungodly, to be able to be honest and faithful to our God and to our faith in spite of all the ungodliness that surrounds us in this wicked world.

But why was Daniel so bold? What was it that made Daniel and his friends strong in faith, courageous for the Lord? The secret of the strength behind Daniel's bold witness in Babylon is that he knew the power and the worth of prayer. Daniel would not have been able to go into the lion's den alone. In his own strength, Daniel would not have been able to stand before great kings and to speak the Word of God. Truth is, Daniel knew what it meant to be on his knees! When the decree was

signed, and Daniel would soon be cast into the lion's den, yet his windows were open, he was bowed toward Jerusalem, and he was found kneeling praying to his God three times a day. Praying, surely, for deliverance, as you can imagine, but also, praying with thanksgiving before his God as he did aforetime. This is Daniel, one who lived a faithful prayer life!

Young people, do you want to be strong in faith? Do you want to be able to stand against the persecution of the world and the temptations that surround us? Do you want to walk a victorious, courageous, Christian life? Then you must learn from Daniel that the true christian life is found on our knees, in prayer, in humble devotion to God day and night. Let us take a look at Daniel as a godly example of a faithful prayer life. We will consider three things: first, the fact of Daniel's faithfulness in prayer. We will seek to demonstrate that Daniel was indeed a man who regularly, consistently, and faithfully prayed! Second, we will uncover the reason for Daniel's faithfulness in prayer for there was indeed a secret behind Daniel's prayerfulness. Finally, albeit briefly, we will consider the fruits of Daniel's prayerfulness, his faithfulness to the end, and especially his fearlessness as a bold warrior in the midst of Babylon.

Daniel was not, first of all, a man of visions and dreams and revelations but a man given to prayer. The fact of his prayerfulness is not found for the first time in Daniel 6. Here Daniel is about 80 years of age and has lived a long time in Babylon. Already from his youth when he was brought into captivity in Babylon, we see Daniel as a man of prayer. In his teen-age years, when Daniel was placed under instruction in the Babylonian courts, he refused to defile himself with the king's meat. You read of this in Daniel 1:8, "But Daniel purposed in his heart that he would not defile himself with the portion of the king's meat, nor with the wine which he drank: therefore he requested of the prince of the eunuchs that he might not defile himself." Take note, it was not only when he was an elderly statesman that he was given to prayer, but already as a young lad. As a young man of probably fourteen years of age, Daniel knew that he must be consecrated to Jehovah. If he could not be faithful to God in food and drink, then when the crunch came, he would be forced to compromise. But why did he not eat the king's meat? Were there some foods at the king's table which were contrary to the law of God? We are not told. Was it because Daniel did not want to enjoy those luxuries of the king and thus be obligated to the king for his life in Babylon? We do not know. But one thing is sure. Daniel looked round about him and he saw in the courts and all about the land hundreds of Babylonian gods, and the idolatry of Babylon. His name had been changed to Belteshazzar. He was to be given training in the schools of the Babylonians. Was he going to allow himself to be assimilated, so that he would become just like one of the Babylonians? Think of that. Daniel chose food and drink to prove the point. He was going to discipline himself. He was not going to allow himself to be defiled with the king's meat. Daniel would not defile himself! He knew his sinful nature. He knew his own weakness and temptations. He knew that if he drank of that wine and ate of that meat and enjoyed all the things of Babylon, then pretty soon, the next step, and then again the next step. How about their women, and what about all the other luxuries? And then it would become more and more difficult to stand fast. No, he would not defile himself. He would rather consecrate himself to prayer and fasting even if he must only eat pulse and drink water. Then he would be willing to stand against the idolatry of Babylon.

Young people, we must not wait until there is a lion's den or when there is fierce persecution or when there is some dramatic event. We must learn from Daniel who turned his heart as a young man to serve Jehovah. How did Daniel come to have such a godly attitude? His parents must have taught him when he was in Jerusalem. He must have had some covenant instruction. He must have heard Jeremiah or one of the other prophets concerning the impending Babylonian captivity. He must have known that Jehovah is faithful and that His remnant must serve Him faithfully. This is clear when you find Daniel immediately in the next chapter, praying.

