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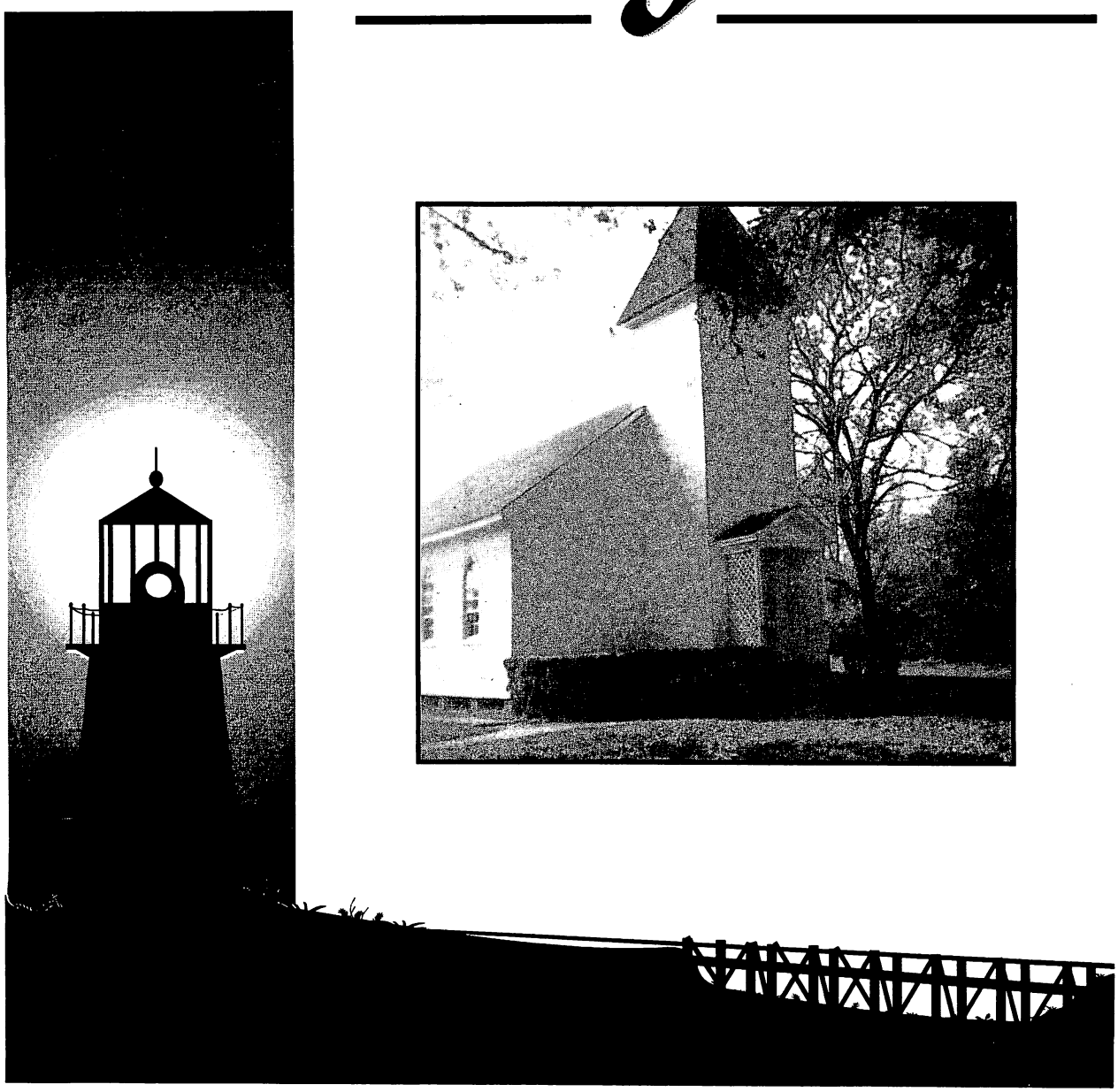

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Diversity and the Church

It is estimated that between 5 and 30 million different species of organisms now live on earth. What a tremendous variety of living things! In our life time we see only the smallest fraction of all living creatures. We can hardly imagine where all the varieties of creatures could live. For one thing, many organisms are so small we can not see them. One drop of water from a pond when observed under a microscope reveals a whole new world of strange living creatures. Paramecium that look like mini submarines zipping here and there. Stentors that look like funnels sweeping water in with cilia around the perimeter of the wide end. Amoeba's that constantly change into an infinite number of shapes.

Life also abounds in the soil upon which we walk. The abundance of life in even a half-inch-thick pinch of soil from your garden is astounding! Millions of miniature insects and 5 billion or so bacteria swimming within invisible droplets of water condensation can easily inhabit a mere pinch of soil. Even the coldest driest valley of Antarctica has rocks that are warmed by bacteria living within.

The things we can see are found in a variety of places and sizes. Flowers spring from cracks in a mountain slope, Kelp sways with the ocean waves, Red Wood trees dwarf people and provide a niche for moss and an endless variety of other organisms. Snakes slither across desert sand and hawks soar through the air. Elephants lumber along trails in the rain-forest while a nervous shrew scampers under a leaf. Life in all its diversity was created by an infinitely creative and wise Creator. The diversity itself reveals a God who finds delight in diversity.

The people which now populate the earth are also very diverse. There are big Dutchmen who live below sea level behind the dikes in Holland and Pygmies that build houses 200 feet up the jungle trees. There are red men, black men, yellow men and white men. The 4,000 to 6,000 different languages reflect unique patterns of thought and perspectives on the world. When God scattered man from the tower of Babel to the various regions of the world He scattered these thought patterns which developed into a colorful patchwork of different cultures. Cultures meet and mix and develop into subcultures. Within cultures are groups and families with unique individuals and personalities. And so we see that the human race is as diverse as life itself.

The God who delights in diversity is pleased to gather out of the world and unto Himself with the one Word of the gospel a Church chosen from eternity. That Church is one Church and united by one faith, but also very diverse in its parts. In gathering His church, God does not bring in people from only a few closely related cultures. Rather, the Church which God gathers includes representatives of all cultures.

Jesus said to his disciples "Go ye therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost" (Matthew 28:19). The word translated "nations" is the most general of four words used to describe groups of people. The word denotes the natural cohesion of a people in a body united in one custom (cultural unit) in contrast to a national unity, political unity, or linguistic unity.

Thus the gospel goes out not only to every politically united nation, but to every group of people defined by a particular custom or culture.

Though America is called a Christian nation and there are many churches found here, the churches with which most of our readers are familiar are only a small part of the Church as the body of Christ. We live during a mere sliver of history and experience only the smallest fraction of the diversity of human life on this earth.

The gospel preached has power to gather the people of God in all their diversity and unite them into one body. What an amazing miracle of God! Almost every day we hear about the tensions between the diverse peoples of the Middle East. This tension has existed for hundreds of years and human efforts to bring peace have been futile. In contrast, the diverse peoples that are gathered into the Church are not united loosely, nor are they forced together into a union filled with tension and dissatisfaction, but they function as a body that can not live except all its parts work in harmony. This union is a wonder work of God that can not be accomplished by any earthly power. When God looked down upon the tower of Babel and confounded the language of Nimrod's kingdom, man had no power to restore a harmonious union. As a result of this confounding work of God, man can only splinter and become more divided. But the power of God which divides man serves God's purpose as He by a wonder of grace takes from the splintering groups of mankind the parts He prepares as building blocks for the Church.

The unity of this wonderfully diverse body is found in the knowledge of the love and righteousness of God revealed in Christ crucified. That salvation we have in Christ by sovereign grace is ours by faith. Every sort of man no matter where he lives or what his language, is a man able to bear the image of God and know God by faith in Christ. (See Rev. Hanko's article which follows for more on the image of God in man.)

The truth of God's love and righteousness that unites all peoples is so deep and profound that no man by himself can see it all and give God the glory due unto Him. The Creator is so much greater than the creature that only an innumerable number of creatures can begin to glorify God as He is worthy to be praised. God in His eternal council is pleased to gather a host of men which can not be numbered to glorify Him. Each person is such that he or she has a unique perspective and experience of the one truth of the gospel and therefore glorifies God in a unique way.

Perhaps we can illustrate the relation between the one truth of God and the perception of that truth by each member of the Church with some geometric concepts. It is as if the truth of God is three dimensional space. If we can think of the truth as three dimensional space, then each man perceives only a small segment of a line that passes through that space. If we apply the analogy to the various cultures in the world, then each culture perceives a plane (lines placed side by side) within that space. The Church together as a combination of all possible planes knows God in the fullest way possible for the creature.

While on this earth we can only begin to appreciate the diversity of the Church. At first the different cultures and nationalities we encounter can be confusing and even frightening. Most people do not like to live apart from their own culture for very long. Even the various personalities within your particular church can be a source of tension rather than rejoicing. We tend to think that other people ought to be the way we are. It takes some work to live in harmony and begin to see how the gifts of others fit into the whole. It takes some work to discuss the truth in societies because we all see that truth from our own personal perspective, but such societies help us to grow in our knowledge of the truth by hearing other perspectives. Conventions stimulate spiritual growth when the truth is discussed by young people from various parts of the country and world. Your interest and involvement in the work of missions brings an even greater variety of perspectives. The excitement that comes with hearing the truth of Christ confessed by people of different cultures points us to heaven when we will see and enjoy the great beauty of the Church in all its diversity. ❖

—Ed.

