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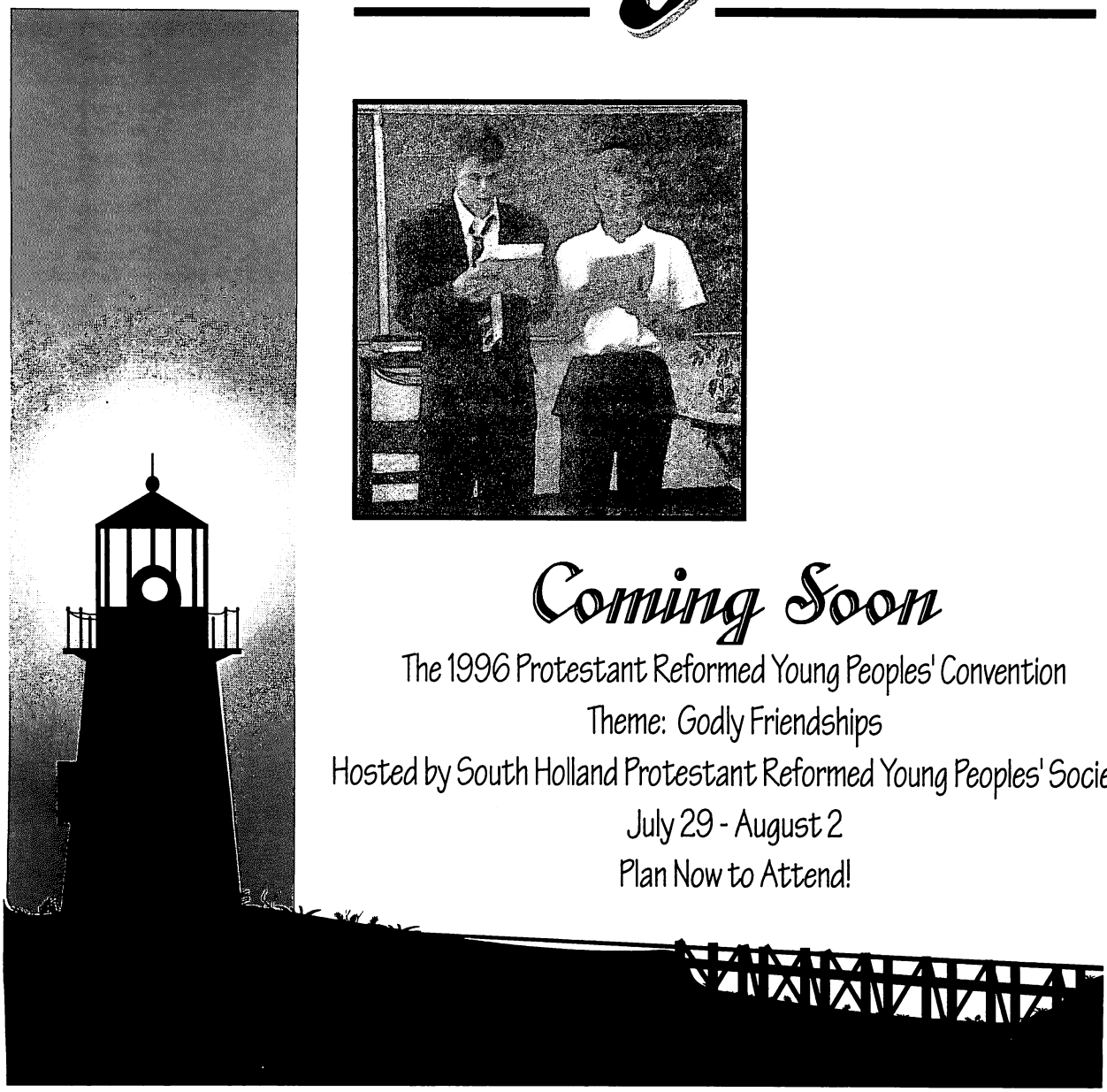

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Repentance is The Key to Forgiveness

By Mike Feenstra

"We must be reading different Bibles!" a sign reads from a student of Byron Center High School (Byron Center, Michigan) supporting his openly homosexual music teacher. In the same section of students at this packed Byron Center school board meeting another sign accuses, "Who are you to judge?" These signs are directed at the Byron Center School Board who must decide on whether to dismiss this music teacher at the request of a group of parents. Buckling under the pressure of the opposition, the school board condemned homosexuality but at the same time retained this teacher.

This action illustrates that many in the world today say that you can hold to your beliefs concerning sin, but you may not call anyone to repentance. The chief arguments behind this erroneous view are these: First, we must forgive all sinners without exception because the Bible teaches this (they say). Second, even though we may believe an action is sinful, it is wrong to "impose" our views on others by calling them to repentance. What shall we say to these things? The Bible says that we must call sinners to repentance, and if they repent we must forgive them (Luke 17:3). "This is forgiveness?" cries the false church. "Yes, for certain! But only after repentance!" replies the believer. Repentance is the key to forgiveness.

When the false church uses these arguments they have a very lax view of sin. They forget that sin is sin against God Himself who requires obedience from all men without exception. The consequences for not obeying God is eternal death in Hell (Romans 6:23a). The standard for obedience to God is, of course, the Law of God as we have it written in Exodus 20:1-18. By the Law we know clearly that we are guilty of sin against God (Romans 3:20). We may never say that we are without sin, for then the truth is not in us (I John 1:8). But, how can we obey God and be in His favor if we can not keep His Law? Further, how can we escape imminent death at the hand of God because of our sin? The answer is that we must confess our sins, for then we are granted forgiveness through Christ's death on the cross (I John 1:9).

This activity of confession is seen in the life of David as recorded in the Psalms. After writing in Psalm 32:1-2 that a forgiven man is blessed of God, David recalls in verse 5 that he confessed his sin to God, then God forgave him. In Psalm 51:17, David further declares that God does not despise a *contrite* heart, therefore He is greatly pleased with the repentance of believers.

Because repentance is the key to forgiveness it is no wonder that Christ commanded his disciples to preach that men should repent (Mark 6:7-13). This is the true calling of the church. She is to preach the command that all men everywhere should repent. God is pleased to use preaching to bring His elect believers to repentance and faith (I Corinthians 1:21).

After God's people repent then He is pleased to forgive them. But, as we learn from the Lord's Prayer in Matthew 6:9-13 we ask God to, "forgive our debts *as* we forgive our debtors" (Emphasis

MPF). Notice that we must forgive our brethren who have repented else God will not forgive our sins (Matthew 6:14-15). This doesn't mean that God forgives us *because* we forgive each other, but *as* we forgive each other. God only forgives those who truly are His elect, that is, those who manifest His free grace by forgiving one another in mercy just as God has forgiven them. Those whom God has forgiven can't help but forgive each other. If they don't forgive each other then they are as the wicked servant in Matthew 18:23-35 who was forgiven by the king of all his enormous debt yet he demanded of his fellow servant a debt of one hundred pence, a trifle compared to the debt forgiven. What was his reward? He was delivered to the tormentors. The same shall happen to those who repeat his actions.

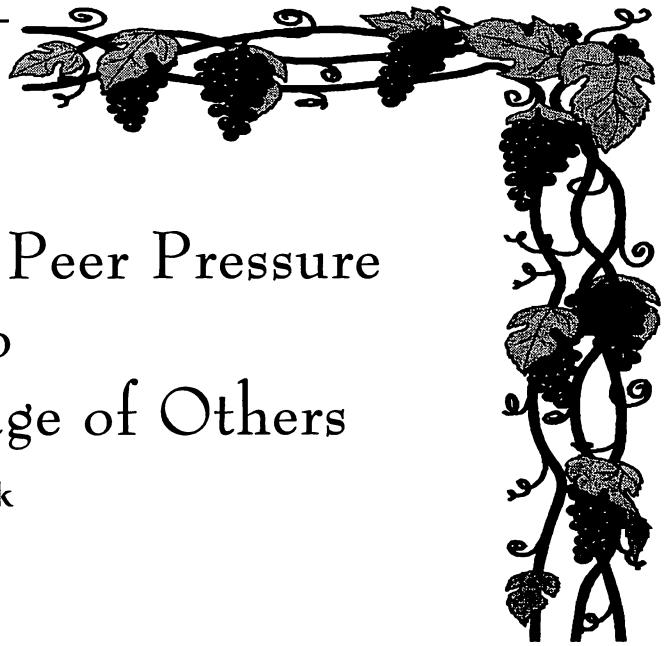
The teaching that God's people should forgive one another has become the hallmark of the false church's desire to make the church tolerant of sin. Although they seem to be speaking the truth yet they seriously err when they forgive before repentance. Many times men speak of people who do this as extremely merciful because they forgave a sinful brother *before* the brother repented as if that is better than waiting until after the brother repents. This attitude is illogical and not biblical. We must follow the example of God's forgiveness towards us. He only forgives after repentance because if He did not He wouldn't be a just God.

The false church also misuses the command to forgive our brothers their trespasses when they refuse to demand repentance of an openly sinning brother. The party sinning must not be told that he is sinning because we "may not judge them," even though we know very well that he is sinning. This is exactly what the Byron Center School Board did when they retained the openly gay music teacher. They condemned the vile sin of homosexuality in their statement to the parents but they did not remove the teacher. Whenever people do this they invariably appeal to Matthew 7:1-5 which commands us not to judge. What they mean by this is that we may never rebuke anyone because of their sin. This interpretation contradicts many passages of Scripture including Luke 17:3, Matthew 18:15ff, and James 5:20 which all speak of the Christian's duty to rebuke those who sin. What Matthew 7:1-5 and like passages *do* teach is how and when we must rebuke.

In this passage from Matthew, Christ teaches us that we may never judge anyone if we ourselves have not repented of our own sin. Further, our motive for rebuke must not be out of revenge but out of a desire for his repentance. If we do have this desire then we will be merciful towards our brother just as the Lord is merciful and gracious. We must rebuke them and go to the foot of the cross together, because we all are in need of forgiveness. If we just condemn our brother and think that we ourselves are without sin then we are hypocrites and we have not seriously looked at our own sin and repented from it.

Although we must be careful when we rebuke, we still are commanded to call sinners to repentance. Although we may never condemn a sinner to Hell (for this belongs only to God), we can and must rebuke them for their trespasses. We must do this because we know that if our brother be converted then we, "shall save a soul from death" as James 5:20 teaches. Here too, James clearly writes that the sinner must be converted, that is, he must repent before he is forgiven. Repentance is the key to forgiveness.

Those who refuse to believe the clear truth that a sinner must repent before he is forgiven of God or forgiven by us do well to remember that God is greatly displeased with their teachings. All those who backed up the gay teacher at Byron Center High School by claiming that we must forgive him even though he didn't repent should know that they shall be judged of God. All we who believe that repentance must be before forgiveness know that in Heaven there is great joy over one sinner that repenteth because we know that God loves those of a contrite heart who humble themselves before Him. ❖



Top Five Ways to Fight Peer Pressure But Also to Use It For the Advantage of Others

by Nathan Langerak

1. Each day have personal devotions.

This is the most important way to fight negative peer pressure. Having personal devotions strengthens our faith in Jesus Christ so that we have a will to do the right and say no to the wrong. Personal devotions also give us a better knowledge of Christ's will for us as teenagers. "The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom: and the knowledge of the Holy is understanding. Those that seek me early shall find me," Proverbs 9:10 and 8:17a.