Interesting, is it not? We think of Daniel as a man filled with dreams and visions. But the book begins with king Nebuchadnezzar dreaming dreams. Not Daniel. It is Nebuchadnezzar who is filled with an ungodly ambition for himself and his kingdom that dreams dreams. He is unable to find anyone to interpret his dreams, so he decides to kill all the wise men in Babylon. But what does Daniel do? Daniel comes to the king and says, "Wait a minute. You remember that my face shined before you? I am ten times wiser than all the astrologists! I will dream and I will give you the interpretation." Is that what Daniel said to the king? No, not at all. Instead Daniel requested some time and he immediately went to his house and asked his three faithful friends to pray with him! You read

of this in Daniel 2:16-23. They "desired the mercies of the God of heaven concerning this secret; that Daniel and his fellows should not perish with the rest of the wise men of Babylon," verse 18. And you read in verse 19: "Then was the secret revealed unto Daniel in a night vision." Indeed Daniel was a man given to prayer. He encourages his companions in times of distress: "Let us pray to the God of Heaven, let us seek His mercies. We are consecrated to Him. He will deliver us. Let us ask Him what we should do at this time." And as the secret was revealed, notice the prayer that Daniel then prayed. "Blessed be the name of God for ever and ever! For wisdom and might are His. He changeth the times and the seasons: He removeth kings...setteth up kings," verses 20-23.

In order to better appreciate this prayer of Daniel, we must remember that Daniel has just been given the secret and the interpretation of the king's dream. He knows now concerning that great statue and how God will send that stone to dash to pieces Nebuchadnezzar and all the kingdoms that will follow. He has been assured that God is a sovereign God, faithful to His people! Daniel's prayer reflects this confidence of faith. Who says that when we know God is sovereign and we know that God will save His chosen people, we do not pray—we need not pray? It is exactly because we know the greatness of our God that we should be found on our knees praying and worshipping and adoring our God like Daniel did. He knew the secret, therefore he prayed!

When we come to Daniel 6 we are not surprised to read that his enemies are plotting to destroy Daniel by attacking his prayer life. We read that the other presidents and all the princes decide to come together. In verse 5 we read that they have come to the realization that they would not find any occasion against this Daniel except they find it against him concerning the law of his God. "If we are going to accuse Daniel of being unfaithful, we cannot. We cannot accuse him of taking bribes or of being dishonest. We cannot accuse him of being a glutton or of womanizing, of course not. He is faithful! But one thing we can accuse him of: that he is dedicated to Jehovah alone, and that he prays. If we flatter the king then the king will make a decree that no one can worship Jehovah, no one can pray to any god except to this king, then we have Daniel." Do you know why? Because if Daniel prays, he will land in the lion's den! He will be killed for sure! But if Daniel does not pray, then he is lost because his strength is in his prayer. Imagine that! Even the ungodly saw that! Daniel's boldness was not in all his personality and in all his gifts and talents. Not even in his visions and dreams. His strength was that he was a man who prayed. His face did shine because he prayed. He was faithful and he was honest because he prayed. The ungodly came to this conclusion, "If we can stop him from praying, then we will destroy this man!"

"Even the ungodly saw that! Daniel's boldness was not in all his personality and in all his gifts and talents. Not even in his visions and dreams. His strength was that he was a man who prayed. His face did shine because he prayed."

From his youth Daniel had learned to be consecrated to Jehovah. What would he do now, when he knew that king decreed to cast all who prayed into the lion's den? The decree had been signed and the law of the Medes and Persians changeth not. Even King Darius could not change it now. If Daniel prayed, he would be fed to the lions. We read in our text that even though he knew the consequence of prayer, he went into his house to pray. No, not in secret but with his windows open towards Jerusalem, he kneeled three times a day. Was it morning, afternoon, and evening? We are not told. But it was not in the quiet, secret morning hour or only at night when no one was looking! Three times a day! He made it very clear that he was still praying regularly, just as before! That is what we are specifically told, "as he did aforetime." It was not as if Daniel was deliberately and purposely arousing the anger of the wicked. Rather, Daniel was given to prayer. That was his life. He had cultivated that habit as a young lad. He knew that therein lay his power, his strength. His faithfulness to Jehovah was in the way of prayer. His prayer life was being tested!