To Know God Is Eternal Life

by Rev. Ronald Hanko

"And...put on the new man, which is renewed in knowledge after the image of Him that created him." (Colossians 3 : 10)

God created man as a mould which His image alone could fill. Man, distinct from the animals, by virtue of his creation, is adapted to be an image bearer. Man's rational moral nature makes him able to stand in relation to God.

Sin so distorted the mould that it was no longer capable of bearing the image of God. The devil filled the twisted mould with his crooked form; thereby, righteousness was replaced by guilt, holiness was replaced by evil and knowledge was replaced by a lie.

Grace repaired the mould, banished the image devil and restored unto the elect the image of God. The purpose of God in renewing His image in man is that man might live in covenant communion with Him. A vital part of any relationship, whether human or divine, is knowledge. In I Peter 3:7 we read: "Likewise, ye husbands, dwell with them (your wives) according to knowledge...." Such knowledge is twofold both intellectual and experiential.

It is through the knowledge of the truth that we know Christ—"the Way, the Truth and the Life." The 'knowledge' the devil proffers is a snare, his 'truth' a lie, and the end thereof is death.

Adam and Eve in partaking of the Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil wilfully turned their back on the knowledge of God, walking and talking with him in the garden, and sought after the lie of the devil doing that which was right in their own eyes. As a result of their acceptance of the lie they were thrown out of the Garden of Eden, a type of heaven, cut off from the fellowship of God and doomed to physical and spiritual death.

False knowledge puffeth itself up and attempts to dethrone the God of heaven and earth. Was that not Adam and Eve's sin in the Garden? True knowledge exalts the God omniscient and humbles man.

How do we know God? In The Confession of Faith Article 2 in response to the statement "By what means God is made known unto us" we read: "We know Him by two means: first, by the creation, preservation and government of the universe.... Secondly, he makes Himself more clearly and fully known to us by His holy and divine Word, that is to say, as far as is necessary for us to know in this life, to his glory and our salvation."

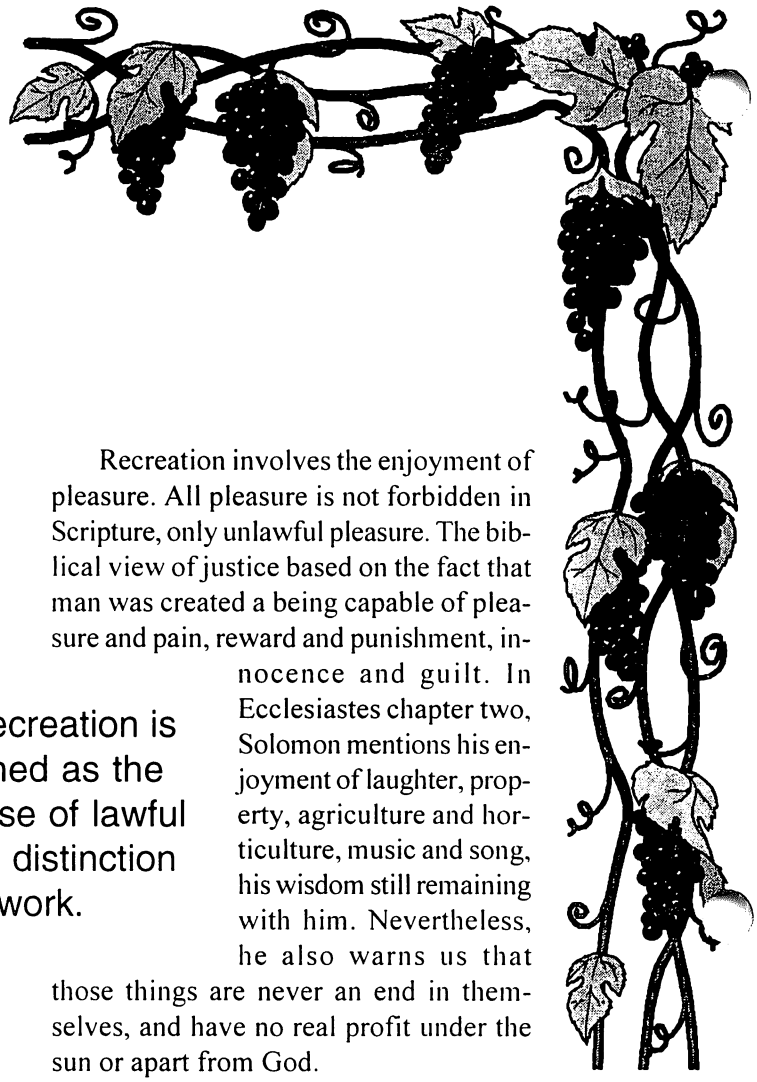
Knowledge of God's word is the weapon with which we fight the devil, the flesh and the wicked world. It is inevitable that he who goes into war unarmed and unprepared will be defeated. Christians arm yourself with the sword of the Lord; that is, the word of God lest you be destroyed in battle. Shall God's words to us be those of Hosea in Israel's time: "My people are destroyed for lack of knowledge: because thou hast rejected knowledge, I will also reject thee..." (Hosea 4:10).

In accepting the lie we embrace the devil and in accepting the truth we embrace Christ. Knowledge is the essence of our covenantal relationship with God. The whole, complete and sufficient word of God is revealed in the scriptures of the Old and New Testament. Search the scriptures as the Berians. That ye may "...grow in grace, and in the knowledge of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ. To Him be glory both now and forever. Amen" (II Peter 3:18).

Knowledge is the gift endowed upon man with his anointing to the prophetic office. To be a prophet is to be overflowing with the word of God. Let us be as the prophet Jeremiah in whom the word burned like a fire so that he could not keep silence.

When we fulfill our prophetic, priestly and kingly calling then we will be called Christians or Christ-like. Q. 32 But why art thou called a Christian? A. Because I am a member of Christ by faith, and thus am partaker of His anointing; that so I may confess His name (prophet), and present myself a living sacrifice of thankfulness to Him (priest), and also that with a free and good conscience I may fight against sin and Satan in this life: and afterwards reign with Him eternally, over all creatures (king). ❖

Rev. Hanko is a missionary to the British Reformed Fellowship in Northern Ireland.



A Christian View of Recreation

by Allen Baird

When Christians want to know about how they may please God in a certain area of life, there are two places they can go for guidance—the moral law and the life of Christ. Despite what we might initially think, those two sources have much to say on the subject of recreation.

All areas of our life should be regulated by God's law, which is summarized for us in the ten commandments. The sixth commandment, which prohibits unlawful killing, requires all our lawful endeavour to preserve our own life and the life of others. In others words, we are to seek to use every opportunity to promote the spiritual, mental and physical welfare of ourselves and our neighbors. Included in this is the sober and proper use of recreation, showing that proper recreation and rest is not only permissible for Christians, but to be commended.

Our Lord Jesus Christ fulfilled this law for His people during the course of His life. An example of this is found in Mark 6:31. During a busy period in Christ's ministry of progression (v. 7), persecution (v. 27) and popularity (v. 33), Jesus takes time to seek after His disciples' welfare. Mark 6:31: "And he said unto them Come ye yourselves apart into a desert place, and rest a while; for there were many coming and going, and they had no leisure so much as to eat." By these words we are taught that proper recreation is best when private not public (apart), basic not luxurious (desert place), temporary not permanent (a while), and not excessive (to eat).

Recreation is distinct from work. Both are of God, but recreation and rest only make sense when contrasted with labor and work. God set this pattern for us when He created the universe in six days and rested from the activity of creation on the seventh. Two implications of this are that rest must follow prior work, and that more time is to be spent on labor than recreation.

Recreation involves the enjoyment of pleasure. All pleasure is not forbidden in Scripture, only unlawful pleasure. The biblical view of justice based on the fact that man was created a being capable of pleasure and pain, reward and punishment, innocence and guilt. In Ecclesiastes chapter two, Solomon mentions his enjoyment of laughter, property, agriculture and horticulture, music and song, his wisdom still remaining with him. Nevertheless, he also warns us that those things are never an end in themselves, and have no real profit under the sun or apart from God.

Christian recreation is to be defined as the moderate use of lawful pleasure in distinction from work.

Recreation must be according to the law. Its object is in the use of things indifferent rather than what is commanded or forbidden. Recreation is clearly unlawful when it involves the use of holy things, the sins or offenses of men, or God's judgments of sin.

Recreation must be moderate. As Christians our priorities must be at all times right. God is to be our chiefest joy, and everything else is subordinate. We must be moderate in the time spent planning and practising, moderate in effort expended during, and moderate in attitude toward ourselves and others when engaged in any act of recreation.

Therefore Christian recreation is to be defined as the moderate use of lawful pleasure in distinction from work. If we believe in the sovereignty of God, then we will be anxious to submit to His authority in every area of our lives, including that of recreation. ❖

Allen is a member of Covenant Reformed Fellowship in Northern Ireland.

The Young Baker

by J.P. de Klerk

Bill Powell was not only a baker with his own business, but a couple of hours every day he also worked as a waiter, in the restaurant of his parents, at the other end of the street.

Many people thought that he had such a busy life and so would not have time to think about anything spiritual. But Bill could tell them, if they wanted to listen, that he had plenty of opportunities to make comparisons and see life as the Bible had taught him...

Like taking *precautions*, in his job as in his daily life. Bill always had to be very careful not to spoil things in the bakery while preparing food, making beautiful cakes and all kinds of cookies. Washing his hands all the time and cleaning everything up straight away. Not forgetting the smallest detail. Never saying "That will work itself out." If it does not smell good or if it has a strange color, *throw it away*. No rubbish!