Is Christ's will for us that we attend wild parties with drinking, smoking and loud rock music? Obviously not; we are required to be good stewards of our bodies, to do our best in school, reject the world's music, and to be in subjection to those in authority over us. "Now therefore hearken unto me, O ye children: for blessed are they that keep my ways. Hear instruction, and be wise, and refuse it not. Blessed is the man that heareth me, watching daily at my gates...for whoso findeth me findeth life, and shall obtain favour of the Lord," Proverbs 8:32-35. Personal devotions not only give us understanding of God's will for our lives, but also give us the strength to do His will and experience God's blessing.

The Scripture gives us the knowledge of what a good friend is. Through reading Scripture we will be equipped not only to chose proper friends, but how to be a good friend. "A man that hath friends must shew himself friendly: and there is a friend that sticketh closer than a brother," Proverbs 18:24. By having personal devotions we as teenagers also are better equipped to exert a positive influence over our peers. We can encourage them to make having personal devotions a habit. We can influence our friends by choosing not to go to a wild party, and giving an example for others to follow. Personal devotions can yield great benefits, but if you do not have them the benefits cannot be experienced.

2. Choose the friends you associate with.

A good majority of negative peer pressure can be easily avoided by some simple choices. As teenagers we have many choices to make and one of them is who our friends are going to be. Are they going to be those who party, drink, disrespect and lie to their parents? Or are your friends going to be friends that do the right things and join with you when you choose not to attend a wild party or lie to your parents? "Be not thou envious against evil men, neither desire to be with them," Proverbs 24:1.

We, also, have to be good friends to others. When we see that someone has done the right and avoided a sinful situation, we must join that person and encourage him by telling him that he did the right thing. Good friends do not mock their peers if they choose the right path, but they always encourage them. Part of being a good friend is also to rebuke your friends when they do wrong. Although this is the hardest part, it is very necessary. "Open rebuke is better than secret love. Faithful are the wounds of a friend," Proverbs 27:5-6.

3. When you go out with friends have something planned.

Trouble usually starts when a group of teenagers gets together and does not have anything planned for the night. It comes out that so and so's parents are gone for the weekend and let's go have a party. Then comes the

pressuring. The person whose parents are gone may be reluctant to have a party, or somebody in the group isn't quite sure they want to come.

If you are the host to a group of your friends then you have an obligation to have things planned so that trouble doesn't start. You also have an obligation to choose who comes over so that the rowdy people don't have a chance to influence others. "A prudent man foreseeth the evil..." Proverbs 27:12a.

4. Choose the activities you attend.

You can also avoid negative peer pressure by not attending activities where you know you will be tempted or influenced wrongly. This goes hand in hand with the friends you choose. "Ponder the path of thy feet, and let all thy ways be established. Turn not to the right hand nor to the left: remove thy foot from evil," Proverbs 4:26-27.

5. Have the courage to just say No.

This last point is the culmination of all the previous. With good friends and faith in Christ we can have the courage to say no to the wrong. "Enter not into the path of the wicked, and go not in the way of evil men. Avoid it, pass not by it, turn from it, and pass away," Proverbs 4:14-15. "My son, if sinners entice thee, consent thou not," Proverbs 1:10.

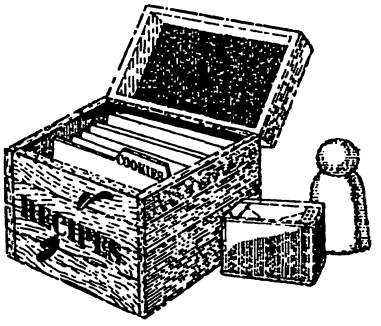
The life of a Christian is not easy and the life of a Christian young person in these evil days is very difficult and full of temptations. As teenagers we cannot afford to form cliques. We have to rely on each other and upon God for strength to fight temptation. "Iron sharpeneth iron; so a man sharpeneth the countenance of his friend," Proverbs 27:17. "In the fear of the Lord is strong confidence: and his children shall have a place of refuge," Proverbs 14:26.

Peer pressure today has taken on a bad connotation. The very mention of the words brings evil pictures of raucous parties, wild drinking and music and other forbidden activities. However, peer pressure can be used for good to influence your peers in the right direction. As Christians, we have been given a mind that can interpret the Scriptures and we are able to determine between right and wrong. As teenagers we must use this gift of the Holy Spirit for our advantage, for our friends' advantage and for the glory of God. "My son, forget not my law; but let thine heart keep my commandments: Trust in the Lord with all thine heart; In all thy ways acknowledge him, and he shall direct thy paths," Proverbs 3:1, 5, 6. ❖

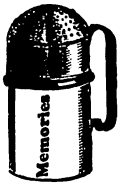
Nathan is a student at Covenant Christian High School.

Recipe for Friendship

by Lisa Kregel



1 cup trust
1/2 cup fun
1/2 cup seriousness
1/4 cup laughter
2 tsp. tears
2/3 cup patience
3/4 cup kindness
1/3 cup hope
3/4 cup humbleness
1/2 cup reliability



Blend well in a large container of love, sprinkle some memories on top. Make some every day for a life full of happiness. Serve 2 or more people. ❖

Lisa is a student at Covenant Christian High School.

Mother and Child

by J.P. de Klerk

Wilma was a happy, young mother. Some people said that she had married too early, that she was herself yet a child.

Wilma didn't care, She enjoyed every moment of her marriage and her motherhood. She was fresh, unspoiled, glad that she had received from the Lord what she had desired many years.

Wilma had always played with her dolls in a world of fantasy, talking to her "children," about everyday topics.

She had been careful with her toys, so that now her own children could play with them.

Her youthful optimism, her love for all and everything around her, her admiration for the birds and the flowers God made, she transferred to her kids.

She had a family of three and one more on its way. With the oldest one, a clever little boy, she could have nice talks, and some of them she wrote down in a diary...

Wilma saw a reflection of herself in Matthew's blue eyes, as he watched the sparrows in the garden and the young hedgehog on the footpath...

"Mamma, what are these?"

A question she heard from him all day.

Wilma would always come and tell him.

"These are two carrier-pigeons. They live in that little house over there in the garden of our neighbors. You see, on that pole."

"But they do not deliver mail, do they?"

"No, but suppose the neighbor would fasten a piece of paper with a message to one of their legs."

"O, you mean, like tea is ready."

"Yes, something like that. In the past, when the people did not yet have telephones and postmen, they often used a carrier-pigeon."

"But nowadays it is easy, Mamma. I say 'This is Matthew Williams' and 'I will call Mamma for you' ..I have beared that in mind!"

"Yes, you are a big boy."

He looked happily at her and she cuddled him, before she said, "You know, we can learn something of the telephone. Sometimes you dial and you get the busy signal. Or, someone has chosen the wrong number, or the telephone is defective and someone has to come to repair it... That happened last month, remember... But, Matthew, Mamma has a special, secret telephone, well, you can call it that. I can speak directly with God. Do you understand what I mean?"

"No, Mamma...I don't know."

"Listen. Always when I want to tell God something, or ask Him to provide me with an answer for a problem, I can pray. The wire to Him is always free, day and night. For everybody, at the same time. He listens."

"But Mamma, does God answer? Do you hear His voice? He is not here in our house, is He?"

"Yes, Matthew, He is. He can whisper in my ear, He can put a thought in my head, for example when I am searching in His Word, the Bible, He suddenly shows me a sentence or a few words I had almost forgotten.... Then I feel quite happy and thankful. You know, I thank God also every day in that way for His gifts, like Daddy and you, as well as Rachel and Susanna."

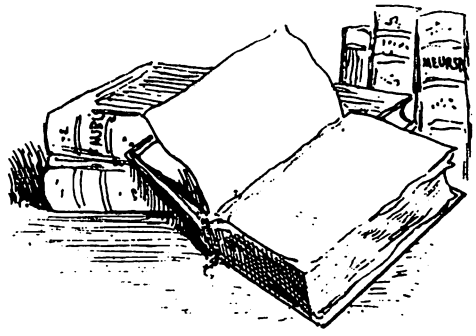
"O...that is wonderful, Mamma. Now, each time when I hear the telephone going I will think again about your secret telephone.... Can I also have one or do I have to wait till I am grown-up?"

"No, you have that telephone already. God wants you to speak to Him, and He will give you an answer, in one way or another."

Wilma sat down in an easy chair, and Matthew nestled his head against her shoulder, with a toy in his hands. ❖

J.P. De Klerk is a journalist and author from the Protestant Reformed Church of New Zealand

The Place of the Novel on the Christian's Book List



by Mrs. L. Doezema

Fiction is often defined as that form of prose narrative in which the characters, scenes, and incidents are partly or entirely imaginary. The *novel* and the *romance* are the two kinds of fiction, although they are not often consistently differentiated. There is, however, a slight difference between a novel and a romance. A novel deals with characters and events that are strictly in keeping with events in ordinary society and history. In a romance, the scenes, characters, and incidents are improbable, uncommon, unreal, and even marvelous. Most of the novels we read are strictly novels, which deal with incidents which *could* have happened.

From the nature of the novel, as we have defined it, even if you have never read one, you might readily concluded, and rightly so, that it is a highly interesting form of reading material. Everyone likes a story. A little child at his mother's knee will plead for a story and then for just one more. Children in school can easily be bribed into hard work by the promise of a story sometime during the day. And when those same children grow up, many of them are able to occupy themselves for hours in a stretch with a "good" book. Go to the library and examine the books on the shelves in the fiction room. There the books are well worn and many of them have been repaired over and over again and then finally replaced. Ask a librarian which books she most often checks out, and she will tell you that more novels leave the library shelves than any other kind of books. People "go for" them. Why? One reason, I think, is that it is so easy to read a novel. No effort, no mental strain is necessary; one can begin to read, but soon he loses himself, and it seems as if he is no longer reading, but living with the characters in the book, saying what they say, experiencing what they experience. Besides, the material of a novel is usually so attractive. Whether realistically or idealistically, a novel deals with life, and life is exciting, interesting; people in books are so real, so new, so different; we meet and learn to know so many different kinds of people through books. Finally, and many chronic novel-readers give this as a sort of defense, many novels are very instructive. It would be more honest to say, sometimes one can learn something from a novel. You will agree with me when I say that a person who wants to learn, who desires to expand his mind in different fields of knowledge, will not look for his learning in novels.

Since instruction is our main goal in reading, as we pointed out in a previous article, it necessarily follows that the novel is not at the top of our reading list. The general purpose of novelists in writing their books is entertainment. Their books may be vehicles for religious, sociological, or moral doctrines, but the main objective is entertainment. And if you are honest with yourself, you will concede that when you sit down to read a novel, your own aim is to relax, to enjoy yourself, to be enter-

tained. You don't sit at your desk on a hard, straight chair, and resolve to spend the time in intense concentration, but you are much more likely to put on a robe and a pair of easy slippers and curl up in an easy chair. That is natural. *But*, do not read novels *all* the time, do not even let novels comprise *half* of your reading material; there are so many important things you *should* read! A novel should be a rare treat to be gently sipped occasionally, for ever-indulgence leads to giddiness, to a very definite light-headedness. We must not have too much entertainment.

There are many dangers connected with novel reading. The book market is flooded with *trash*. Authors must cater to the sinful, corrupt public in order to write books that sell. They delight in writing what is coarse, obscene, impure, and the public takes pleasure in reading what their degenerate souls have concocted. A Christian does not poison his mind, he does not soil his hands with such "literature." You are not contaminated by it? There are books which have influenced *nations*, there are novels which have swayed public opinion in times of crises. Harriet Beecher Stowe's *Uncle Tom's Cabin* exerted a strong influence in molding public opinion in our country against slavery. Whether you realize it at the time or not, every book you read influences you imperceptibly in some way.