Rev. Mahtani is pastor of Trinity Protestant Reformed Church in Houston, Texas.

[C] - Communion of the Saints

The Christian's Tour of Duty

by Tom Bergman

This is the first taste of a new series called C-H-U-R-C-H F-A-M-I-L-Y. Each letter of the heading keynotes a different topic regarding life within the body of Christ.

[C] - Communion of the Saints
[H] - Heaven our Hope
[U] - Unity
[R] - Respect
[C] - Compassion
[H] - Happiness

[F] - Forgiveness
[A] - Alms, Admonish, Adoption
[M] - Mercy
[I] - "I"
[L] - Love
[Y] - Youth

This month, we start with the enlistment of the Christian soldier and look at his tour of *duty*. What does the Bible say about that *duty*? God demands that we love Him and makes us able to. This love, however, is not a simple word of thanks or praise from our lips. True love for God blossoms out of constant activity for the interests of others. Since Christ lives in my heart, we live for Him. Since living for Him can only be done by showing love for the other soldiers on *duty* with us, there has to be a concerted effort to be busy in this calling. Our life on earth is not a hermitage, it is a church life. The tour of *duty* is to live in unity within the local family of believers.

Can I simply express my love for Jesus by attending church twice on Sunday?

No. Do not believe it for a minute! Love for Christ was shown directly to Him before His resurrection. Now that He is sitting at God's right hand, gathering the church and preparing all things for that final day, the command is to fellowship with Him through life in the church. That is what communion of the saints is. Love for Christ must be more than attending two services. It is a whole life (and a very busy one). Love for Zion and her members is the expression of love for Christ. When there is enough to go around, there is communion with each other within the body, and therefore, communion with Christ the head.

If I do not participate in the life of my church, can I even say that Jesus Christ is Lord?

No. When you say, with truly changed heart, "I love Jesus Christ, my Lord and Savior," you are tightly bound with wonderful, unbreakable chains to the work of the Holy Spirit. The Spirit uses the members of the church to work unity in the body. This shows in a godly, active walk for and with each other. Without this the confession rings hollow. Even if you do nothing to openly hate my church, you can still show disdain for it by inactivity as a member. You cannot say that Christ is the Lord of your life if you fail to participate in the life of His body.

Do I have something in common with all of Christ's body? What is that commonality?

The Christ that lives within you!

Men, do not say, "I have nothing in common with these women."

High-school students, do not say, "I have nothing in common with my grandparents."

You with three study halls and a D- in government, do not say, "I have nothing in common with the girl taking physics, advanced biology, and precalc."

Timid? A little shy sometimes? Do not say, "I have nothing in common with some of the really outgoing, popular students in my class."

By nature, no one is better. There is no rank. Only a rank smell if you impose such respecting of persons. Through Christ, though, we have a glorious end *in common*. Joint-heirs with Christ, we will

have the blessing of fellowship with God in heaven. Even today, we have Christ living in us. Even as the last few leaves lose their grip and float to the ground, even as the first few hints of winter 1995-1996 start to blow through the window cracks, I say that He lives within us. You see, no one else has that. Only us. Only His people. That makes us very different than the world. And that gives us the common ground to say with love and sincerity, "I love you brother. I love you sister." Not just to some. You do not need to have the same hobbies, wear the same clothes, or like the right things on your pizza to be able to say something to another member after church. We have Christ.

So what is communion of the saints?

If you admonish a brother for sinning, urging him to repent, that is love. If you give your hard-earned money to care for the needy, that is mercy. If you visit the elderly when they cannot even make it to church, that is compassion. If you receive a repentant sinner back into your *full* fellowship, that is forgiveness. If you feel for other members and *do something* about it...

Love, mercy, compassion, forgiveness. Always with the interests of others in the church at heart. That is fellowship. That is communion of the saints. That is a confession that Jesus is your Lord.