Stick to the rules of hygiene! Like the churches; do not alter the principles, respect the Holy Scriptures. Bill's bakery was spotless; every product free of germs, well-cooked, fresh. Bill did not compromise, did not overlook anything, if he could help it. Like the Department of Health of a country had to do everything possible to prevent the spreading of dangerous bacteria. The well-being of the inhabitants depended on this; they relied on the care and the attentiveness of the authorities. There were instructions with that in mind.

Like in the well-organized family the children learn early in life to wash their bodies daily with water and soap.

Like in the hospitals, where everything has to be sterile; otherwise the lives of the patients are severely endangered. No dust or dirt can be tolerated. Much attention is given to the removal and destruction of refuse. Why were many people so easy with soiling their souls with sinful videos, books, music, etc.? Did they think they could withstand poison forever, that they had a superior immune system?

But when a plane with tourists came to the international airport, it was sprayed before it would land. And animals were not allowed; they had first to go in quarantine...

Bill read in the newspapers that people *talked* about the half-baked measures against the spreading of "Aids." The source, the sin, was not attacked. Only tools were recommended to continue with sin "safely." If Bill operated his bakery that way, his business would soon have been closed. He could not take any risk that food would be contaminated. That would be foolish and life threatening!

Why were many people acting in such an *irresponsible* way?

Bill know the answer—sin.

What kind of spiritual life did they have yet, anyway. It looked like they just played with sin and danger and supposed it would not do them any harm; that they thought to be strong enough in their own right. How wrong. How many Christians mingled with the secular crowd, believing they would not be contaminated...

In the bakery Bill had to keep all the ingredients *separate*, otherwise everything would get the same taste, the same color and the same fragrance. One must be *careful* with these things. ❖

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

Biblical Marriage
Part 3

by Rev. Barrett Gritters

This article is adapted for young people from a speech given for Holland Protestant Reformed Church's Evangelism Committee.

How do Christians behave to make marriage last? Young people, pastors know too many things that ruin marriages.

Every minister and elder in our churches has seen so much sorrow in marriages, so much dishonor of God's name, that we ought to be praying every day for you: "Lord, don't let them make marriages that aren't biblical marriages."

Prayerfully consider these biblical guidelines:

Marry "only in the Lord."

This comes out in the relationship of Christ and the Church! The only reason that there is a mysterious relationship between Christ and the Church is that they are united spiritually. There is not fellowship between Christ and Belial—not simply because Christ does not want a relationship there, but because one cannot exist! The only union is a union of faith, a spiritual union in which the life of Christ flows from Him to His body.

This is why I Corinthians 7:39 instructs us that if the Lord gives us to marry, we must marry "only in the Lord." For believers, the only union that they may make is a union in which they are one with their spouse in the faith of Jesus Christ. To do otherwise is to invite disaster! How can you live as a reflection of Christ and the Church when you are a believer, and your spouse an unbeliever? (For that matter, how can you do that if you marry one of a different faith, and he or she remains of that faith?) Your unbelieving husband will not reverence and respect and honor you as Christ does the Church, unless he has been changed by the sovereign grace of Christ. And your unbelieving wife will never submit to you, be your spiritual help—fit for you—unless, by sovereign grace, Christ has transformed her heart to be a God-fearing wife. And what an inexpressible joy if they are!!!

When I was your age, I saw some young people make marriages that were not "in the Lord." They were miserable then. They still are. I urge you, young people, to believe God's Word and not be blind to what's coming for you if you don't.

There must be *guidance and rule of the husband* over the wife. Husbands will esteem wives highly, treating them with highest respect.

There must be *submission of the wife* to the husband; and reverence.

There must be *faithfulness.*

With Christ and the Church there is unfailing faithfulness, unbreakable fidelity. Although you and I, as the Church, "play the harlot " and stray in sin, not only is it the case that He always abides faithful to us, but He always turns us back to Him!!

Let there be faithfulness in marriage. Let there be faithfulness within the marriage bond, not only outwardly and obviously, but in the heart and in attitude.

Commit no adultery. Watch no television program that leads you to fornication in the heart. Read no book, page through no magazine, that promotes fornication. Not now. Not when you're married. There is only one thing, Jesus says, that has such serious consequences that divorce is permitted. That's fornication. If that sin is so serious, imagine what that sin does in your heart when you promote that sin with books and magazines and music and movies and television programs that are thick with that sin. It ruins existing marriages. It makes marriages in the future—marriages you hope to live in—difficult, if not almost impossible.

Be faithful to your future spouse.

There must be *forgiveness.*

In the union between Christ and the Church there is forgiveness. When we are unfaithful, spiritually, Christ is ready and willing to forgive, over and over and over again.

Let there be forgiveness in marriage. We are one because of what Christ did for us on the cross. May

there be mutual forgiveness in our marriages. They won't last without it.

There must be *self-denial.*

Did not Christ give His own life for the life of the Church? Is not the Church willing to give up her own life, her own existence in this world, for the sake of Christ?

Then let there be the same kind of selfless behavior in our marriages. Why? Because of Christ and His Church.

And all this, because Jesus loved her, and gave Himself for her.

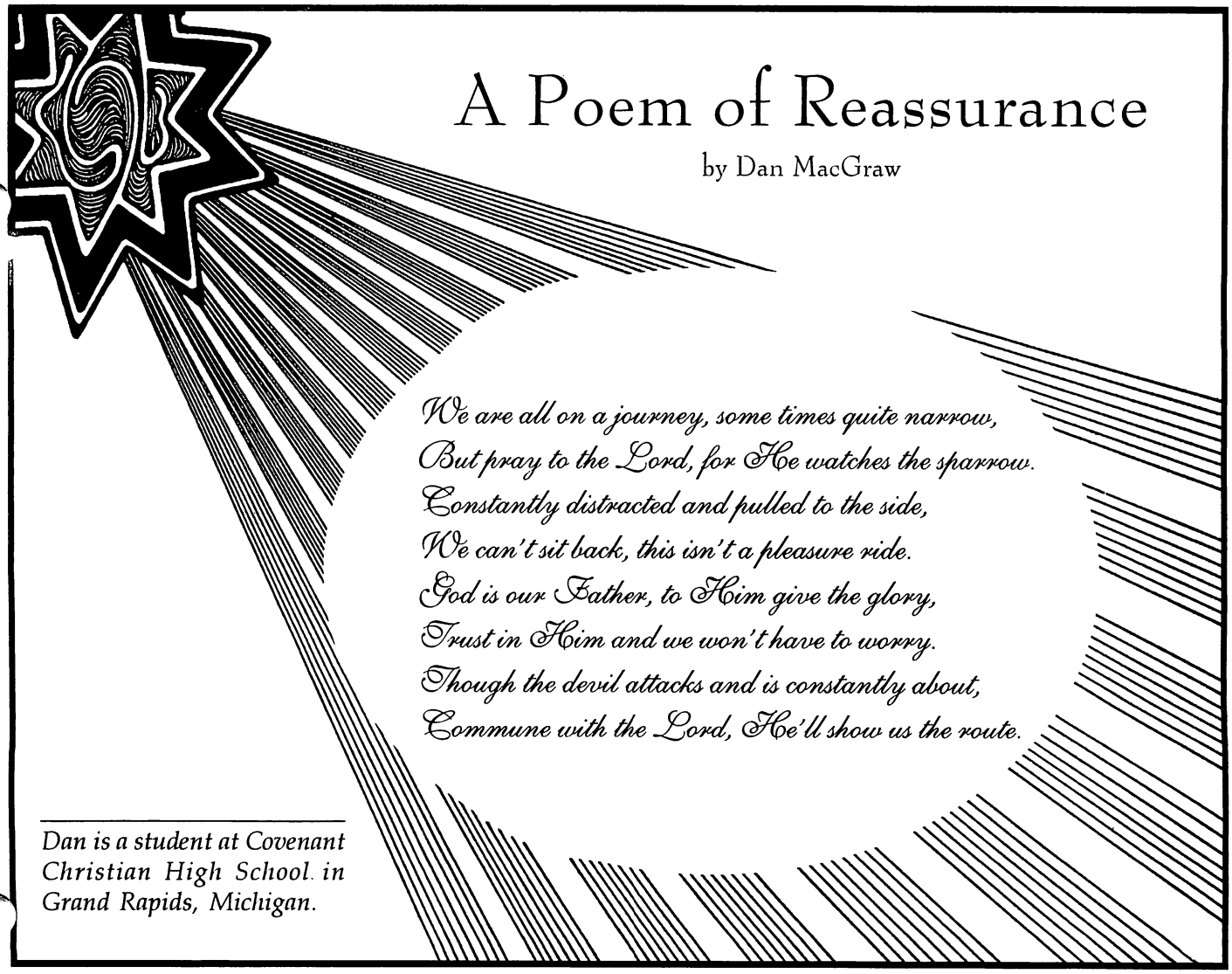
Does the young man tell me he loves the girl whom he takes into my study, and asks me to perform their wedding ceremony? He loves her? Let him show me that he intends to live the way I've just described, and begins to live that way now, and I'll consider it, gladly!

* * * * * * * *

Now, look back over the italicized words above. The one you're dating...or hope to date...how do they rate? How will your marriage last? ❖

Rev. Gritters is Pastor of Hudsonville Protestant Reformed Church in Hudsonville, Michigan.