More dangerous, I believe, are novels which are generally recommended as good literature, and that is why we must read so cautiously and critically. There is such danger in relaxing and reading for pure enjoyment, for we are so apt to become wrapped up in the story and let our judgment and principle relax too. A novelist can so easily arouse our sinful emotions. When you read Dumas' *Count of Monte Christo,* in which the whole plot deals with revenge, did you not rejoice with the hero every time he dealt another blow of vengeance? Yet the desire for revenge is un-Christian. Many authors have used their literary talent to arouse class hatred and to publicize their socialistic or communistic views. Others have used the novel as a means to attempt to abolish moral standards. And many have even used it to propagate their false religious doctrines. The novel can be a subtle weapon!

Because of those dangers it is very necessary first of all to be very careful in our choice of novels and secondly to keep alert in order always to discriminate between the right and the wrong when we are reading novels. For there are very few novels that can be unreservedly recommended. ❖

C-H-U-R-C-H F-A-M-I-L-Y

[C]-Compassion

Hail to the Victors!

by Tom Bergman

Saturday, November 24, 1995. An afternoon football game that really meant something for a number of people was in progress. The number two college football team in the nation was trailing its opponent late in the fourth quarter. The score was very close all game. The lead had changed hands a time or two. But now in the final minutes, the Buckeyes' Rose Bowl hopes were dying.

Michigan over Ohio State, 31-23.

When the final seconds expired off the official clock, the Michigan Wolverines had beaten the mighty Ohio State Buckeyes, a significant victory. The fans for Michigan exploded with excitement—a crowd of over 100,000 people. They had been pulling for their team to win this game of intense rivalry. Each play was cheered or booed as if the world's fate depended on it. The electrifying runs by the Michigan running back were celebrated with

shouts and screams of pleasure. Every snap, every tackle, every first down was so crucial that fans had to sit at the edge of their seats and bite their fingernails. For the thrilling touchdown plays, they had to stand up and strain their necks in order to see the action. All this commotion. Three solid hours of football frenzy- and the fans loved it.

"Strong feelings with"

It makes us think a little bit about what it is that we love. What would you give to go see that kind of sports event? How strong of feelings do you have in that respect?

That is what the word *compassion* means. It connotates the ability to have strong feelings with another person. Strong feelings for a football team hardly counts for compassion. Strong feelings for fellow church members is a high priority. Strong desire to be a wild football fan is a bit silly. Zealous desire to feel love and sympathy *for* and *with* our brethren is an honorable thing.

When you get dressed in the morning, take time to dress your soul in compassion.

Each member of the church is a member in Christ. It is not a coincidence that our brothers and sisters in the Lord go to the same building twice on Sundays as we do. No matter how different we are, we always will have this in common: Christ that lives within us. Our lives are changed. Our hearts are turned. We love God. As members of the Body of Christ, we love God. Unbelievers do not. Believers do. We are alone in what we do, and our King prays to the Father for us. He knows that we are not of this world. God will protect us in this foreign land according to His will. But, it is that fact and the Holy Spirit working mysteriously in us that drives us together.

For one thing, we are all members of one body that cannot function properly without all of its members. We all need each other, says Jesus Christ our Head. Therefore, we live holily and walk uprightly as a church.

Also, we all are strangers. Imagine if you were in a foreign country with a strange race of people and starkly different culture. Suddenly, you see one person who is the same nationality as you. What a relief! Although you may have ever so little in common, you are glad nevertheless. So it is in this foreign country. No Christian has a permanent home here. Our home is in heaven, in the glorious fellowship of our God when He calls us. Think about some of the members of your church. *Your* church, of which *you* are part, *they* are part. You and they have the same home, far, far away from this corrupt world. Does that give you some feelings to share? When you get dressed in the morning, take time to dress your soul in compassion, the ability to uniquely understand the hearts and desires of fellow believers. Join them in thanks. Be there and listen in time of sorrow. These are brothers and sisters. Understand, and love.

"What is in it for me?"

It is our natures that makes this all so difficult. It seems so obvious that our strong feelings for fellow believers should rival and surpass the emotion pent up in a football game. However, we really need to improve on this.

Maybe you ask, "What is in it for me?" It may seem a little selfish, but really it is not such a bad question. The body of Christ does well when a member has compassion for another. Real, true compassion, even the love of God Himself. The church does even better when many members are filled with compassion. Christ's church cannot function properly, though, unless all members understand each other in love and compassion. But, that is the idea. What is in it for you is the mutual compassion that you feel when you share your thoughts and understanding. It bounces right back at you. Compassion is a wonderful gift of God.

Do not give up this enormous privilege and opportunity. There is victory in it for God's people. Not the victors that hail from a Michigan Wolverine football team, but true, heavenly victors. Victors in and through Christ, our Head. Eternal victors. Thanks be to God. ❖

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

The Protestant Reformed Young People's Scholarship Committee is again providing scholarship money for the 1996-1997 school year. All prospective teachers and ministers please contact Sarah Decker at (616)457-7441 for an application. Completed applications are due on June 15, 1996.

The Word of God: The Perfect Immune System for the Body of Christ

by John Huizenga

From the perspective of the inner workings of our body, the external environment is seething with enemies looking for an opportunity to attack and destroy life. The cells in our bodies are so delicate and exceedingly complex and are therefore very vulnerable to any disturbance. A slight change in temperature, or chemical balance will wreck havoc in the body. Because of this extreme vulnerability, and extreme threat from the outside, only the most remarkable system of defense enables us to live from a physical point of view.

Our first line of defense is our skin which includes the lining in our lungs as well as the digestive system. Our skin effectively prevents the invasion of the millions of bacteria and viruses which would immediately engage in a systematic destruction of our body upon entry. For the most part, the delicate cells are quite secure beneath the skin, that is, until we get a cut or scratch, a breach in the wall, so to speak.

If an enemy does manage to evade the first line of defense, the battle has only begun. The enemy immediately faces the deadly force of precision security unmatched by the best security and defense devised by man. This security system is the immune system. The principle is simple and straight forward: anything foreign to the actual material of the body is treated as an enemy and destroyed. Only after a foreign material such as food or water has been carefully prepared for the body in the digestive system will it be received in the body.

When one studies the immune system he is immediately impressed with the fact that it is quite remarkable that we are alive while such a deadly force as the immune system prowls throughout the body. It is as if the body is crawling with deadly vipers ready to strike out at and destroy anything that is unable to identify itself as belonging to the body. What if the system makes a mistake and begins to attack the body itself? That happens occasionally, and scientists are greatly challenged to figure these things out. Even a mother's own baby while in the womb is subject to attack!

Enemy bacteria and viruses attack with a variety of strategies. Some of the enemies attempt to disguise themselves to evade detection, some come in a great variety of shapes to confuse the security, and some come with brute force in an attempt to overwhelm the security. The immune system must therefore be able to distinguish between all the various enemies and at the same time leave the body itself in all its variations untouched and safe. It is indeed an amazing array of highly trained and adaptable warriors. They are at the same time very gentle with the body but merciless with the enemy.

The Church also exists in a world seething with enemies. We live in a world of sin. Satan has been given authority to rule God's creation for a time, though it has in principle been redeemed by the blood of Christ and the new life of the resurrected Lord is found in the Church. Though Satan has been defeated, he continues to fight and seek entry into the body of Christ to destroy it and snuff out its life.

But the Church has an immune system. It consists of the pure preaching of the gospel. Most of the time we think of the Word of God preached as spiritual food; it

is that, but it is also a defensive weapon. If we think that the physical immune system is amazing, the Word of God is infinitely more amazing with wonders too deep ever to be fathomed. If we think the immune system is a powerful deadly force, the Word of God holds the power of eternal life and eternal death.

The Word of God is a two edged sword that is precise and exacting. It makes no mistakes, and smites dead every enemy that invades the Church, able even to pierce the old man of sin within an individual member of the Church. The Word is like the exceedingly hot fire that killed the soldiers of Nebuchadnezzar in an instant, but did not singe so much as a hair of Daniel and his friends nor cause the smell of smoke to be found on them. The Word of God is the angel of death which killed all the firstborn of Egypt but saved Israel alive. With such a power in the Church and in each believer, it is truly a wonder that we are not all consumed!

The pure preaching of the Word tolerates nothing foreign to the body of Christ. One is either a member of the body or he is not. One either has the new life of Christ in him, or he does not. The Word preached penetrates the soul of every hearer and brings condemnation to the sinner who rejects Christ, but brings life more abundantly to the sinner in whom Christ lives. The Word of God preached, the Gospel, is the good news that salvation is in Christ alone and by grace alone and worked by the sovereign operation of God. Only those in whom God implants the new life of regeneration receive the gospel with gladness, all others in pride reject it to their own destruction.

The enemy is forever seeking to evade the pure preaching of the Word. The best way to enter is to slip quietly into an individual member where it can remain undetected by the bearers of the Word: the preachers and the elders in the church. The enemies of the human body play the same game. They enter a cell of the body and there they quietly multiply, rupturing the cell with a virtual army of enemies trained to invade new cells. When Satan invades the heart of a church member, his first goal is to make him dull of hearing and lethargic lest the sword of the Word root him out. Only the sharpest preaching can find it out and prevent the spread of the enemy in the Body.

The Enemy also generates an endless variety of false doctrines and wicked ideas which the preacher of the Word and every believer must be able to identify and attack with the sword of the Word. The Word must remain sharp as to its central purpose and also continually be used and studied in order to identify distinctly endless variety of false doctrines and errors. The Word must be lively and quick in the preaching and also in the soul of the believer.

Sometimes disorders arise in the human immune system and it fails in its purpose. The immune system may become corrupted and begin to identify wrongly the cells of the body as the enemy and destroy the body it is supposed to protect. Presently the AIDS virus lurks in the world ready and able to attack and disable the immune system itself. Once infected, the immune system relaxes and becomes lazy and there is little chance of survival.

When the Enemy of the Body of Christ attacks the preaching of gospel itself, the result is as deadly for the church as AIDS is to the human body. The preaching of false doctrine is full blown AIDS in the church. When false doctrines are preached, the sword is dull and fails to destroy the enemy. The preaching begins instead to kill and starve the true members of the body. More false doctrines are allowed in the church, they quickly overtake the Body and the life is snuffed out.

The preaching of false doctrine in your local congregation can be prevented only when your church and your minister condemns the preaching of false doctrine and remains faithful to the Word of God. The church may never compromise the seriousness of sin, the vicarious atonement of Christ, the sovereignty of God in salvation by grace alone. The Church must remain faithful to her Husband: Christ Jesus. Any illicit contact with organizations that preach false doctrine such as Promise Keepers is asking for trouble. A firm rebuke and a call to repentance is the only contact we may have with such organizations and it is a necessary contact in obedience to Chirst. Those who belong to such organizations must be warned and believers who are deceived must be called out.

Despite the vicious threat of false doctrine, the pure preaching of the gospel will never be silent. Denominations of churches and congregations may become infected and die, but the Body of Christ is spiritual and found throughout the whole world. The true Body of Christ is perfectly preserved by the pure preaching of the Word and not one member is ever lost. The Church continues to grow and mature into the beautiful bride of Christ wherever believers are found and the Word of God is faithfully preached. ❖

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Watching Daily At My Gates

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May 1

Read Ephesians 3 (verses 14, 16).