Soldier, how is your performance for your tour of duty? Is your service exemplary? Do you love the church?

- Whom do you speak with after church? What do you talk about?
- Do you make an effort to visit those who need visiting? Just on Sunday afternoon, or during the week. Those six days are not yours, you know.
- What do you think about when you place part of your paycheck into the collection plate? Thinking about how much you love helping with the needs of the family?
- How many times during the week do you pray for the interests of others? When you do, are you "praying hard"?

Active participation is your *duty*, Christian. No honorable discharge from this service. Only the honor and praise of our King. Show that Jesus is your Lord. Show that you love His church.

Tom is a member of Hudsonville Protestant Reformed Church in Hudsonville, Michigan.

Dating and Marriage

Seeking A Godly Spouse

by Rev. Wilber Bruinsma

The following is the body of a speech given by Rev. Bruinsma for an area-wide Bible seminar at Hope College in Holland, Michigan.

I assume most of us here have not come just to hear an interesting speech on dating. If we are parents, then we are concerned with giving wise counsel to our young people concerning their dating life. If we are young people, I assume we wish to be instructed in this whole area of our lives. I would like to begin by telling you that I do not have all the answers. Just as the Bible itself is not a ready-made handbook on dating, neither am I. I have learned very quickly, through my own experiences as a father with children of dating age, that when I think I have the answer I at times do not! For that reason, I will attempt to root what I say in Scripture, the one authority before which all of us must bow.

I also assume one other matter about our young people. I assume that all of us are genuinely concerned with establishing and maintaining solid, Christian marriages and families. We are looking for some stability in a world where divorce occurs almost as frequently as marriage! We want to enter into the marriage bond with the rock-solid assurance that this marriage is a good one and will last, because it is based on the Word of God! If that is our concern, then we must realize that establishing a good marriage begins already long before we settle down with someone. It starts already in our seeking and finding a marriage part-

ner. A solid, Christian marriage depends on whom ve choose to live with for the rest of our lives. And this has everything to do with dating! So, dating is not frivolous and irresponsible, but it is a weighty subject.

There are really two basic questions out of this broad subject of dating that I believe are basic. If they are answered correctly, I believe many of the other difficulties confronted in dating will fall into place. The first question is: how old must I be to date? (That is a sticky question, right?) The second is: who may I date? Are there certain people I may not date? These questions we wish to address this evening.

Before considering the whole question of dating the parent is called upon to make a solid determination: how old must my teenager be before I allow him or her to date? Because of the increasing pressure placed upon our children to date at an early age, the teenager himself ought to seriously consider that question as well. How old must I be to date? This question gets at what I would call: "the maturity factor" of dating. How spiritually mature must I be to date? Well, young people, you may breathe a sigh of relief, because I am not going to set down a rule for a specific age. Many parnts might even chafe beneath my rules (though every parent should consider establishing such rules for his family)! I make it a general rule in my family that my children must be sixteen years old to date. Even that seems young to me! By today's standards, however, sixteen is considered pretty old. (But then again, I have been known to break the standards set by many today!) Yet, that is a rule for my family, and I may not force that rule on other parents of the church. The Bible does not give us a specific age for dating, so neither can I. Christian parents are called upon to exercise their spiritual common sense in answering this question for their home.

There are a couple of matters we ought to bear in mind, however, if we tend to allow our children to date at too young an age. The first is the matter of fornication. In his book *Why Wait?* Josh McDowell quotes Brent Miller (p. 79) who researched this matter by interviewing two thousand four hundred young men and women. These were Miller's conclusions:

> The younger a girl begins to date, the more likely she is to have sex before graduating from high school. It is also true of girls and boys who go steady in the ninth grade. Of girls who begin dating at 12, 91% had sex before graduation—compared to 56% who dated at 13, 53% who dated at 14, 40% who dated at 15, and 20% who dated at 16. Of boys with a ninth grade steady, 70% said they'd had sex compared to 60% of girls. Of boys who dated occasionally as freshmen, 52% had sex compared to 35% of girls.