Gem of the Month

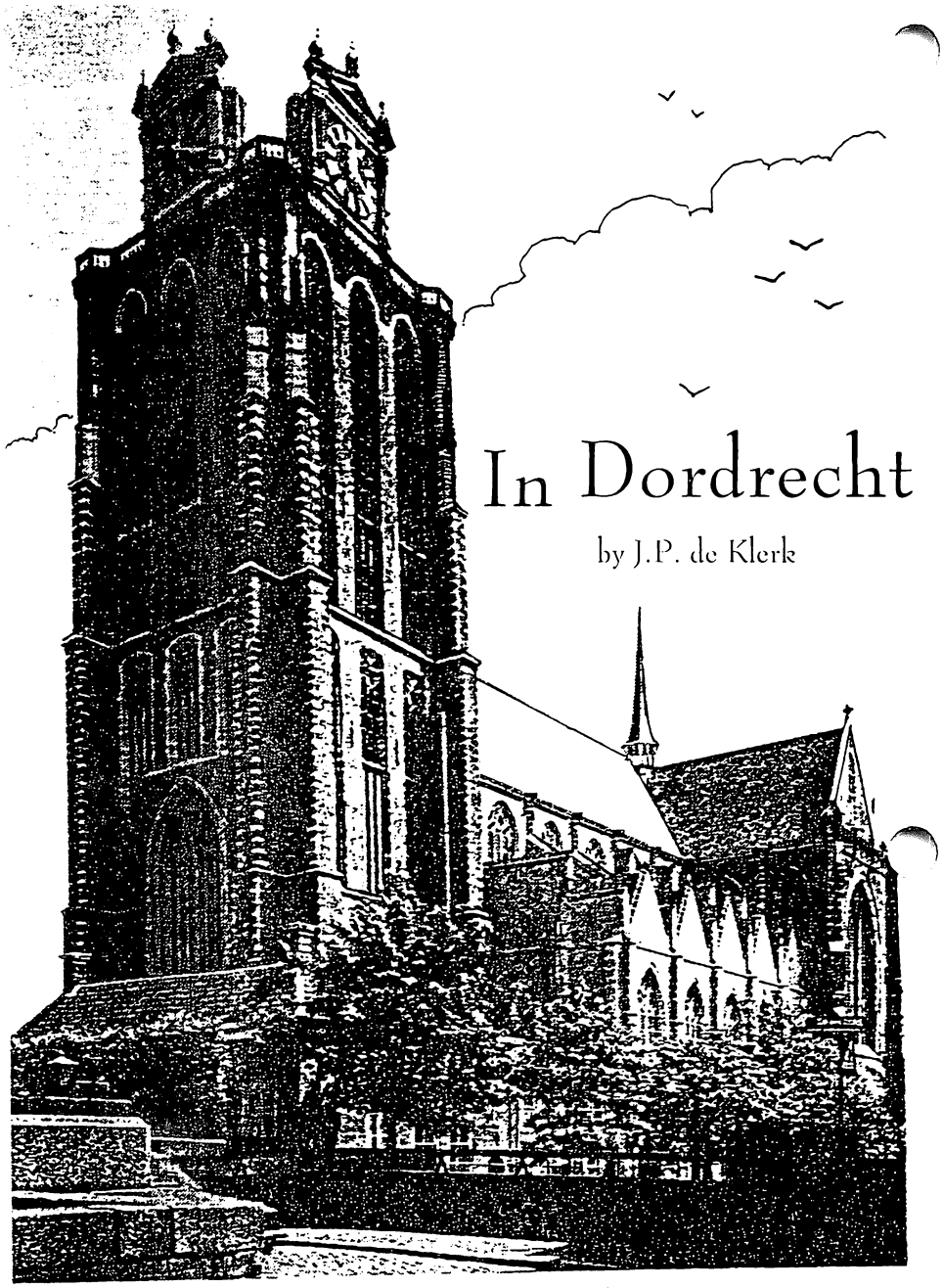


A Poem of Reassurance

by Dan MacGraw

We are all on a journey, some times quite narrow,
But pray to the Lord, for He watches the sparrow.
Constantly distracted and pulled to the side,
We can't sit back, this isn't a pleasure ride.
God is our Father, to Him give the glory,
Trust in Him and we won't have to worry.
Though the devil attacks and is constantly about,
Commune with the Lord, He'll show us the route.

Dan is a student at Covenant Christian High School in Grand Rapids, Michigan.



In Dordrecht

by J.P. de Klerk

The city of Dordrecht, in The Netherlands at the river the Merwede, is one of the oldest of the country, officially founded in 1220 by Duke William I.

The first divine service of the young reformed church was on June 25, 1572. The following year Prince William of Orange came to have the Holy Supper with them. The "grote Kerk" in the picture became famous because Dordrecht was a center for synods and many related meetings of the reformed churches. The founding and organization of churches, nomination of ministers, founding of a university in Leyden, were all discussed in Dordrecht.

On November 18, 1618 came the most important Synod of Dordrecht, with delegations from England, Germany, Switzerland and France. Also 18 representatives of the government (Prince Maurits of Orange) took part in the discussions.

On May 6, 1619, the Canons and the Catechism were made public. The Remonstrants were sent away. A new translation of the Bible was suggested.

The church is completely made of bricks and the building started in 1280. The tower was made a century later and never completed (too expensive). In 1457 the church was destroyed by fire, but was rebuilt. The tower was carefully restored in 1953.

The population is statistically divided into mainly State Reformed (Nederlands Hervormd) and yet 10 percent Synodal Reformed (Synodaal Gereformeerd), but shrinking in numbers. They are united with the Lutheran Church in what they call "samen op weg" (together on our way), with a modernist character. A conservative part has left and has joined the Liberated Reformed Church (Gereformeerde kerk vrijgemaakt), which is the only church in The Netherlands with a growing number of members for several years. However, a small part of them has separated and formed the Netherlands Reformed Church (Nederlands Gereformeerde kerk). The "grote kerk" remains a symbol of a glorious past in the Reformed Churches. ❖

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

Watching Daily At My Gates

From *Nieuw Bijbelsch Dagboek* by H.W.S. Translated, condensed and edited by John Huizenga.

July 1

Isaiah 63; (verse 9)

Already in the Old Testament we have the prefiguring of our Saviour. Sometimes as the enduring Power of God, sometimes as the High Priest who offered up sacrifices in the sanctuary as a picture of Christ the Lamb without blemish Who covered all our sins. Here Isaiah is inspired by the Holy Spirit to bring Him to us as the One who helps the people of God in all history in their affliction. From all eternity God determined Christ to be our perfect Helper. Not only does He know about our affliction, but He also was afflicted. Redeemer is His name and gracious High Priest is His work.

July 2

Ezekiel 34:15-31; (verse 16)

What do you look for, my reader, among the men of this world? Do you look for honor and greatness, riches and wealth, joy and pleasure, good health and length of days? Or does the Lord give you a cross to bear and you are looking for a way out? Only the way of God brings satisfaction; and the way of God is the way of comforting the sorrowful, encouraging and refreshing the depressed, and supporting the weak. Do we desire the way of thankfulness and love for His great work of salvation? This is the only way that leads to true peace.

July 3

Isaiah 33; Hosea 13:4, 5

A whole world can be expressed in a single word. "I am the Lord your God" lays up both pity and reproof on the Lord's side and resistance and unbelief on our side. The whole of human history is one of wandering around, making gods for oneself, and being miserable. My reader, is this history of mankind the history of each one of us personally? Now comes the Lord our God who has seen all our wandering and with the pity of a Father calls us to Himself. Come to Me, He says, I am the Lord your God.

July 4

Psalm 107:1-20; Jeremiah 3:22

We have a question and an answer in our text today. The calling of Israel is the calling which sounds through all the ages. The Lord directs His call to His children who have strayed into sin. The child of God knows God that He not only forgives our sins, but also heals us. Blessed are we, when we experience this over and over again in our life and the answer of our soul is: Behold, we come unto thee; for thou art the Lord our God and there is no salvation apart from Thee.

July 5

Psalm 39; 40:17

The man who speaks here shows in these words themselves to be familiar with the knowledge of the Lord. How do we compare with this fellow traveler? Do we acknowledge with him that we are poor and needy? Not of course with regard to earthly things as we are so inclined to feel, but poor in spiritual life. Let us ask earnestly each day anew that we have nothing in ourselves and no riches unless it is given us from above. May God be given praise and thanks that He thinks on us with eternal thoughts of peace and makes us His beloved children.

July 6

Psalm 40; (verse 17b)

The Lord thinketh upon me! Let us still today abide by this word that the early morning of a new day speaks to us. The Lord comes to meet us again with His blessings. Now we do not need to be dejected over our continual slipping back into sin: when He thinks on us, He is mindful of our frailty. When we are unfaithful, He remains the Faithful One. Does He then spare us the sorrow, the chastisement of our stray-

ing? No, that is certainly not a holy love. Through it He leads us back to righteousness in Christ.

July 7

John 4:27-42; (verse 34)

It was on a burning hot afternoon that our Lord and Saviour spoke these words after a long wearisome journey. His disciples meant for Him to rest but He had found a lost sheep and He forgot His bodily thirst and weariness. He wanted nothing but to do the will of His Father. We also must seek the will of God, and be willing to do it. The peace of God which goes far above all understanding shall go before us as the torch which lights our path and comforts our soul.