The Apostle brings us here inside the secret of his inner chamber and shares with us his prayers for his beloved congregation in Ephesus. That prayer is no mere formality for him but rather he pours his soul out and is also so engaged in his heart that he assures us in a previous chapter: "I cease not to give thanks for you and to remember you in my prayers." Here we have the communion of the saints applied in practical life. However distant we may be from each other when we pray, we know that the prayers of every saint are heard by our one Father in heaven. Do we like Paul have others in mind for whom we pray? We then also bow our knees as he and lay our hearts naked before God. Let us do this without ceasing. The prize which we desire is worth a thousand-fold. The Spring from which all blessings flow is unfailing: the blessing of the riches of His righteousness—that is the treasure-house of God!

May 2

Read Psalm 116; Ephesians 3:17.

We spoke yesterday of the treasure-house of God, which true prayer can open up for another. One who prays for another also reaps for himself the most lovely fruit. The more open we are with someone, the more he or she is drawn to us and willing to open up the heart. This is also how it goes in our prayer life: the closer we are to others, the more we are accustomed to laying open before God our troubles and the troubles of others. When we read our text again in connection with the words from yesterday, then we see how the Apostle, as Abraham of old, is not satisfied with only a little of something. When he has prayed that the hand of the Saviour pour out good things over those whose soul is laid down before him, he goes further and desires the indwelling of the Holy Spirit in the heart. With this indwelling comes strength for our often shaken faith and our troubled heart. The Lord of the New Covenant comes to His Temple, and His Temple is the heart of each believer who confesses Christ as Saviour.

May 3

Read Psalm 115; Ephesians 3:18.

Yes, the breadth and length, the depth and the height; without limit is the volume of Christ's love for sinners. We can stammer, but we can not comprehend; it transcends all earthly knowledge. When we come to understand that all the wisdom of the world is foolishness when it comes to our salvation, and when we begin to know the love of Christ, then our heart already here on this earth has a foretaste of the salvation of eternal life. Indeed, a part of the curtain that hides the unseeable things bound up on earth from before our dimmed eyes goes away. Yet we need not be concerned with the thought: "I am now yet of the earth earthy, I can not dig into the things of eternity; I know Christ has died for me, because He has loved me and that is enough." The Apostle says here clearly: we *can* know the depth and height of the heavenly love which goes above all understanding. This is learned through God's Spirit so that we can do nothing but walk in this knowledge each day.

May 4

Read Isaiah 57:10-21; Isaiah 54:14.

By way of the strong chastising rod, we are urged onward in our path. We walk and become so tired, we run and become so weary. Take note of the sorrow which is written upon many a forehead and in the flustered gaze and the readable features of the face. Each troubled man who has a shortage of soundness and constancy and has an uncertain look comes to know that it is the rest found in God which is lacking. Yes, we all have need of firmness in our lives; in our designated path, and determined aim of life, yet so often we seek out ways and means, which are not God's ways and means, hence our instability, our unrest of soul, our leaning on reeds, which poke through our hands. By faith read concerning our Guide: "Thou hast loved righteousness, therefore Thy God hast anointed Thee with oil of gladness." Does not that word have something to say to us? Does it not point out to us the way to obtaining firmness in our lives, the confirmation of our life's path and goal, which we all without distinction desire? *He hath loved righteousness*, therefore the reward of the joy of His Lord is given. Our righteousness is in Christ. Let us in thankfulness follow the footprints of our Guide in every small detail of life. Righteousness brings peace, and peace gives firmness and rest.

May 5

Read Matthew 17:1-9 (verse 8).

There is no sin which we children of men take so lightly as our attachment and clinging tightly to men. To be certain, it is a great privilege of the Lord, when He binds our souls together and we can edify each other through diligent, faithful, sanctified friendship in Christ. Few there are, however, who also kill self-seeking in their friendship, and

esteem the soul of others valuable, and the love of the Saviour the highest. Most of us build our hope and expectations on the faithfulness of men, and thus also seek simply friendship itself. Is it no wonder that disappointment is so often the lot of man, and rather than give gratitude he utters the bitter complaint: is there no trust among men, and can men rely on anyone? At the moment we dejectedly stare at the mess of our expectations, the Lord comes to us in All his sufficiency and teaches us to lift up our eyes, and see Him. We gradually come to the discovery that there is nothing in heaven or on earth that our soul has undoubtedly, except Him alone, and that makes all the other undesirable things a great privilege.

May 6

Read Matthew 14-34; Psalm 42:7-8.

The Psalmist expresses here a knowledge of life that is not altogether foreign to most of us whose way of life has depths. Also the industrious young ones, whose vessel is jolted and hurled through the storm, have in these days similar experiences in their spiritual lives. Indeed, it can storm in our lives, and it can be a fearful thing for the weak who are in anguish. There is much that can terrify our hearts in our walk. "All thy waves and billows are gone over me," says the poet, but this is followed with "Yet the LORD will command his lovingkindness in the daytime, and in the night his song shall be with me, and my prayer unto the God of my life." He therefore does not go under in the storm but the fierce waves wash him into the rescuing arms of God. We will have the same experience when we also lift up our eyes and ears to Him, when the storm arises and comes to us, when the need of the soul is the highest. Also to us he comes, as to the disciples of old, walking through the waves, who speaks to us with His words of comfort: "It is I, be not afraid."

May 7

Read Psalm 81. Psalm 73:24.

There are men, who go through life as wandering question marks. They ask everything and everyone for their advice, but if one thinks that such people feel so dependent and so modest, that they place another insight above their own, then they are mistaken. Experience teaches that no one except such a one himself, goes his direction and holds his same insight. But experience also teaches something else each day, which is confirmed by the Scriptures, which each knows: that the council and wisdom of man is foolishness. Has your Council giver perished, O man? So cries the Lord to us, when we ask it of the mountains and expect it from the heavens. Notice these things in Asaph, who more than many had seen evil days. What a firmness he has, and how he trusts that the Lord's council and leading will lead him safely in the most difficult ways, and gives him a certain hope of the future in this weariness of life. After? Yes, after, after this life, when the earthly tabernacle is dissolved and death beckons, what then? Is the Lord also a Council giver and Guide in the distress of death? The child of God does not continually think about the distress of death, but rather that afterwards the heavenly Guide shall open for him the salvation of heaven. Shall we not quickly seek Him and no other Counselor in our life?

May 8

Read Isaiah 12 (verse 2).

We spoke yesterday about the heavenly Council-giver that we have in life and in the distress of death. The word of the Prophet comes to us today telling us how the Heavenly Leader will fulfill what the renewed heart of man desires. God is my strength, says he. He is this for me because He is become my salvation, He is the strength and the power of my weakness, and I have learned to trust in Him with my whole soul. He is my strength, that is, my help, my happiness, my salvation. I have obtained the Mighty One of Jacob as my ally, and therefore there is no more place for fear; hills may totter, mountains may give way, clouds may gather, men may plot against me, but I shall remain faithful and will not fear, because the Lord is my Strength. God's children have experienced so much, they fear not what is coming, but lay all things cheerfully in God's hands.

May 9

Read John 15:1-17 (verses 4, 5).

These words which we have read from the text today are so familiar, so often heard and read; should it not then be a word which will remain with us today and have something to say for our life? That which men know so well, they find so ordinary! So it goes so often with us, to our deep shame we confess, and it is for this reason, that we earnestly ask each other: Have we ever acknowledged a day, what we confess to believe: that we can do nothing without the help and the continual nearness of our Saviour? The thought does not remain often in us and it does not appear in our manner of activity and work, that we are indeed very rich! Is our speech about the Lord frequently not much more than our life with Him? O, the void and the emptiness of an industrious life, having lived for Him but without Him! O, the impotence of our Christianity, of our preaching, of our instruction, of our good works, if our lives are not bound to His, like the tendril on a grapevine. We are not surprised that a branch withers that is cut off from the stem, and shall we then say that there is no connection with the Fountain of Life? Abide in Me, says the Saviour. O, let us pray of Him, that He train our earthly hearts in this, and graft us into His fellowship!

May 10

Read Galatians 1-10; Ephesians 5:15, 16.

Life is short and time flies quickly. There is no truth, which is less spoken about yet so irrefutable, being confirmed by the experience of each day. And yet we build our dwellings here and create our dream homes and rush rashly on with our days and hours as if they were not accounted for by Him, Who holds the timepiece of our life in His hand, and will inquire into our use of all that He has entrusted to us here, in the short time which flew by. Let us covet from Him, Who holds eternity, and for that very reason desire, and to reckon with the bit of eternity that He entrusts to us, and go carefully on our way, not being slow in prayer, neither assaulters of heaven. We call time "a bit of eternity" intentionally, in order to bring to one another's attention how each deed, each neglected thing, has significance for eternity and works its way to the outside fringes of our observation. Often, virtue or vice depends upon small steps; on moments of eternity, beyond the grave. May the Lord teach us today and every day to be serious with time and opportunities, which He grants and extends in grace.

May 11

Read Genesis 12:1-8; Genesis 5:24.

Can two walk together, unless they be agreed? asks the Prophet. We think then where we so often walk together, being agreed in nothing else but our self-interest and so called unholy friendship, the roots have no depth of earth, the soil being self-interest. We find in our text today instruction for the cherished and unshakable covenant, that ever a man can seal, instruction also of the basis upon which sound friendships are built; the most certain foundation of peace, happiness and

joy, yes, already salvation here on earth in principle. We walk with God, through whose fellowship comes sanctified living, Who is in all true intercourse, to Whom is every alliance and holy covenant, because it is sealed through the presence of Him, Who is faithful through all eternity. What can harm us if the eternally Faithful One is near us? What can harm when hopelessness presses us down, where a mighty Helper is always nearby? Who can take away our peace, if the Prince of Peace Himself lays His hand in ours? We can also walk as Enoch with this Friend. Let us seek then His oversight continually.

May 12

Read Zechariah 4 (verse 6).

This is not only an admonition for the energetic among us, who intend to quicken the arrival of the Kingdom with force, and who impatiently give up if their work is not noticed. The Lord will certainly teach them to abandon their own power and in the place of this, to place their spiritual power, their energy, their diligence, in subservience to His service. It is also a word for the discouraged and disheartened. Perhaps a great mountain stands over against us, one that is in our eyes insurmountable except with difficulty, where is the shortage of power, and lack of wisdom? Where now shall help be sought? Who shall roll off the impossible stone, the mountain of burden? Behold, we have the certain promise: "not by might, nor by power, but by my spirit." Your weakness therefore is no disadvantage. God's Spirit shall conquer the hearts which resist, His wisdom leads and gives the right word at the right time. We ask of the Lord only that we might wait patiently for His time. At the determined time is the working of grace revealed. Then shall he, who has sown in hope bring his sheaves in with gladness.

May 13

Read Psalm 13; Romans 8:26.

This is certainly something which we all come across, that we don't know for what we should pray! Either the heart was overwhelmed with distress, or perhaps it was so earthbound, our gaze so fixed on the earth, that we can not lift our heart above the visual world. Still—the prayer is the lifebreath of the soul—without true prayer there is no true life! What good is it, when we confess the necessity of fellowship with our God, and we are not able to lift up our heart? Where do we find counsel, if our soul cleaves to the dust and the wings of prayer can not stretch out? Where should we begin, if we act upon various feelings and moods, so that God's will for us is hidden? Our text for today gives us the answer: Then, if we are not even able to stammer, God's Spirit comes to help; if we do not know what to pray for, He knows it for us and brings our needs before the throne of grace.

May 14

Read Psalm 16. I Peter 2:9.