Now, I would like to believe that these statistics were taken among unbelieving young people! They sound high for young men and women professing godliness. But we ought never to underestimate the power of our own sinful natures, even as God's children. We ought not to deny that the sin that characterizes the world is in us too, and that the temptations experienced by unbelieving young men and women are temptations that are real for us as well. The fact is, the earlier the dating experiences, the more susceptible a young person becomes to fornication, not to pregnancy perhaps (not today, anyway!), but certainly to fornication! That is one serious consideration, if we are thinking of allowing our children to date when they are young.

The other matter is the seriousness of dating. Most often parents who allow their children to date at a young age also tell them that dating is strictly for fun. They ought not to take it too seriously, but simply go out and have a good time. Play the field! Of course, our young people may have a good time when they date, neither do they need to be intent on marrying the first person they go with. Nevertheless, dating is a serious matter! By telling our children that dating is not to be taken seriously, it may leave them with a frivolous attitude about dating that they should not have. I agree with Rev. Cornelius Hanko in His book, *Leaving Father and Mother*, (p. 9),

> Seeking a life's mate is a serious matter. Young men should not play the field to see how many scalps they can collect before they settle down. The young woman should not play the field to see how many fellows will fall victim to her charm, how many shattered hearts and broken hoes she can leave along her trail before she marries. Dating is not a frivolous game that can be played without doing serious damage to some innocent victim.

There is a warning, therefore, that goes out to parents who allow their children to date when they are too young. As young people also, who seek to be mature in our dating we ought also to be concerned for ourselves in this whole matter of dating.

Instead of laying down a strict rule about age, let's consider two Scriptural principles that should be givens in deciding the age for dating. These will determine whether one is mature enough to be-

come involved in this all-important aspect of a Christian young person's life. The first principle of Scripture is this: I am called to love and honor my parents! Now, maybe this may seem at first to have nothing to do with dating. But it most assuredly does! Christian parents who are vitally concerned with the future happiness and security of their children take an active interest in their children's dating life. And well they should too! God has given to them the children of the covenant, and commanded them to raise them in the fear and admonition of His Name. Covenant parents have vowed before God and church that they would do this. That calling of a parent does not cease when you become a teenager. It is theirs as long as you are in their home. This is why Solomon in his wisdom as a parent could speak the words of Proverbs 5:1-4, "My son, attend unto my wisdom, and bow thine ear to my understanding: that thou mayest regard discretion, and that thy lips may keep knowledge. For the lips of a strange woman drop as an honeycomb, and her mouth is smoother than oil: but her end is bitter as wormwood, sharp as a two-edged sword." That is the advice of a wise father to his son concerning whom he dates.

A young person is mature enough to date *only* when he realizes that he must bow before parental authority while he dates. He must submit himself to their decisions concerning whom he dates, when he dates, curfew, where he goes on a date, and so on. If a young person is not ready to love, honor, and obey his father and mother in his dating life, then that young person is not old enough to date. He is not mature enough to date. Cheerful obedience to parents should determine when our children may date. It is a part of the "maturity factor" that plays into our dating life.

But this is not the only principle. This does not stand alone in our determination of whether a young person is old enough to date. There is a second important factor involved: the young person's spiritual conviction! I am not old enough to date until I am convinced of what I believe as a child of God! If I am not ready to make a spiritual commitment to my Lord and to serving Him, if I am not sure of what my church teaches me as the truth, then I ought not to date. I am not ready.

The reason behind this is Scriptural and wise! But we will wait to explain this until the next article. That will give us some time, however, to reflect on what has already appeared in this article, and digest that first.

Rev. Bruinsma is pastor of the First Protestant Reformed Church in Holland, Michigan.

Guest Article

No Smith in Israel

by Rev. Cornelius Hanko

"Now there was no smith found throughout all the land of Israel," I Samuel 13:19a.

Today the blacksmith shop has become a museum piece. Since the automobile has replaced the horse and carriage the blacksmith extinguished his fire, put away his anvil, took off his heavy apron and closed shop. His usefulness is a thing of the past.