July 8

Psalm 119:129-152; (verse 105)

Even as the flower bends itself toward the sun and seeks her rays so seeks the child of God a light upon his path. Do you feel the need for light on your path of life? There are so many torch bearers in our time, but there is but one light bearer which never fails to enlighten: the Word of God. The Word keeps the foot from stumbling and guides on the right path. It can not go out because God's Spirit preserves the flame by God's love for us in Christ.

July 9

Genesis 42:25-38; (verse 36b)

We can understand this complaint of the patriarch Jacob. All things were certainly against him from the perspective of this world. He was bereft of children one after another, now he was to be separated from the child of his love. But understanding his complaint is not the same as approving, and sometimes we must have a good talk with ourselves or others in light of Scripture. Had not Jacob found God's faithfulness during his long life on this earth? And we also today know from our experience and God's Word that He can not be against you for whom He gave His life.

July 10

Colossians 3:1-17; (verse 3)

What a wonderful secret is here revealed to us! It is a word that is directed straight at the heart of God's children who have learned to know Christ as their Saviour and Preserver. For time and eternity, and even in this earthly life which is holy for those in whom Christ lives, we are hid with Christ in God. Are we sad, Christ shares in our sorrow; are we happy, He sanctifies our gladness. The whole of our life is hidden with Him. That is also the security of our preservation and the peace of our soul.

July 11

Matthew 7:1-14; Galatians 6:2

This word shines so clearly and yet is understood by so few, or at least is brought to practice in so few. People hide themselves under the argument: "I don't want to bother with that, no time, the last time I had pity he turned on me." We have an High Priest who has born our burdens; not only all our sins on the cross, but has entered so into our needs and sorrows that He can bear all things we experience. We can do nothing for our fellow man, we can't help, console, or comfort our brother, if he does not feel that we suffer with him. Then we bear with him. When Christ lives in our heart, then we learn how to do this.

July 12

Matthew 8:23-34; (verse 23)

We find in this chapter an account of the voyage of the disciples with Jesus aboard which parallels our life in this world. There is only one ship in which we are safely brought to the land of rest. It is the ship of the faithful Captain. Do you know the sea of this life with its dangerous deeps, whirlpools of sin into which many are quickly swept? Do you know the great storms that bring huge waves of despair and trials of temptation against the ship? The great Helmsman has paid the fare for your voyage with his sacrifice of love and He stills the storms in your heart.

July 13

Psalm 142; Psalm 90:1

God is our dwelling place. Is not that the central thought of the Psalm which so impresses the frailty of man in contrast with the eternity and greatness of the Shepherd? Before the mountains were born, before the world was brought forth, God was, Who is exalted above all the changes of the time. Man, on the other hand is like the flower of the field which blooms and then withered by the wind and is no more. In contrast to our weakness, God reveals Himself as the Almighty, but also in His grace and mercy. It is to Him that we come as a secure familiar home.

July 14

Luke 12:1-12; John 9:4

In our time of frantic life and work day and night we may loose the sense of this text. Formerly there were many night hours when no work could be done. Jesus is speaking here about our life as the daylight hours. The question then comes before us, in whatever we do, in every expression of our thoughts, whether we work the works of God according to the example of Him who at all times did the will of God. Each evening calls to our remembrance that our life also will come to a close. Let us walk then as children of the light and let our light shine before men.

July 15

Joshua 1; (verse 9a)

Perhaps we take up our task today with a burdened heart. What a rest it is then for our mind that we are in the way of the Lord. We know that nothing happens apart from the will of God. Joshua also stood before a difficult life-work. After the death of Moses, the Lord called him to be the head of His people and the Jordan was there at his feet. While considering the great task before him, God says "be strong and of good courage because the Lord is with you wherever you go." We also have the sure promise that He will give us what is necessary for us to have when we remain in His ways.

July 16

Romans 2:1-13; 10:12

Though there are many different kinds of people and nations in the world, the children of God among them have one thing in common: they call upon God and God is rich unto all of them. Though God sends rain to the wicked and the good, and the sun to the righteous and the unrighteous God is rich only to those who call upon Him. The promise here in the text is not of temporal things, but for the eternal. Here God opens up the fountain of Good, the treasure house of His riches, which make the soul rich, the soul which is fashioned in His image. In Him alone does the weary soul find rest and the guilty heart find peace.

July 17

Psalm 139; Zechariah 9:1 (N.B. The Dutch reads "The Lord has an eye over man.")

These short words carry great trust, but also a serious warning for us. The whole of Scripture reveals to us the almighty lofty God who neither slumbers nor sleeps, who knows the secrets of our thoughts. If we think this through, then we go to Him with the whole book of our life open. In Him is forgiveness, and His eye is particularly opened to those who hope in His steadfast covenant faithfulness. We can not see to trust on that beyond the ever seeing providing eye of the Lord, and thereby He is also the Keeper of our souls in all struggles and needs.

July 18

John 1:1-12; (verse 11, 12)

Have we received Him? Do we confess the Only Name given under heaven by which we can be saved? Do we understand that He must create in us a new heart so that we can begin to walk as children of God? We must see to it that we who have the gift do not live carelessly or without courage. We are already here on this earth children of God and it is not yet revealed what we shall be says the Apostle.

July 19

Matthew 13:18-30; Galatians 6:7

From each life flows forth either good or evil. We sow the field of life whether we want to or not, we sow before ourselves and others. In fact, God is not mocked, He makes each responsible for the seed sown; the fruit thereof shall he reap and not another's seed. Must the child of God then fret over these words of truth day and night? We sow in the hope that the seeds of eternal life which are given us will grow up with the weeds and shall be harvested in eternity. Yet remember today that of all the seeds sown by us in word and deed, our account shall be required in eternity.

July 20

Luke 13:22-35 (verse 24)

A command with a promise, with this our God comes to us continually. The promise is this: "we shall enter into eternal rest." Here on this earth we are pilgrims and strangers and there are many paths which men take, but only the way of the cross leads to the land of eternal rest. Many seek to enter but shall not be able. This is because they seek their own way apart from God. Those who walk the way of self-denial, who take the path of humility, who go the way of the cross and find their righteousness in Christ shall find the gate and enter in.

July 21

II Timothy 2:1-14; (verse 8)

Is that truly a reality for you, my reader, a daily returning to that lovely, comforting reality, that you have a Saviour who is raised from the dead and lives; raised from the dead for you so that you never have to doubt that He is your Mediator and Pledge? It is a comfort to have the certainty that Jesus lives when our lives are dark and miserable. When the days are brighter, we must continue to hold in mind that He keeps us in His fellowship and daily renews us.

July 22

Psalm 50; (verse 15)

Godly parents grieve when their children do not pay attention to their love and devotion and go to strangers in their despair and distress and pass by them. How must our heavenly Father then feel when we ignore His love and take our sorrows and troubles to others? Let us enjoy nothing without first giving thanks to our God, and let no sorrow overtake us without calling upon Him for help, in the certain confidence that He shall make His word true and help us.

July 23

Proverbs 15:1-16; (verse 3)

We read of our Saviour again and again: "And Jesus looked upon him or her." So it is with God Whose eye is always upon us. No unloving thought or hurtful word is hidden

from His sight, nor any burden in our heart or injustice toward us. Searching, protecting, pitying; so are the eyes of the Lord in every place. Is not that a wonderful comfort?

July 24

I Samuel 16:1-13; Daniel 5:27

We are from our youth familiar with this "Mene, Mene, Tekel, Upharisin" applied to Belshazzar the king of the Chaldeans when we are taught this history. But have we ever considered that we also one day will be judged by the holy God? What we know about holiness, however, can never be pleasing to God if that knowledge is not turned into works of thankful obedience, self sacrifice, love and faithfulness. And our works are good only when we are clothed in the righteousness of Him who died for us.

July 25

Psalm 145; (verse 14)

A wonderful promise indeed, when we are one for whom it applies. Upholding is promised here to those who fall, a helping hand to those who are bowed down under a burden of sin and feeling of guilt. Perhaps you do not feel this way and see others more sinful than you. The heart of man is so sinful and dark by nature that he does not even see his own sin. To such the promise in this text does not apply. God in sovereign grace opens our eyes by means of meditation upon His Word, prayer, and the work of the Spirit. Then we experience our Lord as the Helper indeed.

July 26

John 21:15-25; (verse 15)

"Lovest thou me more than these?" We know the answer of Peter to the question Jesus asked. Now this question comes to us personally. "Do you love me more than these?" He asks when the things of this world become so important and our pride lifts its head. "Lovest thou me?" asks the Saviour teaching us in the very question that the love which is in the heart must show itself also in our life. We do not display what goes on in our prayer closet, but the fruit of prayer and devotion must be evident in all things and at all times. When we love Him more than all these things, then we are His disciples.

July 27

Psalm 100; (verse 2)

The service of the Lord and the service of sin stand in opposition to each other. Serving sin is a dark oppressive servitude, but the service of the Lord is not simply work but it is also joyful and with singing. The Lord comes to the soul of His people like He came to Eden in the cool of the evening. He comes in the starry sky, in each beauty of nature, in each heart beat, and also in the storm and adversity. We find joy and happiness in these things because they come from the hand of our heavenly Father who loves us.

July 28

Psalm 95; Romans 14:8

What is your only comfort in life and in death? This: "That I am not my own but belong to my faithful Saviour Jesus Christ." This word of comfort also brings a warning. If we belong to the King of the heavens, then we must also understand that our health, strength, time, money and abilities also belong to Him, and we must use them for His glory. This is not bondage, but greatest freedom. Satan binds us with chains and his yoke is heavy. The more we know ourselves to be the property of the One who makes us free, the more safe and free we become.