Yes, here we have introduced by a man of a ripe knowledge of life our certain Christian calling, the life work, which rests upon us in the future, on us who formerly were without God in the world, restless, peaceless, doing the will of our own nature, but in which heart there has fallen presently a ray of hope, no, a flood of light, wonderful in its shine and beauty, but also wonderful in its working of grace. We are called to proclaim praises first of all in our walk, that is, in the imitation of Him, Who goes before us as the Guide, and Whom we have met in our way in the form of the unblemished Lamb of God, that has given Himself to cover our sins. Who has judged us in this meeting in our unworthiness, but girds us with strength, makes us skillful in the race, gives us over to the Redeemer of our souls, through which He will let His light shine in the world, because others also must be enlightened and drawn in.

May 15

Read Isaiah 33:1-17a (verse 2).

We have an example in earthly life of our Saviour, that He turned no one away, upon whom he had pity in the depths of their distress. We only need to think of Bartamaus, the blind man by the gate of Jericho with leprosy, who called earnestly upon so many, who came to Him with a "have pity on me." The Lord did the same in the Old Testament: over and over again these words ring in the Psalms: "I called with my voice to the Lord and He heard me out of the place of His holiness." "Out of anxieties I called to the Lord and He helped me." Shall the Unchangeable One, in whom there is no shadow of turning, not also show Himself to us in the same way? We must certainly go up; as truly as God is a God close by, so truly shall He also be gracious to us when He hears our voice of despair. He is a Helper, for each spiritual need, in each struggle with sin, in each illness unto death. May He be more so to us each day for time and eternity!

May 16

Read Isaiah 40:1-18 (verse 11).

The care and love of our God for us is tender, for us His often wandering sheep; it excels the tenderest mother; it surpasses the care of the most faithful earthly father. He comes down to us in our weakness and frailty, he reveals His patience with our little ones. The Lord could not reveal Himself in a more tender and faithful way, than with the example of a shepherd who grazes and tends his sheep and carries the lambs, the weak, and the weary. Yes, the sheep follow here in their earthly pilgrimage, yes, they seek by themselves often pastures other than that which the Shepherd wills, but His eye watches carefully over them and His hand remains ready in order to bring them into His way. When the evil one makes threats like a lion to devour the sheep, His arm protects. Do we not want to belong to the flock and follow His voice? When He calls us, or leads in the way, or takes hold of the heart; by the power of His grace we do not resist.

May 17

Read II Corinthians 4; Philippians 3:20.

Another translation of this text reads "our citizenship" instead of "our conversation." It is therefore a wonderful word that we consider here; our citizenship, also while we walk on this earth, is confirmed in heaven. We remind ourselves how Paul of Tarsus, the Hebrew, had his citizenship in Rome; this right gave him a free pass which gave him a right of way and respect also from his enemies. Should the citizenship of our heavenly bliss mean less for us? Must the knowledge that our place is prepared there and that our inheritance is secured there, and our citizenship there is purchased by the exceedingly high cost of blood, not be a power in our life and a help in order to persevere in the way of righteousness so that we thereby command respect from the enemies of the cross? Already the patriarchs have professed this that they were strangers and visitors on the earth and had a blessed hope. We also have an eye on the New Jerusalem, the beauties of which we can not imagine. How important it is in life and the troubles in our journey to remember where are Fatherland is, where we will be welcomed as citizens!

May 18

Read Psalm 32; Psalm 51:6.

To the question why there are so many cheerless lives, while men still profess to know their only Trust; or why it is that so much work in God's kingdom does not produce fruit even though men have good intentions, this may well be the answer: because there is a constraint in such a life, or a constraint on the workers of the kingdom. This is not always understood because people don't know themselves. In our text today we have an example of a man in whose life there is a constraint which is made apparent through confession of guilt. What an hour must it have been in David's life when he came to himself! He had lived in sin and shame for a whole year; outwardly seeming to be himself when he came before the people praying with hands lifted up to heaven, and now all at once God had so irresistibly shaken him that everything was revealed and he saw the gulf which separated him from God. The darkest hour was indeed an hour of sadness, but also one of readmission into the fellowship of God. Do we know something of this sadness? Let us pray for this self discovery and truth between the Lord and our heart.

May 19

Read I Samuel 30:1-19 (verse 6).

Seldom has a person undergone so much distress as David, whom we encounter here in great dilemma. When the people were gathered for the anointing of the king, he was before long a hero, who would rescue his people, but soon thereafter he was considered the greatest criminal and lived with the cave as his dwelling. Here in Ziklag, after years of suffering, which presently become darker, we find him in the greatest need. His people had made him an exile, his enemies seek him, his friends are ready to stone him. What was there now of God's promise, of His faithfulness, of his crowning for the throne? It had never been darker, it could never be darker for us on this earth. But David did not forget God's promise, never doubted God's faithfulness, and he was strong in the spirit, encouraged in his heart, and comforted in his soul while the turning-point of his life stood before the door. May we as David have our eyes on the rock from whence our help comes, when we are distressed in life and everyone despises us. Let us seek it then not from men, but from the Source of strength. No one and nothing can be against us if God is for us.

May 20

Read II Samuel 2:7.

Thus speaks David in the most sanctified hour of his life, after the promise of God for him and his house was spoken by the prophet, the promise of the eternal blessing for those who shall be made members of the covenant. We commend David for knowing himself small and insignificant before God though God had raised him to such dizzying heights. "It is too much, I am not worthy!" stammers the king. We can not find anything more humble than this thankfulness which is also at the heart of our life of gratitude. The Lord has also graciously given us our inheritance in the great Son of David and preserves us from day to day. Who of us can do anything but echo these words of David when we see our unworthiness and dependence upon God! But few are the truly thankful hearts because so little humility is found among us. We suppose that we need other privileges, while in reality our greatest desire must be to glorify the Lord in thankful love.

May 21

Read Genesis 32:24-31 (verse 31).

How lovely when the sun rises up over our lives! How lovely, carefree and undismayed are our lives when the lark sings above our head and the rays of sunshine light our path. Many feel this way in the early years of life, but so many are then disappointed with reality and embittered by the disappointments. For many the shadows are very dark in their path and soul, and the happy songs of youth die on their lips. Such is life outside of Paradise, such is life for the sinner, the true God can no longer come to us in the evening breezes. There is a sun which comes up after the darkness of night, there is a light that dispels the darkest shadow, there is a song that smooths the wrinkles of worry and brings eternal youth to our old heart. The sun which rose upon Jacob after the frightening night was the sun of God's grace which the shadow of unconfessed guilt had covered. The song that rejuvenated his heart was the song of new life from Him who said: "see, I make all things new; though your sins be as crimson, I will make them white as wool." Has the sun risen up over you?

May 22

Read I Corinthians 15:1-10 (verse 10).

Whatever we do gives evidence of what rules in our lives. He who gives honor to the Lord with words, and really is only concerned for himself, that he receives praise of others is generally deceptive in his walk and ways. From such comes false displays of humility, touchiness in the hearing of remarks, and the giving of more blessings than men are able to receive. In our text today is a man who shames us by his simple acknowledgment of the grace the Lord worked in him. There is no false humility here which denies the gifts received. God receives the thanks for the grace He gave. Here also the possibility of self exaltation is excluded, because the Apostle is more than anything convinced that it is not his work, but the grace of God which He had worked. We must learn from Paul to lose ourselves so that we can grow in the grace of our Saviour and reveal it to others.

May 23

Read II Corinthians 12:5-18; Isaiah 40:31.

The powerless and weak, the handicap; they shall receive new power. This is a promise of new life! There are also many who are tired and worn out in this life. They have done too much, made themselves too tired, they are in one word overworked! The earthly physician knows that the best remedy is rest. The Lord does not restrict Himself to a place of isolation in order to speak to the soul of better things than the care of the body alone. The secret in sickness and in health is none other than a childlike holding on to the promise of the Lord, and thus not only look for Him, but also expect His coming. We expect Him, He never disappoints!

May 24

Read II Thessalonians 3:1-16 (verses 3, 36).

There are many temptations and disturbances which are worked in the heart through the prompting of the evil one who goes round about the children of God like a roaring lion seeing whom he may make his prey. But the devil also works evil in us by the tongues of malevolent men, and even brings his evil influence upon us through our friends. Whenever we are in danger of being drawn away from our firm ground and loosed from the peace in our heart, there is an unending comfort in the morning of each new day knowing this assuring word of God: "I am faithful, I will strengthen you; when the evil one falls on you with temptations to take away your peace, I stand next to you as your

shield and am certainly more mighty than he. Stay always by Me, the Prince of Peace, and your peace will be multiplied and you will be preserved."

May 25

Read Romans 8:28-39 (verse 34).

Satan is still always eager to sift every one of us as the wheat and win us over in his devilish game. It is however an unspeakable comfort for each who is challenged, that it is not the will of God for even one elect child to be lost. He who is for us is sovereign over all the devils. Do we have security in that? Can we be certain that God's purpose is not to leave us to ourselves? Has He also willed my preservation? So asks the anxious soul. Who is it that damns? asks the apostle. You have a Saviour who is damned for you. What anxious soul can remain so when confronted with this knowledge: my salvation was so dear to Him, that He gave His own life for me, and God raised Him from the dead! So complete was His work that He now reigns and makes intercession for us.

May 26

Read Psalm 121 (verse 5).

That is a beautiful promise which proclaims the full riches of God's grace for us. At the beginning of a new year this verse gives a welcome comfort and courage for the future. What could be better than to know that God watches our every step. What is there more beautiful than to know that those whom we love may continue on their way under the shadow of the Almighty! But these words do not only have something to say to us on rare anniversaries. The God Who holds us forever in His power, and the Saviour who remains the same yesterday and in the future is also the Fulfiller of all the promises of the Old Testament. Also today as the heat of the days fall on us and burdens rise up before us can our soul find a beautiful shelter under His wings. He Who is the Shepherd of the flock will also be the Shepherd of each sheep.

May 27

Read Isaiah 63:7-64:1 (verses 7, 8).

There are so many reasons to complain, says the heart of man, there are so many reasons for distress. Over against the lamentation of the mourners, the prophet sets forth instead the song of praise of God's children. When we survey our way we must confess, even if we also belong to the mourners, that the blessings were more than the afflictions, that the lovingkindnesses of our God were and are innumerable. In one word, we act as if we had a right to God's lovingkindnesses while it is all of God's covenant grace. Do we not by nature react against the word "For"? It is as if the Lord says here to Himself: "They have no right to My lovingkindness because they forget Me every day and they turn themselves continually away from Me, but yet I will not deal with them according to their sin because they are My people, I have led them with My hand and My covenant is an eternal covenant in Christ."

May 28

Read Psalm 94:9-23; James 1:5.

When we write these promises on the table of our heart each day, they work in us God's grace to live and work in His Kingdom. The apostle presumes here that there is a shortage of wisdom! We suppose so often that we can judge by our own wisdom and undertake our own affairs, but the Scripture says to us: "The Lord sees no wise hearts!" The Lord must open our eyes for us so that we take refuge in the Source of wisdom, which gives generously and abundantly. All our words and actions must give witness that we have called upon the Lord. Though we do not hear an audible answer spoken by God, God's Word sheds light on our path, and God's Spirit leads and sanctifies us in our thoughts and desires. The promise is certain, the light that we desire will be given to us.

May 29

Read Psalm 43; Psalm 42:5a.

Who is there among us who does not understand the frame of mind of the psalmist? Do we not know by our own experience the dark days, the sleepless nights, the distressed heart, the tempestuous waves which wash over us, the troubles of life which are too much for us? Then we bow our soul and close our eyes so tight that we do not see the light of God's Word. Now it is certainly easy to speak of happiness and hope if we stand afar off, estranged to the distress of life, but that is not the case here. We can trust these words of the psalmist, he knows the fearful struggle, he has gone through the depth of abandonment. If my God is for me, who can be against me? That must be the confession of the Christian. We are God's children in Christ our Saviour.