In the days of Israel the smith had other duties than shoeing horses. Practically all the tools used were of a metal that needed repeated sharpening. If you will look up the passage in I Samuel 13, you will find a whole list of tools that were sharpened by the smith at the time of Saul and Jonathan.

But the smith also made weapons of war. In fact, Israel was completely dependent upon the smith for swords and spears. So what happened? The Philistines did not allow any smiths in all of Israel. As for sharpening their tools, they either went down to the Philistines to sharpen them or they used a file for that purpose. But they were not able to make swords and spears. There was no smith, so they had no weapons of war. Which meant that

they could not attack their arch-enemy, the Philistines. But it also meant that they were defenseless over against them. They were ready victims of the foe.

Israel was the covenant people of God. This means that the devil had devised a plot to wipe out the church of the old dispensation.

This was not the first nor only time that Satan had tried to wipe out God's cause from the face of the earth. Ever since the fall of Adam and Eve in paradise, this Temptor of our first parents sought out ways and means of preventing the coming of the Savior by wiping out the church. If he should succeed he would stand victorious over the cause of the living God upon the earth.

He killed Abel. He stirred up wicked Lamech and others to destroy the church that existed before the flood. He used the attractive women of the world to lure the young men of the church. The sons of God saw the daughters of men that they were fair, and they joined the world with all its lusts.

After the flood we read of Nimrod, the mighty hunter, who in his day already had tried to establish a world empire. Esau sought to kill Jacob. Egypt oppressed the children of Israel. Many more instances could be cited. It is the battle of the ages. Satan always stands as the chief opponent of God and His Christ, causing the heathen to rage and the people to imagine vain things.

It was no different in the days of Saul and Jonathan. The Philistines were determined to subdue and conquer Israel. Deprived of weapons, Israel could neither attack nor defend themselves from the onslaughts of the enemy.

There was no smith throughout all the land of Israel. Saul's army had no swords nor spears. There were two swords, one in the hands of Saul and the other in the hands of Jonathan. Two swords over against a well armed army of the Philistines.

Does the devil use the same tactics today? Is he working to take your sword and spear away from you? Does he try to make you defenseless over against all his onslaughts? Yes, especially from you, the covenant youth of the church?

In Ephesians 6:14-17 we read of the armor of the Christian soldier, required for fighting the forces of darkness. Most of the parts of that armor are for defense. But one weapon is both for defense and assault, namely, "The sword of the Spirit, which is the Word of God."

Satan attacks that Word of God to deprive us of our weapons in our warfare with the forces of darkness.

He does this by openly and cunningly denying the infallibility and inerrancy of the holy Scriptures. He will remind you that the Bible was written by secondary authors, ordinary men, who were imperfect, even as we are, and could readily have made errors while writing the original autographa.

Or he will assert that the entire Bible is not inspired, but that the Word of God is found in the Bible. That is done in many subtle ways. He may point you to the many "errors" in the Bible. I read a book that purported to present 300 errors in the Bible, most of which were so ridiculous that one wonders how anyone dared to present them. Or he will try to prove to you that historically and scientifically the Bible is inaccurate, only the doctrine taught in the Bible can be accepted.

Another attempt that is used to deprive us of our sole weapon of defense is the many translations, or so-called translations, that are on the market today. Every effort is made to discredit the accuracy and importance of the Authorized, or King James Version of the Bible. Many facts can be stated in favor of the King James Version, especially that the lofty style still is the easiest to memorize and to retain.

I have not yet mentioned the strong, destructive power of heresy. Even the devil can cite Scripture for his purpose, and he does so through many false teachers. They sound so sincere, but they are so very misleading. There is the error of modernism that is cloaked in piety. There is the error of Arminianism that runs rampant through the churches. And many more.

Then there is the deceptive tactics of making light of sound doctrine. Satan will tell you that it does not make any difference what you believe, as long as you believe in the Lord Jesus Christ. All this cold doctrine is confusing. We need warmth, enthusiasm. We must be emotionally aroused and filled with excitement.