July 29

Psalm 112; I Corinthians 15:58

To do the work of the Lord; that, so we think, is the life work of only a privileged few who have been qualified and called to the work. The simple, the untalented, the poor, the insignificant are those who can't do this work. Is that not how we often think? Persevere in prayer, says the apostle, because it is the greatest lever for doing work for the Kingdom. The work of the Lord is to give evidence of His gracious work in your life.

July 30

Psalm 107; Psalm 90:14

So many days in life have begun which have not been lived to the end. Life is short, the length is uncertain, and many live in indifferent carelessness. In contrast to worldly satisfaction with the emptiness of this life, Moses the man of God prays "Satisfy, us Lord," we do not have enough, give to us of your fullness in the morning. Only God's mercy can satisfy and last the whole day. Let us so learn to desire, so learn to pray, and watch the Guide for our path.

July 31

John 6:53-69; Isaiah 55:3

We are inclined to listen to so many different opinions of this earth. Many speak to us and have our ear, who through slanderous language take away our peace. In the midst of the confusion and deceit of this world, God comes with the word of our text. We too are rebellious by nature and He could come with a word of judgment, but He speaks to our soul of peace, forgiveness and salvation. He reveals to us His council and brings us to Golgotha and the preaching of eternal life and grace.

Lost—a Thinking-Cap

Part 1

Rev. H. Hoeksema

Recently, one of our staff did some extra work and obtained a very interesting article. It was the address given at the second annual convention of Young Men's Societies in 1921, and quite pertinent for today.

It is reprinted from "The Young Calvinist," published by the American Federation of Reformed Young Men's Societies, and used by permission.

The speaker? A young pastor named Herman Hoeksema.

If you ask me what, in our time, our people need above all in the first place, my answer is: Doctrine! If you ask me what they need in the second place, I say: Doctrine! If you ask me what they need in the third place, I say: Doctrine!

You say, that's a bold statement. You tell me that I won't find a ready ear for such a statement in our age which is intensely practical. And I am fully aware of it. Doctrine is not popular. Principles, fundamental truths are contraband. Most people say: we have had too much doctrine. We need practical stuff. Service, is the watchword. Others say, more reservedly: we need truth, all right, but a restatement of the truth. The tendency and the result of the latter is the same as that of the former. Doctrine is not popular.

Naturally, one asks himself the question: How must this doctrinal indigestion, this apathy, this positive aversion to fundamental principles, be explained? There are various causes. One tremendous cause is the spirit of the age. That powerful, undefinable but very real influence that imbues the general populace, invades literature and pulpits and finds a very ready response at a certain period, which we designate as the spirit of the times for want of a better expression. The spirit of the time is against doctrine. The leaders of the people are against doctrine. The air we inhale is against doctrine. We cannot help but be under the influence of the spirit of the age before we are fully aware of it. And so, we gradually wean away from doctrine and begin to speak as the spirit of the age speaks: No more doctrine, let us be up and doing!

But I want to be more concrete and stay nearer at home. It is not this difficult-to-describe spirit of the age which I want to blame today. There is another reason. Surely, there are many causes that combine to account for this miserable apathy to doctrine. But one of the causes is the loss of the thinking-cap. To this cause I want to call your attention a few moments:

I. The Reality of this Loss
II. The Deplorable Nature of this Loss
III. What to do to Regain it

I. You may be surprised to hear that the cap, such an insignificant thing as a cap, has always had great symbolical significance in popular language. Yet, this is a fact. To wear one's cap on one ear, for instance, has always been symbolic of extreme nonchalance and indifference. To come with cap in hand expressed an attitude of respect and politeness over against superiors. The expression: "to set one's cap" meant the same as to make a fool of somebody. And thus examples might be multiplied to show that in the language of the people the cap always had great symbolical meaning.

And so the language of the people coined the term: thinking-cap. The exact origin of the term we failed to find. But the meaning of the expression is quite generally known. And though I have no authorities to show for it, I venture to guess that the expression finds its origin in the custom to put on a certain peculiarly shaped, plain, round black cap, when on would sit down to do some serious thinking.

If this guess is at all right, you will find no difficulty in understanding the meaning of the expression. It does not symbolize the brains, it does not point to thinking capacity as such, for to put off the thinking-cap did not mean to lose one's mind. If this were the case, the loss

of the thinking-cap would signify something irretrievable. It would mean that our people, that, especially our young people, that still more particularly our young men, had lost their ability to think. That, of course, would be deplorable in the extreme. One might, then, probably deliver a funeral oration on the thinking-cap. But it would be a loss that was decisive as death.. It could never be restored. And I did not exactly mean to be so pessimistic today. I did not come to deliver funeral orations. No, I do not believe that our young men, and that more or less in general, our people are inferior to a former age in thinking capacity. If anything the contrary is true. There are bright and quick minds among our young people. Many indications there are of this fact. If there is only something that interests them, they are sufficiently bright-minded and quick-witted to grasp a thing. But the thinking-cap symbolizes rather *the exercise* of our thinking capacity than the capacity itself. If one wears his thinking-cap it signifies that he sets himself to do some serious, quiet, sound, deep, continuous thinking, to solve some problem, or to listen to the exposition of that solution by some one else. If one is without his thinking-cap, it signifies that he has no desire to exercise his brains, that he is mentally lazy , that the exponent of some difficult problem finds nobody home. And the loss of the thinking-cap stands for a general mental laziness. Now, I maintain that I have reason to think that the thinking-cap is lost especially among our young people. They are averse to do some straight and sound, some real and continuous thinking. They dislike to exercise their thinking capacity, especially in regard to subjects the acquiring of which does not yield immediate practical results in dollars and cents. Our young people are loath to think!

If one wears his thinking-cap it signifies that he sets himself to do some serious, quiet, sound, deep, continuous thinking,

You want evidence? I think I can produce it. Let me point you to some undeniable facts.

In the first place, there is the subject of reading. You pass through our homes with the inquiry: what do our young people read? You will obtain various answers. Very few will answer you that they actually are interested in reading books that require some study. Religious books, doctrinal works, are hardly read at all. A good many will tell you that they read novels. Stories, preferably some very snappy detective story, they will read. And they read these without any critical judgment, merely for the sake of the temporary enjoyment they get out of it. And then, there is a large group that do not read at all. They have no time, they find no interest whatever in reading And if you turn from the homes to our church- and Sunday school libraries, you will obtain the same result. The vast majority of the books that are drawn are novels and romances. Books of a more substantial nature enjoy the solemn peace of oblivion. I find in this an evidence that our young people have lost the thinking-cap.

Let me call your attention in the second place, to the character of the various programs that will "draw the crowd." It has happened, that in the heat of the school fight last year, a well known speaker had prepared an address on the detestable school amendment, and had to return home without having delivered the lecture because there was no audience. You say that I am pointing to extreme cases? I beg to differ. The lecture course that is annually prepared by the Young Men's League of Grand Rapids has degenerated into a course of entertainment. Short, snappy, twenty-minute speeches could be tolerated. But the main part of the program was of an entertaining rather than of an educational nature And why was this course changed? Because the lectures drew no crowd! And why did they draw no crowd? Because the thinking-cap is lost!

Let me call your attention to the condition of our Young Men's Societies. It is a general complaint that they do not flourish. Surely, for a social evening you can generally draw a full attendance and more. But for the regular meetings there is little or no interest. You can prepare programs, you may assign to each member his work weeks in advance. But generally, you find that the society decreases in membership in proportion as it lays more stress on the necessity of study and preparation. Why? Because the thinking-cap cannot be found!

I could continue for a while. I could call your attention to the things that do interest many of our young people. And it would be easy to show that they are generally things that require no wearing of the thinking-cap. But I will take for granted that I will meet with little serious opposition when I say that our time is characteristic by a deplorable absence of the thinking-cap. Happily, there are others. There are happy exceptions. But I am speaking none too strongly when I say that the absence of the thinking-cap among the coming generations is rather general.

II. Now, I said, that this loss of the thinking-cap is a *deplorable loss*. It is not a good riddance. It is not a loss that we can afford to forget. It is a deplorable loss. And I am going to tell you some of the reasons why particularly the loss of this cap is to be deplored.

The first reason I want to mention in this connection is that the thinking-cap and sound doctrine are most intimately connected. Doctrinal knowledge cannot be expected to flourish where the thinking-cap is wanting. I know that not all would agree with me today, when I emphasize that the loss of doctrinal knowledge is most deplorable. The cry that we must become less doctrinal and more practical is very loud in our time. And besides, there are a goodly number who identify in their minds doctrine and narrow-mindedness and who take pride in preaching the gospel of broad-mindedness. But in the first place, I would call your attention to the fact that to despise doctrine is to despise the work of God Himself. Our God did not deem it sufficient to reveal to us a little gospel you might write on your thumbnail, but gave us the entire Word, full of wisdom and knowledge, in order that we might know the whole counsel of God. And that Word emphasizes again and again that the church of Christ in the world must be founded in doctrine. In the second place, I deny the antithesis sometimes, in our day so often, postulated between doctrine and practical life. Surely, I admit that the church can and often did divorce its doctrine from life, so that it fell into the error of dead orthodoxy and cold intellectualism. But this is not to be blamed to doctrine as such, but rather to a wrong conception and defective application of it. Sound doctrine lies at the basis of life. It is indispensable to sound practice. Practical life soon runs wild if it is weaned from doctrine. And therefore, it is a mistake to cry: Less doctrine, more life. I would rather maintain that we must have both: more doctrine and more life, or that we will lose both life and doctrine. And as far as this so-called broad-mindedness is concerned, I have little respect for it. It generally signifies but little more than an obliteration of all lines of distinction, an aversion to positive and definite truth. And many of these broad-mindedness advocates are so narrow-minded that you could not crowd the narrow Reformed doctrine into their minds if they would want to receive it. And, therefore, I maintain that our need is not less, but more doctrine. But it is more than accident, that doctrinal knowledge and the thinking-cap go together. If the coming generation refuses to read, to study, to think, they will soon be strangers to the main principles of our Reformed faith. Our hour in catechetical instruction, a little instruction in the Sunday school, and the instruction in the sermon is not sufficient, and will prove altogether inefficient if our young men do not set themselves to study and investigate. And, therefore, the loss of the thinking-cap is deplorable because if involves a loss of doctrinal knowledge. ❖

to be continued...