May 30

Read Psalm 97; Psalm 73:11, 17.

How does God know? So asks the restless heart of man when the clouds pack together so thickly above us, when one trial after another comes down upon us, when men grieve us, when friendships turn against us. How does God know? We desire to have the riddles in our own lives solved. We want to hear the voice of God in the world, and see the oppressed helped, and the dark things revealed. But the heavens remain closed and the world mocks. The psalmist knows that the darkness in our lives, insofar as it seems unjust, is troublesome in our eyes, but he shows us the way to the light—the sanctuary of God. May we also seek the Lord's will, wait upon Him for our light and salvation. God's promises are unshakable in Jesus Christ, through Whom all things work together for our good!

May 31

Read Psalm 89:1-19; Psalm 86:11.

The man who joins these two prayers together knows the human heart well; he knows how divided his desires can be and how the same man with the prayer of his lips and to some extent the heart prays "teach me, Lord, thy ways" can at some other time be filled with conflicting desires and can long for something other than the God ordained way. That is why he adds: unite my heart, O Lord, help me so that I have nothing but one goal in view, make that the center of my life; that I become more and more thy property, and thus learn to ask for all things according to thy will and fear thy name. May we also, pilgrims as we are on the broad way of life, write the prayer in our soul: Unite my heart, O Lord! Bind together all gifts and powers so that I do not abuse them but devote them to thy glory; lead all desires in thy path, sanctify all talents and abilities for thy honor, let all the ways of my heart lead to the goal of which the angels sing, the honor and glorification of thy holy name.

Too Busy

Too busy to hear the song of the bird
As he carols at the break of the day—
Or list'n to the bee as his drone can be heard,
When nectar he sips on the way?

Too busy to observe the expanse of the blue
As the clouds nonchalantly float by—
Or gaze at the flowers of beautiful hue,
Caressed by the breezes wafting nigh?

Too busy to visit those in deep pain,
And comfort the weary of heart—
Or write to a friend his faith to sustain,
'Ere the days of his life do depart?

Too busy to read in God's Holy Word,
And meditate on the Truth He imparts—
Have we prayed in the days already accrued;
Is gratefulness ingrained in our hearts?

Too busy with the cares of this life here below,
That we forget the great mansions beyond—
Are we pilgrims—and in our very life show
That we to the friendship of God do respond?

Too busy to realize that the things of this world,
As fantasy soon pass away—
And the plan of God will then be unfurled,
To all—on that great Judgment Day?

Will the words "*Too Busy*" be atuned on that Day,
To the richness of that divine state—
Or will the rebuke to our utter dismay,
Be—"It's too late, yes, it's too late!"?

by Mrs. C. De Boer

Marriage: What Is Its Purpose

by Jeff Potjer

What is marriage? Is it just sparkling rings, a beautiful dress, a tuxedo, and a nice ceremony? Or is it a symbol of constant faithfulness and abiding love?

The world most likely would go with just the big expensive wedding ceremony. But we as christians know that marriage is far more than just the ceremony. Marriage is a social institution between a man and a woman which is regulated by the Word of God, whereby two become one flesh.

What is the purpose of marriage? First and foremost it is a means by which a husband and wife; not only show public commitment towards each other, but also show their unity in service to God. By no means is marriage a way to better serve our own self.

God gave Adam (man), Eve (woman) to serve as an help meet for him and likewise for her also is the man a helper. They were not to be each others' possession. For man was not given woman to be her tyrant, but so that they may share in their different natures. Many men these days think that they are the tyrant of their house and family. But that is not what they should be. A tyrant is one who governs, controls, and regulates things in a manner, in some respect, of enslavement to others so that his way is the only way. How can two become in unity with their service to God if they cannot share ideas in the home?

Man can better show his service to God by his example of how he loves his wife. And vice versa, a woman can reverence her husband the same. For as Proverbs 18:22 states "Whoso findeth a wife findeth a good thing, and obtaineth favour of the Lord."

The wife's calling in marriage and to her husband is best described in Titus 2:4, 5. "That they may teach the young women to be sober, to love their husbands, to love their children, To be discreet, chaste, keepers at home, good obedient to their husbands, that the Word of God be not blasphemed."

A couple's purpose in marriage is also to help the church grow as well as the human race. This is based on God's will in Genesis 1:27, 28 "...male and female created He them. And God blessed them, and God said unto them, Be fruitful, and multiply, and replenish the earth, ..." The only purpose in marriage is not only to bear children, but also it is very important that they help the church to continue to grow. Without marriage it is not possible.

Through marriage we promise to live faithfully with our spouse. We also promise to live properly with them. To love, honor, and cherish them. These are promises to be continually made to your spouse. When it comes to promises a good example of how not to be, is the example of the "Promise Keepers." The "Promise Keepers" make promises before other men who are not even of like faith. What can be achieved by that, when all promises must be carried out to God through faith; likewise in marriage.

Married persons should also realize that they must be there for each other at all times. That means work must be a means in which to support our families, not our wants. Therefore we should devote our time and energy to the family and the church while making work

our secondary objection. This means that husband and wife should do as much as possible with each other and their family. And not always be hanging out with the "guys" or doing things with the "girls."

Marriages today are on the decline along with the morality of our society. This is in relation to three main things: fornication, adultery, and divorce; all of which go hand in hand. People today seem to think only about themselves. And marriage appears to reflect only "puppy love." Relationships are here today and gone tomorrow with no sincerity. What then is the meaning of the vows "to love, honor, and cherish, for richer or for poorer, in sickness and in health, for better or for worse, till death do us part." A key word here is "death." That means that marriage is a lifetime commitment.

As Christians we must stand apart from the world in our marriages and show our commitment towards one another. We can do this by our devotion to each other in marriage, and not be as the world. Scripture supports this in Hebrews 13:4 when it says, "Marriage is honourable in all, and the bed undefiled: but whoremongers and adulters God will judge." This is our comfort as we are ridiculed for our beliefs in marriage.

In conclusion, marriage is a symbol of Christ and His bride the church. Its purpose is to serve God and the church. The wedding ceremony is an expression of public commitment to one another and marks the beginning of a unified service to God. By no means is it a way of self glorification for man. Marriage is an institution of God, not of man. Therefore as Prof. David Engelsma quotes, I Corinthians 7:39, in his book *Marriage—The Mystery of Christ and the Church* ... that we ought to marry "only in the Lord." ❖

Jeff is a member of Faith Protestant Reformed Church in Jenison, Michigan.

Where We Stand

Introduction to DISTINCTIVES

by Jeff Kalsbeek

There are differences between the Church of God and the world, which can be seen as believers walk the antithetical life here on the earth. More specifically, we as Protestant Reformed youth see many differences between us and the church world as a whole. There are distinctions taking the form of doctrines and also distinctions which become manifest in our walk of life, and it is some of these that we wish to address in this series on "Distinctives."

It is our desire that this series might serve to refresh our memories, that the articles might serve to strengthen our faith, and serve to maintain the Truth about God which has been entrusted to us. This desire of us young people, is only an echo of what the first editor of the *Beacon Lights*, Rev. C. Hanko, showed to be one of the purposes of the *Beacon Lights*, which we quote,

> ...as an airplane pilot wings his way unhesitantly on his course by the sweeping rays of his beacon lights, so this paper designs to guide you on your way through this world of sin and darkness, that you may ever hold your course and unswervingly strive for your goal.

Then, pointing out a distinction, Sovereign Grace, he continues,

> Protestant Reformed young men and women have an especially high calling. To them is entrusted the maintenance of their Reformed heritage, the truth of God's Sovereign Grace, so commonly denied and consistently undermined in our time. That Truth cannot and may not perish from the earth, but must be carried on to the generations to come, even until the end.

We are thankful for our heritage, and pray that we too might be faithful.

In Defense Of Women (1)

by Jeff Kalsbeek

An issue which sharply distinguishes us as Protestant Reformed young people from an increasingly greater number of churches and people, is the issue of women holding places of authority in the institutional life of the Church. The most recent example of this is the "Women in Office" controversy in the Christian Reformed Churches, where many are seeking, and seem to have succeeded in having the offices of elder and minister opened to women. This is an attack against the Reformed position which holds to the submission of the woman to the man, in all areas of life. This is an attack against true believing women who desire to obey God's will for them. This is also an attack against God Himself and His revealed Word. There have been many, many false views raised against this position of the New Testament Church, and advocates of women in office appeal to them all to defend their stand. These have been refuted long ago, yet they are important to know, so we will try to briefly summarize some of them.

The first appeal is to the Old Testament passages of scripture which speak of Debra, who judged Israel (Judges 4), and of Hulda, the prophetess (II Chronicles 34:20-28).

Our objection to the appeal to these passages, first of all is that they are isolated incidents and not at all the general rule in the O.T. Also it has been pointed out that the spiritual condition of God's people at the time of these women was very low. There were no men to lead, to their shame, so God through special revelation raised up women. John Calvin stated the Churches position clearly,

> If any one bring forward, by way of objection, Deborah(Judges 4:4) and others of the same class of whom we read that they were at one time appointed by the command of God to govern the people, the answer is easy. Extra ordinary acts done by God do not overturn the ordinary rules of government, by which He intended that we should be bound. Accordingly, if women at one time held the office of prophets and teachers, and that too when they were supernaturally called to it by the Spirit of God, He who is above all law might do this; but being a peculiar case, this is not opposed to the constant and ordinary system of government."[1]

As can be seen too, by this rather lengthy quote, this issue of women's authority is nothing new, but something the Church has always battled.

The second appeal is to point to the New Testament passages that seem to allow for women deacons or deaconesses. Though there are others, the passage in Romans 16 which speaks of Phebe, is one of the passages pointed to.

> I commend unto you Phebe our sister, which is a SERVANT of the church which is at Cenchrea: That ye receive her in the Lord, as becometh saints, and that ye assist her in whatsoever business she hath need of you...

The word "servant" in this passage can properly be translated deaconess, therefore, it is assumed that women deacons might have been common in Paul's day. At the very least, it is maintained by many, that the Bible is not clear about this. This argumentation is typical of those who spread false views. One passage is found which seems to support their contention and they run with it, regardless that other passages in scripture clearly show their assumption to be incorrect.

The Reformed position on this passage holds the word "servant" to be translated correctly. Only two other times in the Bible is this word translated "deacon", and then it refers to men only, whereas many many times this word is translated "servant." Other parts of God's Word clearly forbid women to have places of authority, and when taken together, this passage in Romans could never be taken to allow women as deacons.[2]

A third appeal is to Galatians 3:28,

> There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither bond nor free, there is neither male nor female: for ye are all one in Christ Jesus.

Those who use this passage will argue that God sees all believers as being the same, "neither male nor female." The separate distinctions are now gone with the coming of Christ. Therefore the Church may not continue to deny women their rightful place.

We as Prot. Ref. youth have been taught the correct interpretation of this passage. God is not setting aside earthly differences here, but instead is showing us that, as regards our justification He sees no differences in us. Whether we are rich or poor, whether we are male or female, we are all His children and have received salvation the same way. And now too, salvation does not make us the same. Now that we are His children, there are still wealthy believers and poor believers; there are still males and females. Just as the human body, so Christ's body has many different parts, yet, "ye are all one in Christ Jesus."