But the Lord says, "My people are destroyed for lack of knowledge" (Hosea 4:6). and Jesus says, "The truth shall make you free!" (John 8:32). While John writes in his third epistle: "I have no greater joy than that I hear that my children walk in the truth" (III John 4).

Still another subtle attempt of the devil to make us wide open for his attacks is to arouse in us a lack of interest in the Word of God. Our lives and minds may be so cluttered with everything else that we have no interest in the Word. Satan likes nothing better than that we sit in church and day dream, occupying ourselves with thoughts of things that distract us from the worship service. We forget that

we are there to worship our God, to praise Him for all His blessings, and, in turn, to be fed with the Bread of life. We sing without zeal, our minds wander during the congregational prayer, we put forth no effort to listen to the sermon. If afterward anyone were to ask us what the minister preached about we would be hard pressed to tell him.

That same indifference can become a still more grievous sin when we attend our catechism class. How deeply sinful and how disrespectful it is to ignore our God and His Word, when we are so sorely in need of Him and His guidance. Our early years of life are given us for learning the things of the kingdom. If this valuable time is wasted we will suffer for it the rest of our lives.

The devil likes nothing better than to make us completely defenseless against the onslaughts of the powers of darkness. He seeks our souls to draw it with him into hell.

You have a powerful weapon. Cherish your sword! Know how to wield it! Be prepared! Be alert! The enemy lurks every moment at every side! Faith is the victory that overcomes the world! (Next time: "Two Swords")

Rev. Hanko is a retired minister of the Protestant Reformed Churches. He is currently a member of Hudsonville Protestant Church in Hudsonville, Michigan.

Book Review

The Farbers

Reviewed by Barb Dykstra.

Written by Gertrude Hoeksema, illustrated by Terri Gleason VandeVegte. 203 pages, $14.95 reg. price; $12.95 sale price (hardcover).

With subjects ranging from school to 4H, broken arms to broken hearts, lambs to wombats, fishing to stealing and Upper Michigan to Tasmania, this book will keep your children begging for more. We're thankful that Mrs. Hoeksema has written these stories and that the Heritage Christian School Fundraisers have had it published.

From the very first chapter, the reader is taken into the life of the Farber family with their five children:

—Alice, who is in the first grade and whose eyes get black when she gets mad.

—Ben, who is in the third grade and who kicked the steer, Pirate, because he hated his own new braces.

—Terry, who is in 5th grade—tough Terry who fainted when his friend got hurt.

—Beth, who is in 7th grade—Miss Prim, who wants pierced ears so badly she lies to get them.

—Joe, who is in 9th grade and learned first hand what the wine of astonishment meant (Psalm 60:3).

The stories hold special appeal because they are written in first person from each member of the family. They are very entertaining, with the 4H show, family camping, and most important they each have a message children can understand to help them live their lives as children of God.

Obedience first comes through strongly in the stories and the consequences of disobedience are easily understood. The stories show the important place Scripture holds in family life.

You will feel the emotions the author expresses so well in her writings; emotions of fear, excitement, shame, guilt, sorrow and joy.

Each story in itself can lead to a good discussion with your children as you laugh or cry with the characters in their problems—you'll find your own there somewhere!

The book is a wonderful, clear picture to children of the life of the covenant family. I recommend it for children of all ages.

The book is available at the Reformed Book Outlet in Hudsonville, MI or by contacting:

Heritage Fundraisers
4702 40th Avenue
Hudsonville, MI 49426.

"LITTLE LIGHTS" . . . LET IT SHINE!

by Connie Meyer

Gentleness (Part 6)

"Jason, what do you think you're doing? Can't you even build a snow fort correctly?" Julie said as she crossed her arms and looked down at her little brother's efforts. She sighed, shook her head, adjusted her mittens, and then began to build a wall next to his. "This way is stronger, and it looks nicer too. See?" Julie patted some snowballs in place and gave one more look of disgust at Jason's wall of mounded snow.

Jason had to admit that Julie's wall was shaping up better than his, but she sure could make him angry sometimes! Without getting much farther on his part of the fort, he stood up and announced, "I'm going inside." Julie hardly noticed him leave.