Battles and Crusades

Introduction to New "Battles and Crusades" Rubric

by Nathan Brummel

It has been said that the history of the world can be characterized as a history of war.

The Christian era can also be defined in terms of the wars and battles that shaped the history of Western civilization and with that the world within which the Christian church existed.

With this issue of the *Beacon Lights* and the article entitled "Not One Stone Shall Be Left Upon Another" we begin a new rubric entitled "Battles and Crusades."

In this rubric we will have articles on battles, wars, and crusades that have played a significant role in the history of Christianity. We are beginning with the Destruction of Jerusalem in A.D. 70 and the plan is to follow the history of important conflicts throughout the Middle Ages and to conclude with the Reformation era religious wars.

The writers for this rubric will tell the story of a battle or crusade and attempt to bring out any interesting details about it. An effort will be made to show the importance of the event for church history and its possible relevance for today.

Some of the battles or crusades will have a moral or lesson that can easily be drawn from them. For example, many historians have claimed that the death of Zwingli in the Battle of Cappel shows that those who lift up the sword will perish with it. They have argued that this was God's judgment on the Swiss Reformer for using the arm of the sword to advance Christianity. This would teach the church that it must advance by the power of the Word alone.

Other battles or crusades will be shown to have played a decisive role in the establishment and defens of Christendom. Among these would be Constantine the Great's victory at the Milvian Bridge outside of Rome. This battle ended Christianity's existence as a persecuted minority religion and transformed it into an influential state religion.

We hope that you will enjoy reading about these battles and crusades. A thank you must be extended to the many *Beacon Lights* staff members who have already pledged to write articles for this rubric. Some of you readers might also be enthused about writing about the history of warfare and the history of Christianity. If you are interested, please write to the Editor and he will send a rather extensive list of possible battles and crusades to write on. We welcome writers, since there are many battles and crusades that are worth writing about. Enjoy this rubric! ❖

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

Not One Stone Shall Be Left Upon Another

by Mindy DeMeester

Crucify Him! Crucify Him! His blood be upon us and our children. This was the cry of the Jews at the crucifixion of Jesus. We go now to a time only a few years later when these words of the Jews were being fulfilled.

The years before the destruction of the city of Jerusalem and the temple of God were years filled with much fighting and strife. The Jews and the Romans were constantly at war. Matthew 24:6-7 states, "And ye shall hear of wars and rumors of wars: see that ye be not troubled; for all these things must come to pass, but the end is not yet. For nation shall rise against nation, and kingdom against kingdom...." At times the Jews would conquer the Romans, but the majority of the battles were won by the Romans who were lead by a man named Vespasian. City after city in Galilee was conquered. But the Jews, along with their general, Josephus, continue to fight.

A battle breaks out in which hundreds of Jews have been slaughtered but Josephus and some of his men flee the Romans soldiers. They flee to a cave and try to escape the Romans but are followed. The Jews see the Romans coming and they kill themselves because they would rather die that way than be held as a captive by the Romans and then be put to death. Josephus, however, does not kill himself. The Romans befriend him and his fellow countrymen, Jews call him a traitor. In the months to follow, Josephus advises the Jews to surrender to the Romans because he could see that they would never conquer the mighty armies of the Romans. However, the Jews are hard hearted and refuse to listen. They fight on. As the battles continue, thousands of Jews are massacred by the Romans. Many Jews have given their lives to prevent the enemy from conquering their beloved city, Jerusalem.

But then, suddenly, the Roman soldiers retreat. Why? Their emperor, the wicked Nero, had been killed and Vespasian must go back to Rome to become the new emperor. In going back to gain his position, he must first defeat the man who took over immediately after Nero died. After a brief struggle, Vespasian attained to the throne, and sends his son, Titus, to stamp out the rebellion of the Jews.

While the Romans were in their own country, the Jews had created a their own problem. After the many conflicts and battles with the Romans a great division arose among the Jews. Part of the Jews wanted to end the war and make peace with the Romans. The remaining Jews wished to continue war and conquer the Romans. This group was called the Zealots. As a result, struggles and serious fighting persisted even without the Romans around.

The Jews continue to fight and their resources dwindle almost to nothing. Food is being burned, ammunition is being destroyed and the city is in shambles. To add to the confusion Jerusalem has hundreds visitors because the time of the Passover is near.

Suddenly a loud bang shakes the city. Titus and his Roman soldiers have returned and are bombarding the outside wall of Jerusalem with battering rams! The Jews defend their precious city as best they can, but the Romans succeed in making a breach in the wall. Soon they conquer Bezetha, a portion of the city. The Romans press forward.

In the middle of the city, the Jews are trying to celebrate the Passover feast. The people are unable to leave the city because it is surrounded by the soldiers. They are caught in Jerusalem, and with no way to get in or out, they struggle to find food. Their supply of food runs out. Famine and diseases are prevalent. Many are dying from starvation. One mother even kills her own child, roasts it, and eats it. The Lord Jesus himself prophesied in Matthew 24: 7, 8 & 19 "...and there shall be famines, and pestilences, and earthquakes in divers places. All these are the beginning of sorrows." "And woe to them that are with child, and to them that give suck in those days!"

Finally, the Romans conquer the majority of the city. During the night, they take by surprise the tower of Antonia, the stronghold of Jerusalem. With the tower in the hands of the Romans, the Jews know that they have little hope left. Fighting rages around the tower until the Romans at last succeed in coming to the temple. The sacrificing now halts because all the people are needed to defend the temple from the Romans. In the midst of trouble many of the Jews continue to look in vain for the promised Messiah believing that he would come at anytime to rescue and deliver them from the terrible massacre.

But alas, the Lord had already come! He himself had prophesied the destruction of the temple! The glory of the temple, the dwelling place of God is destroyed and leveled to the ground. It is the will of God! Christ in Matthew 24:2 prophesied "...verily I say unto you, There shall not be left here one stone upon another, that shall not be thrown down."

So Titus and his men continue the carnage. Titus wants to save the temple, but his men persevere in their fighting. To win and to conquer all was foremost in their minds. They set the annexes of the temple on fire and the temple slowly begins to fall away. A flaming firebrand flies into the temple and it begins to burn. The Jews scramble to put it out, but without success. They cannot believe that their temple is being destroyed! Yet, they continue to look for the Messiah to deliver them.

The temple now rages with huge flames of fire, men and women alike are being killed by the sword, dead bodies are piled in heaps along the streets and the blood rushes everywhere like water. Not one stone of the temple is left upon another. A terrible tragedy for the Jews, and yet, it was the will of God.

The destruction of Jerusalem forced the people of God to flee to the mountains, to flee from the great tribulation. Matthew 24:16-18 "Then let them which be in Judaea flee into the mountains: Let him which is on the housetop not come down to take any thing out of his house: Neither let him which is in the field return back to take his clothes." By means of the destruction of the city of Jerusalem, the gospel was spread to where the people of God fled. I Peter 1:1-2, "...to the strangers scattered throughout Pontus, Galatia, Cappadocia, Asia, and Bithynia, Elect according to the foreknowledge of God the Father, through sanctification of the Spirit, unto obedience and sprinkling of the blood of Jesus Christ: Grace unto you and peace..."

The great battle and horrible persecutions experienced by the Jews are so hard to comprehend to those of us who live in relatively peaceful times, and yet we know that this was only the beginning. "For then shall be great tribulation, such as was not since the beginning of the world to this time, no, nor ever shall be. Except those days should be shortened, there should no flesh be saved: but for the very elect's sake those days shall be shortened" (Matthew 24:21-22). The persecution at the end

time will be yet more terrible than that of the Jews. We are called to watch and be ready for the second coming of our Lord. The tribulation is one sign of that glorious return of Christ. He will give his people grace to stand in those evil days. Thanks be to the Lord! ❖

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

Minding Missions

What the Georgetown Young People Learned in Houston

by Mr. Ben Hopkins

The truth of salvation by grace alone is central to the understanding of Scriptural doctrine. Our churches adhere to this principle, and do not skimp in teaching it from the pulpit, in Sunday School, catechism, bible study groups, and Young Peoples' groups.

The Georgetown Young People were given the opportunity to visit Houston in order to expose them to an evangelistic enterprise, so they could see how it is properly done, so they could understand the enemy, so they could appreciate their own precious heritage all the more. It almost goes without saying that God is glorified in all of these things. More specifically, the object of this trip was the Hindu work, and the Houston planners made it possible to have contact with these people.