These appeals to the Bible by advocates of women in office have been soundly rejected as false by the Church for many years. Yet there is another means of attack upon the Church. When the position for women in office cannot be justified with scripture, it is admitted that passages such as I Timothy 2:11, 12 and I Corinthians14:34, 35 do in fact prohibit women from holding places of authority in the Church. Yet, though this is admitted, it is maintained that such passages no longer apply to the church of today, Paul was influenced by the culture in which he lived. This is a blatant attack on the clarity of the Bible and the unchangableness of God.

When taken together, all these arguments, for the position of women in office in the church, seem to have the same basis. They are rooted in the false view that the woman was never supposed to be in submission to the man, but actually, was to be the same as man in all areas of life. The Church, then, for centuries, has sinned against God in refusing women their rightful place. The Church has sinned, in prohibiting women from using their God given gifts. The men of Israel in the O.T. did not allow women to have authority, yet, according to this view, this was surely not God's will, for God willed from the very start that women would be equal with men. God even showed this, it could be said, when He raised up a prophetess in Israel and a woman to judge in Judah. God certainly had no problem with women in places of authority! Paul in the N.T. taught that it was a "shame" for a woman to speak authoritatively in the Church, yet this was, without question, not God's will; God's will is that there be "neither male nor female." Now, when in today's church world, the offices of the Church are finally being opened to women, it is proudly announced that the Church is finally doing what God intended all along, to have men and women be the same.

to be continued... ❖

[1]*Calvin's Commentaries* vol. 21, p.67

[2]For those interested in more than a summary of this translating of the word "servant," read *Far Above Rubies*, Chap.7 pp87-91, Chap.9 pp127-138, and Chap.10 pp144-145.

Jeff is a member of Hope Protestant Reformed Church in Grand Rapids, Michigan.

Guest Article

PELLA IOWA: Tulips in a Crumbled Castle

by John Huizenga

Nestled in the plains of Southeast Iowa, along the Des Moines River, not far from Lake "Red Rock," we find a city of 9300 souls with the name "Pella." Here we find one of our own Protestant Reformed churches, as well as some very interesting history.

Pella is a strange name for a city in these parts where names can usually be traced to the local Indian tribes or the nation from which settlers came. The name "Pella" may not seem that significant at first, but it is packed with interesting history. The name itself goes back to 70 A.D. when Jerusalem was destroyed by the Romans

and some of the Christians fled across the Jordan to a town called "Pella." Thus "Pella" has come to mean "a refuge" and meaning in this name was carried over to the city we find in Southeast Iowa.

One would not expect such an epic history behind any town in Iowa. The city does not trace its lineage back to the days of the Romans, but simply declares that its heritage is Dutch. In fact in May of 1995 it celebrated its 60th annual Tulip Time Festival dedicated to the memory of the 700 Hollanders who founded the city of Pella under the leadership of Dominie Hendrick Pieter Scholte. In Scholte we discover the connection between the ancient name of this Dutch settlement and its present existence in Iowa. Pella of Iowa is the place once considered a refuge for 700 Hollanders who fled from their Fatherland, the Netherlands, in order to be free from economic and religious oppression.

But there is more to the name "Pella" than refuge from oppression. Just as the Jews fled the destruction of Jerusalem, Scholte claimed in 1845 that the Netherlands was ripe for the judgment of God. He wanted a decisive separation from the doomed Fatherland which involved establishing a new settlement in which all traces of the Netherlands were to be banished. This was to be a new beginning. It is ironic, therefore, that the residents of Pella today so zealously celebrate the heritage which was supposed to be destroyed! This curious paradox can only be understood when we make a distinction between Scholte and those whom he led to Pella. Pella is the flourishing of Dutch heritage amidst the glorious ruins of Scholte's dream.

First we consider the reason why the people wanted to leave the Netherlands. One source of discontent was the persecution that the seceders faced after the *Afscheiding*. The government declared the secession church illegal on grounds that the policy of freedom of religion applied only to denominations that existed in 1816 when the policy was adopted. Soldiers were sent to make life miserable for the seceders, disrupting worship services and demanded to be fed and housed by the poor farmers which they were persecuting. Those who wished to find employment could not do so because they belonged to an illegal church. This, of course, made life and worship very difficult for these believers.

The persecution itself, however, was not enough to stimulate emigration to America. There are a number of reasons for this. For one thing the persecution only lasted for five years (1835-40). The people hardly had time to think of leaving amidst all their troubles. Neither was the idea of emigration popular among the Dutch. For many Dutchmen, America seemed uncivilized, far away, and dreamlike. In addition to fear of the unknown, those who left for America were often thought of as outcasts and exiles. The people therefore endured the persecution, hoping for better times in the future.

Better times did come for the seceders; but in the meantime, news of the wide open space, freedom, and opportunities in America trickled into the Netherlands with letters from friends and relatives who had previously gone to America. This news made America more attractive to many of the poor in the Netherlands, but was not enough for those who would endure most anything for the security of their beloved *Vaderland*. But their security was soon to be shaken. In 1845 the land was hit with a potato crop failure and a cattle plague. Now there were many who were willing to leave, especially the secessionists who had persecution fresh in their memories.

In response to those who wished to leave, associations were formed to help the emigrants. Soon there were many such associations, but of particular importance for this paper are the Utrecht, Arnhem, and Zeeland associations which

> were headed respectively by the Reverends Scholte, Van Raalte, and Van der Meulen, all of whom were secessionist ministers. The charters of the associations contained detailed regulations pertaining to such matters as membership, financial obligations, conduct aboard ship, method of choosing a settlement site, and the manner in which a new settlement would be administered during the formative years. As might be expected, nonbelievers and Catholics could not become members of the associations, but their charters were quite liberal in accepting non-seceding Protestants. Provisions were frequently made for transporting emigrants who had limited economic means, with the understanding that payment would occur at a later date on terms agreeable to all parties. Governing boards were established for solving problems that might arise before the emigrants left the Netherlands, and to supervise affairs en route and at the settlement site. A small, advance group was generally sent to prepare the way for the main party. It made inquiries and obtained information that would be helpful when the main body arrived.[1]

Scholte had been helping to organize emigration for some time and at first had no intentions of going to America himself. The *Reveil* movement out of which he came despised the idea of going to America because these

men considered America to be an uncivilized and uncultured place. This may have hindered a decision to go but he proved to be quite willing to depart from the ideas of the *Reveil* when he seceded from the *Hervormde Kerk.* He had an independent impulse within him. He was an opportunist. He was looking for opportunities that would enable him to fulfill his own dreams. Until he could see some advantage to going to America, he preferred to stay put; but, he left the possibility open. Already on October 16, 1835 Scholte wrote to the King saying that "my fellow believers might be forced to seek a free place in the world to serve God according to the dictates of their consciences."[2] But at this point he felt that spiritual conditions did not yet warrant flight.

By 1845, the year of the potato blight, the spiritual conditions had become better for the secessionists, but the relations of the parties led by Scholte with the rest of the Secession began to wither along with the potatoes. Being twice an outcast, it was not long before Scholte himself decided to go to America.

to be continued... ❖

[1]Gerald F. DeJong, *The Dutch in America 1609-1976.* (Boston: Twane Publishers, 1975.) pp. 135-6.

[2]Lubbertus Oostendorp *H.P. Scholte: Leader of the Secession of 1834 and Founder of Pella.* Academish Proefscrift. (Franeker: T. Wever), p. 148.

Our History

The Reformed Churches in the Netherlands

by J.P. de Klerk
Introduction by John Huizenga

Introduction

Although many of our readers can trace their family history back to the Netherlands, the bond has become very weak and our Fatherland has become a Great Grandfatherland known only from secondary sources. Yet we do well to keep abreast on church news in the Netherlands as well as the other countries in the world. J.P. de Klerk is a native of the Netherlands and now lives in New Zealand. We have asked him to share his knowledge of the Netherlands in the way of personal drawings and photographs of churches in the Netherlands as well as a brief summary of each church.

The Reformed Churches in the Netherlands

Thirty years ago there were still many Reformed churches in The Netherlands, though they were divided into three groups:

(1) Reformed State Churches
(Netherlands Hervormde Kerken)
(2) Reformed Synodal Churches
(Gereformeerd Synodale Kerken)
(3) Reformed Liberated Churches
(Gereformeerde Kerken Vrijgemaakt).

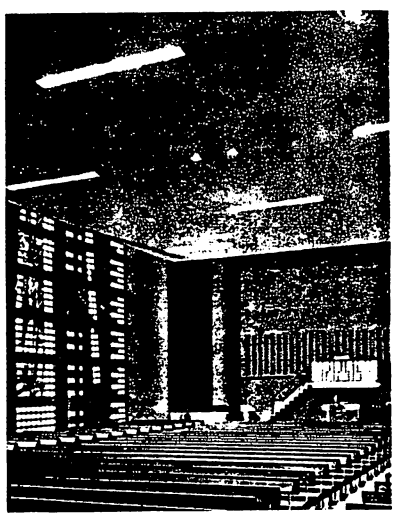
In the first two groups the modernist professors have caused chaos. Numerous books, brochures, pamphlets and articles have been written about that. As a result

thousands of people left, in different directions, because several were already too much infected so that they did not fit in the obvious choice, the Liberated Churches. Anyhow, the result has been, that many Reformed Synodal Churches have disappeared completely, broken down till the last piece, or used by a factory or a warehouse, and even here and there, a mosque (there are already more than 500 mosques in The Netherlands). The Churches where I was baptized, and the one where we married, have been bulldozed away (in the city of The Hague).

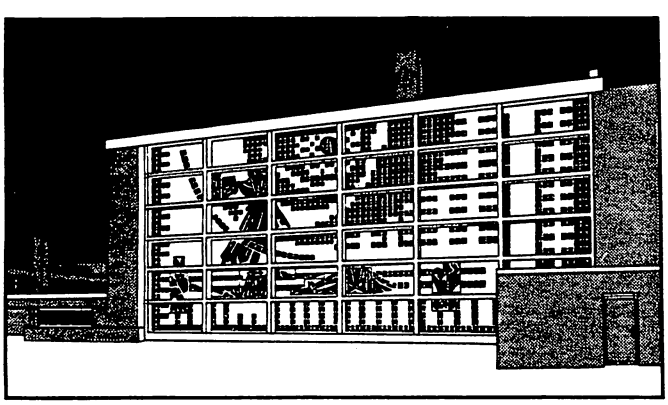
So, speaking about Reformed Churches has become more difficult. The Reformed Synodal Churches decided last year to go together with the Reformed State Churches and the Lutheran Churches of The Netherlands. Those three have adopted the name "Samen of weg kerken" (Churches who go together the same way) which has caused a lot of consternation. They are modernist. A group called "Gereformeerde Bond" (Reformed Covenant) left the Reformed State Churches (Nederlands Hervormde Kerk) and joined those who had left the Reformed Synodal Churches, as far as they did not join the "Liberated Reformed Churches" (the fastest growing Churches).

The *Koningskerk* (King's Church) is one of the new buildings, one of the few, erected after 1960. It has attracted much attention because of a high wall made of concrete and glass in a design that has to do with the parable of the sower. There is an outside roof and a (lower) inside roof, for acoustic reasons. The tower has been separated from the main building. Houses for the minister and the caretaker are part of the whole construction; in between there is a big room for festivities of clubs, weddings, etc.

Situated in Amsterdam, the church is surrounded by many high flatbuildings. ❖



Inside the Reformed (Syn.) Koningskerek at Amsterdam. The pulpit, the baptismal, the small Communion table.



Outside the Koningskerk, designed by the Dutch Architects C. Trappenburg and W. van der Kuilen.