"Hmph. Sisters . . . " he mumbled as he came into the kitchen.

"What's that, Jason?" Mom asked, and she came to help him take off his scarf and mittens.

"Oh, Julie was telling me the *correct* way to build a fort," he answered, mimicking Julie's haughty manner.

"I see. Hm . . . . Here, you put your scarf and mittens back on and I'll get my coat and go outside with you for awhile." Soon they were both by Julie in the snow.

"Oh. Hi, Mom, You're going to help?" asked Julie.

"Uh-huh."

"Hey, what's that?" Julie asked again, pointing to something in Mother's hand.

Mother smiled kindly. "Oh, this is just a plastic box. I'll show you how to make a better fort with it. Just pack the snow in here . . . unmold it in rows like this . . . and you have a 'brick' snow fort. See?"

"Yea," Jason sneered, "this is the *correct* way to build a fort!"

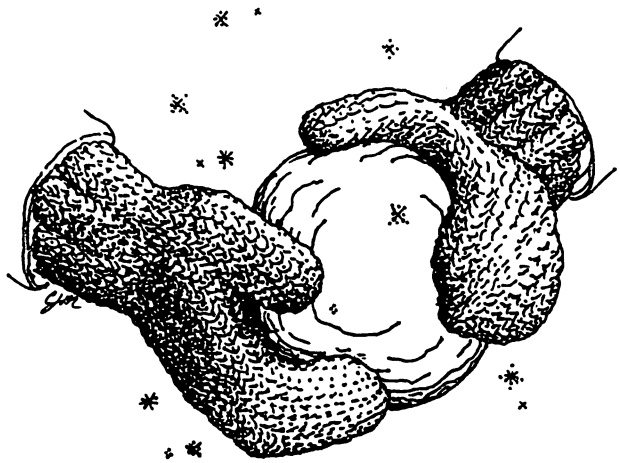
Mother gave Jason a reprimanding look. "Hm. It seems you *both* need work in giving gentle correction."

"Oh-h," said Julie then in meek understanding. She glanced at Jason, but he was purposefully looking the other way.

"C'mon, let's get this fort made," encouraged Mother. "It's been years since I've worked on one!"

Finally the fort was finished and all three stepped back to admire it. It had turned out well after all.

Connie is the mother of 5 children and attends Hope Protestant Reformed Church in Walker, Michigan.



Unscramble the words of the following verse. If you need help, look it up!

"Dan het reastnv fo eht Lord
"
--- --- ------- -- ---

stum ton vertsi; tub eb netgle
---- --- ------; --- -- ------

toun lal nem, tap ot cateh,
---- --- ---, --- -- -----,

natipet."
-------."

II Timothy 2:24

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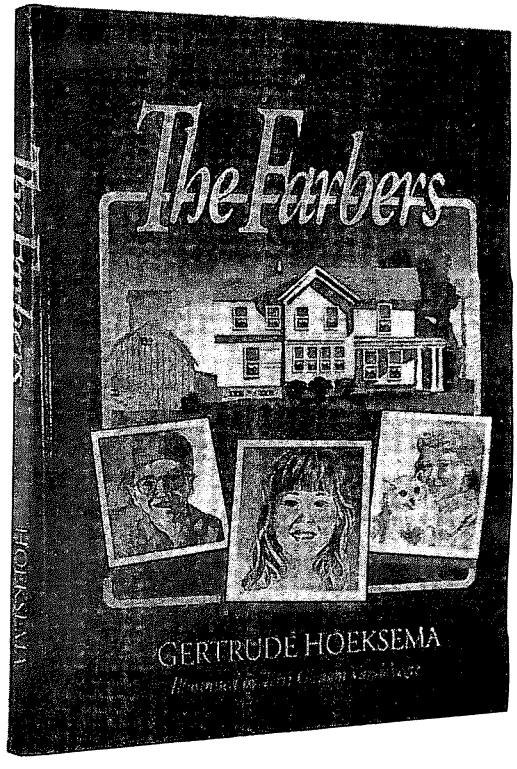

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