This is the Reformed Church of Koudekerke, on the island of Walcheren, belonging to the Dutch province of Zeeland. Also the villages Lammerenburg and Westhoek belong to this congregation. The church is old, simple, but well looked after. During the summer months, many tourists find their way to this Church. I made this drawing in 1941. You see a full moon, which is sometimes close to the earth, but nevertheless in reality far away. The light can be almost as strong as daylight and you can read the *Beacon Lights*!

J.P. De Klerk is a journalist and author from the Protestant Reformed Church of New Zealand

The Mark of a Man

Book Review by John Huizenga

The Mark of a Man by Elizabeth Elliot, Fleming H. Revell Company: Old Tappan, New Jersey.

Young ladies, what do you look for in a man? Young men, do you cultivate the qualities of a man? Do you have a clear goal in your mind for attaining true manliness? In these days of confusion when so many men act like women, and so many women act like men, Elliot cuts through the nonsense with sharp biblical clarity. She sets forth the distinctions between men and women in order to help young people in the critical task of finding a suitable partner for life. This topic is important because strong relationships and homes are crucial for the life of the church.

Elliot works with the concept of men and women as complementary to each other. This means that the woman has something which the man needs but does not have in himself, and the man has something which the woman needs but does not have in herself. For example, a particular color may be a fine color, but when a complementary color is placed next to it, each adds to the other an additional brilliance and beauty. So it is in the godly relationship between a man and a woman. The wonder of complements is something mysterious and deep especially in human relationships, but the ungodly world today is working very hard to destroy this beauty of God's creation.

Thus the idea is that men must be clearly and distinctly masculine, and women must be clearly and distinctly feminine in order to have a strong and beautiful relationship. According to Elliot, the distinctive virtue of men is "initiation" and the distinctive virtue of women is "response." She then defines the concept of initiation in relation to the related concepts of authority, faithfulness, leadership, courtesy, decisiveness, sacrifice, courage, kindness, obedience, integrity, endurance, tenderness, and love.

This book is excellent reading and with stimulating content. I would recommend it to all young people and parents of young people. The ideas are not developed in the abstract, but in close connection with the issues we hear about every day such as homosexuality, women in church office, divorce, and sexism. Thus this book has great practical worth, and is also very informative about what is happening in the world today.

The Lord willing, I will review another book by Elizabeth Elliot next month entitled *Let Me Be a Woman*, which deals more specifically with the concept of "femininity" and "response." Then we will take a close look at the young ladies to which real men are attracted. Real men want real women, and a real woman is one who is glad she's a woman, stands in obedience to Christ, has a good sense of humor, and knows that love is action and not merely a feeling.

In one of her concluding chapters, Elliot says to the men "There are five ways you can help that woman who will be your wife be the woman you want her to be. First off, be a man. I've said that in a hundred ways, but I'll say it again. You expect her to be a real woman, but you can't expect that if you're not a real man. It is in response to the fullest expression of your manliness that she will be most womanly. When she's not living up to your expectations, check yourself out first. Are you taking the lead as you ought to, with an attitude of humility and submission to Christ? Are you remembering that you're the one responsible to her?" Get the book to find out what the other four are. It is well worth the price. You will be able to find it in most Christian book stores, and if they don't have it, they will be happy to order it for you. ❖

CHURCH NEWS continued from the Back Cover

MARRIAGE "... and they twain shall be one flesh." Matt 19:5

Mr. Jon Rutgers (HOPE, MI) & Miss Cheri Kaptein (FAITH, MI) were united in marriage on Feb 23.

Joined in holy matrimony on Feb. 23 were Mr. Scott Riemersma (GEORGETOWN, MI) & Miss Jill Pipe (SOUTHEAST, MI).

TRANSFERRED MEMBERSHIPS

From FAITH, MI to BYRON CENTER MI - Miss Catherine Bruckbauer

From LYNDEN, WA to HUDSONVILE, MI - Mr. & Mrs. Mark Vandenberg

From LYNDEN,WA to DOON, IA - Mr. John Tolsma

From LYNDEN, WA to PEACE, IL - Mr. Ralph Medema

From SOUTHEAST, MI to GEORGETOWN, MI - Jill Pipe

To LYNDEN, WA from FIRST, MI - Mr. Tim Joostens ❖

"LITTLE LIGHTS" . . . let it shine!

by Connie Meyer

The Fruit of the Spirit (Conclusion)

Time for a break! It was a warm, sunny afternoon, and Julie and Jason were finished with their daily chores. Now with apples in hand, they climbed onto the railing of their porch and began to eat the crisp, red fruit.

"Mm, these are good," Jason slurped.

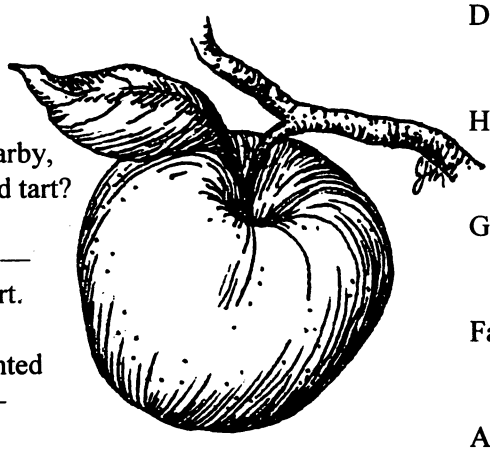
"Yea. Hey—that reminds me of a poem I just found," his older sister replied. "Want me to get it?"

Poetry wasn't exactly Jason's favorite literature, but he said anyway, "Why not."

Julie promptly returned with the poem and handed it to Jason. "I found it in a *Beacon Lights* magazine," she said. "It explains a few things, don't you think?"

Jason read:

The Fruit!



Dear child,
have you some fruit nearby,
plump, sweet, good, and tart?
The fruit
as picture teaches more—
of things inside the heart.
So look
to see that God has planted
fruit within your soul—
Though small,
when watered with His Word
the Spirit makes it grow.
Nourished
so each part's maturing:
stem, seed, pulp, and rind.
The fruit
within us has parts too,
so see if each you find.
Do you
love others when loving's hard;
find joy when sorrow's given?
Have peace
when storms about would harm:
patience when you're striven?
Gentle
when you'd rather be harsh;
work good for those around?
Faithful
to God and to His Word;
meek when revenge surmounts?
And then
have strength to wage a war
against the worst of foes—
The strength
to fight a sinful will—
the will within your soul?
Dear child,
pray and seek this blessed fruit
in all you think and do.
Glory
to God is the result—
it's why the fruit's in you!

Find each underlined word of this verse in the puzzle below: "But the <u>fruit</u> of the Spirit is <u>love</u>, <u>joy</u>, <u>peace</u>, <u>longsuffering</u>, <u>gentleness</u>, <u>goodness</u>, <u>faith</u>, <u>meekness</u>, <u>temperance</u>: <u>against</u> <u>such</u> there is no <u>law</u>."

Galatians 5:22, 23.

S	S	N	F	E	K	M	E	P	R	A	S	T
O	H	T	I	A	F	S	S	V	M	N	H	S
T	H	E	K	W	L	R	G	A	O	C	E	S
S	G	M	M	Q	E	C	U	I	A	L	P	E
S	A	P	S	E	N	M	T	I	G	T	C	N
E	T	E	F	G	E	A	P	E	T	A	A	D
N	L	R	L	W	L	K	U	T	E	G	C	O
E	I	A	U	A	O	D	N	P	D	A	H	O
L	O	N	G	S	U	F	F	E	R	I	N	G
T	K	C	F	K	W	I	U	R	S	N	S	H
N	S	E	V	F	E	A	M	U	G	S	T	W
E	S	O	W	J	O	Y	C	G	B	T	H	A
G	M	I	T	N	E	H	T	A	F	I	H	L

(If you would like to know more about the fruit of the Spirit, you will find the book *Jesus' Beauty Shining In You* to be helpful. It is available for $6.50 from *Beacon Lights* or the Reformed Book Outlet.) ❖

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

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Church News

BIRTHS "Lo, children are an heritage of the Lord..." Ps 127:3

DOON, IA

Mr. & Mrs. Dennis Altena rejoice in the birth of a daughter, Shelby Jo.

Mr. & Mrs. Craig Vander Veen were blessed with the birth of a daughter, Nicole Joyce.

FAITH, MI

Aaron Christopher was born to Mr. & Mrs. Tim Talsma.

Mr. & Mrs. Brian Dykstra were blessed with the birth of a son, Kellen Joel.

FIRST, MI

Mr. & Mrs. Ron Seif rejoice in the birth of a son, Gabriel.

GEORGETOWN, MI

Mr. and Mrs. Thad Lubbers rejoice in the birth of a son, Evan Dewey.

Mr. and Mrs. Scott Lubbers rejoice in the birth of a daughter, Taylor Ann.

HUDSONVILLE, MI

Bob & Carolyn Prins were blessed with the birth of twins, Andrew Henry & Alicia Joy.

Austin Richard was born to Brad & Ruth Brower.

LOVELAND, CO

Mr. & Mrs. Scott Bonzelaar give thanks to God for the birth of a daugher, Amanda Joy.

SOUTHWEST, MI

Mr. & Mrs. Rodney Kleyn were blessed with the birth of a daughter, Sarah Elizabeth.

TRINITY, TX

Brian & Valerie Driesen rejoice in the birth of a daughter, Sydney Nicole.

BAPTISMS "He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved" Mark 16:16

BYRON CENTER, MI

Gary & Jan Lubbers presented their son, Ryan Christopher, for baptism.

Taylor Ann, daughter of Brent & Shari Dommisse, was presented for baptism.

DOON, IA

Mr. & Mrs. Dennis Altena presented their daughter, Shelby Jo, for baptism.

Baptism was administered to Nicole Joyce, daughter of Mr. & Mrs. Craig Vander Veen.

Abbie Linn, daughter of Mr. & Mrs. Kevin Eppinga, was presented for baptism.

FAITH, MI

Baptism was administered to Kellen Joel, son of Mr. & Mrs. Brian Dykstra.

GEORGETOWN, MI

Baptism was administered to Anthony Jordan, son of Mr. and Mrs. Tim Schimmel.

PEACE, IL

Dirk Comrad, son of Dan & Jessica Wiersma, was presented for baptism.

Baptism was administered to Brittany Sue, daughter of Dan & Dawn Zandstra.

RANDOLPH, WI

Baptism was administered to Jenna Lyn, daughter of Lyle and Mary Van Ravenswaay.

REDLANDS, CA

Carissa Faye, daughter of Gerrit & Bonnie Meelker, was presented for baptism.

SOUTHEAST, MI

Samuel Evan, son of Pete & Vicki DeKryger, was presented for baptism.

Len & Tammy Holstege presented their son, Steven Alan, for baptism.

Baptism was administered to Molly Ann, daughter of Jerry & Heidi Van Baren.

CONFESSIONS OF FAITH "... and with the mouth confession is made unto salvation." Romans 10:10

FIRST, MI

Miss Shelly Slopsema has made public her confession in Jesus Christ.

LYNDEN, WA

Mr. & Mrs. Jake De Hoog made confession of their faith in the Lord Jesus Christ.

HUDSONVILLE, MI

Public confession of faith was made by Mrs. Faith (Tom) Miedema.

RANDOLPH, WI

Erin Braaksma, Stephanie Key, and Mary Oosterhouse made their public confessions of faith.

REDLANDS,CA

Mr. Ed Heeter made public his confession in the Lord Jesus.

Continued on Page 26.