Ravi's (not his real name) idol room is the spare bedroom in his home. Its walls are covered with pictures and statues of the gods: Rama-Chandra, Krishna, Varaha, Vishnu and the like. This is a room for worshiping. The thick red velvet carpet is easy on the knees. Some of the girls who came to Houston were assigned to sleep in this room. While they were unpacking, Ravi's cute and rascally five year old son bounced into the room. He was bubbling over, jumping up and down, giggling at a private joke. He couldn't keep it in any longer. "You have to take your shoes off in here!" he blurted. This child knows the rules of the idol gods, in fact, he is named after one of them.

The idol room is where they saw Ravi doing the daily chores of incense and chants. It is the room that punched home the point that idol worship is real in a sense that they never thought possible. We read of it in the Bible. We hear sermons about how we should be careful about letting our admiration of a sports hero, or our following of

The Idol Room

a political leader, or our desire for material bounty, cross the line into idolatry. But here, in this room, the walls are full of pictures and statues of idol gods. Here, in this room, Ravi bows down and prays to those pictures and statues!

The young people saw Manu (not his real name) in his "father's" office, a room at the back of his jewelry store. "There is my father," murmured Manu reverently, pointing to a large picture of Jesus propped up in the chair behind the desk. Like Ravi's room, there were dozens of pictures of other gods spread over the walls. On the desk were pending business contracts under ornate crucifixes, as if they were there to be superstitiously sanctified, cured in the spiritual smokehouse. After Thursday

night's Christian SINDHI meeting, they heard Manu say that the goal of understanding more and more of god (his god, not the true God) is the "miracles" of prosperity, health and happiness. All those things in Manu's 'father's" office were desperate and hopeless attempts to gain salvation.

In the shops and homes of the Hindu people, they saw time and again evidence of bondage. Little shrines with gifts of oranges and bananas, incense smoke, pictures, ribbons, baubles, and tinkling bells were plentiful in Indian Town and China Town. Superstitious fear of unknown forces drives these people to embrace as many gods as possible, including Jesus, in the hope that they avoid offending any god (and paying the price), or perhaps please some of the gods (and earn a reward).

The truth is salvation by God's grace alone. The lie is that salvation is determined by our will. The lie is that we can do things that qualify us for salvation, or that can please God, or that can at least avoid the worst damnation. The truth is that sin earns us the death penalty, that sin has in fact already killed us spiritually, so we can not do anything at all, much less do anything pleasing to God. Our Protestant Reformed teaching has drilled our young people on this point and all its implications, and while in Houston, the group leaders made the application repeatedly.

The doctrine of grace alone is so vital to the correct understanding of God's glorious revelation, that all false religions pervert this point. The Hindu idol worship is for the purpose of conditioning their minds and soul, making them fit for salvation. Hindu salvation is really no salvation at all, since their ultimate goal is reabsorption into the infinite nothingness from which everything originated. Is that salvation or obliviation? In this context Rev. Mahtani and Rev. Miersma repeatedly emphasized the folly of earning salvation, no matter what is the method.

There was an unplanned and unexpected object lesson, showing just how varied are the alternatives men in their "cunning craftiness" devise to the truth of salvation by grace alone. One Wednesday, some of the young people were invited to attend a social evening at a local Baptist church. The social games were somehow converted into an impromptu service, and the minister asked all the young people to bow their heads and close their eyes. The room hushed as everyone prepared for prayer. "If you accept Jesus into your heart, raise your head and look at me," he said, trying to elicit from his young audience some conduct that would earn them salvation. Our young people fidgeted uncomfortably.

Here again comes the truth of salvation by grace alone. Not by magic chants or prayers, not by symbolic going forward at a meeting, none of these things can earn the favor of God. The young people could experience that all those things taught in church about Arminianism are true after all. There really are people that practice those things. Much the same way that the Hundu idols opened the young people's eyes, so did the Baptist alter call. In both cases, our group leaders were on hand to make sure the proper application was made.

So, what did the Georgetown young people learn in Houston? You can be sure they did not learn anything new (not doctrinal, anyway). What they saw, what they heard, what they smelled, was the confirmation that man's pathetic feeble attempts to grasp salvation fail miserably. They learned that sound evangelistic practice differs little from the life of God's redeemed people. Make friends with people. Be ready to give a reason for the hope that's in you. It is not door-to-door tract distribution, not mass meetings with emotional calls for accepting salvation, not glad-handing people on the street. Evangelism is concerned with individuals and their families in day to day life.

The young people came to know and love their hosts and families "up close and personal." They were living their faith in front of the unsaved folk that they came to know by showing the love of God for his people in their attitudes, by their conduct, by their whole way of life. That is the setting for evangelism. That is the setting for being godly salt in an ungodly world. That is the setting for causing God to be glorified in the lives of His people. That is the setting of a normal Christian life. ❖

Mr. Ben Hopkins is an elder of Trinity Protestant Reformed Church in Houston, Texas.

Georgetown Young People who went to Houston.

Church News

BIRTHS *"Lo, children are an heritage of the Lord."*

Psalm 127:3

HOLLAND, MI

Phoenix James, was born to Barry & Darla Elzinga.

HOPE, MI

Scott & Sharla Moelker rejoice in the birth of a son, Brandon Scott.

HUDSONVILLE, MI

Henry & Dorothy DeJong were blessed with the birth of twin sons, Bradley Allen and Calvin Lewis.

Bruce & Jodi Hugg rejoice in the birth of a son, Jacob Taylor.

LYNDEN, WA

Mr. & Mrs. Kent Bouwman were blessed with the birth of a daughter, Kelsey Lynn.

Mr. & Mrs. Ed deBoer rejoice in the birth a son, Jarrod Herman.

RANDOLPH, WI

David Ronald was born to Dave & Jennie Braaksma.

Dave & Jody Buiter were blessed with the birth of a son, Andrew Scott.

Dirk & Beth Westra rejoice in the birth of a son, Michael John.

BAPTISMS *"He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved."*

Mark 16:16

GEORGETOWN, MI

The sacrament of baptism was administered to Ashtyn Joy, daughter of Mr. & Mrs. Doug Kaptein.

Mr. & Mrs. Doug Start presented their son, Jacob Robert, for baptism.

GRACE, MI

Baptism was administered to Nathanael William, son of Rev. & Mrs. Dick.

Sharon Marie, daughter of Mr. & Mrs. Nick Kleyn, was presented for baptism.

GRANDVILLE, MI

Mr. & Mrs. Jeff Baker presented their son, Daniel Jeffrey, for baptism.

Catherine Marcelle, daughter of Mr. & Mrs. Paul Vink, was presented for baptism.

HOPE, MI

Baptism was administered to Joel Everett, son of Mr. & Mrs. Joel Langerak.

Jesse Lennae, daughter of Mr. & Mrs. Shon Griess was presented for baptism.

HOLLAND, MI

Mr. & Mrs. John Oudman presented their son, Zachary Anand, for baptism.

Phoenix James, son of Mr. & Mrs. Barry Elzinga, received the sign and seal of holy baptism.

LOVELAND, CO

The sacrament of baptism was administered to Amanda Joy, daughter of Mr. & Mrs. Scott Bonzelaar.

LYNDEN, WA

Mr. & Mrs. Herman Boonstra Jr. presented their son, Stephen Dean, for baptism.

RANDOLPH, WI

Michael John, son of Mr. & Mrs. Dirk Westra, was presented for baptism.

CONFESSIONS OF FAITH

"...and with the mouth confession is made unto salvation."

Romans 10:10

FIRST, MI

Miss Kristen Minch has made her confession in the Lord Jesus public.

PEACE, IL

Public confession of faith was made by Joseph Martz and Terri Kizer.

MARRIAGES *"...and they twain shall be one flesh."*

Matthew 19:5

FAITH, MI

United in holy matrimony were Matt Kuiper and Tami VanderKolk.

FIRST, MI

Mr. & Mrs. Roger Meyer were united in marriage.

HOPE, MI

Joel Langerak and Jori Derusha were united in holy matrimony.

PELLA, IA

The Lord has united in marriage, Brad Postma and Brenda Koehler.

SOUTHWEST, MI

Mark Kuiper and Rebekah Cammega were joined in marriage.

MEMBERSHIP TRANSFERS

From Faith, MI to Hope, MI—Mrs. Cheri (Kaptein) Rutgers

From South Holland, IL to Peace, IL—Karen Medema

From Hope, MI to Southwest, MI—Mr. Marc Kuiper

From Grandville, MI to Georgetown, MI—Miss Monica DeBoer

"LITTLE LIGHTS"

. . . let it shine!

by Connie Meyer

The Rainbow

Plink. Plunk. Plink-plink-plunk. Droplets of water began to splash onto the creek and Grandpa pulled his fisherman's hat down over his ears. Becky and Chad ran for their jackets and quickly put them on.

"I didn't think it would rain. It's still sunny!" exclaimed Becky. "Will the fish still bite if it's raining, Grandpa?"

"Oh, I don't think they'll mind," he chuckled, 'they're all wet anyway."

Suddenly Chad pointed behind them, "Look over there—a rainbow!" Then all three turned around and gazed at the awe-inspiring curve of colored light. The rain came down more steadily now, but the little fishing party stood their ground to stare at the wonderful sight.

Finally Becky broke the silence, "That has to be one of the most beautiful things in the world."

"I think you're right," said Grandpa. "It's fitting that something so beautiful would have a beautiful sign as well."

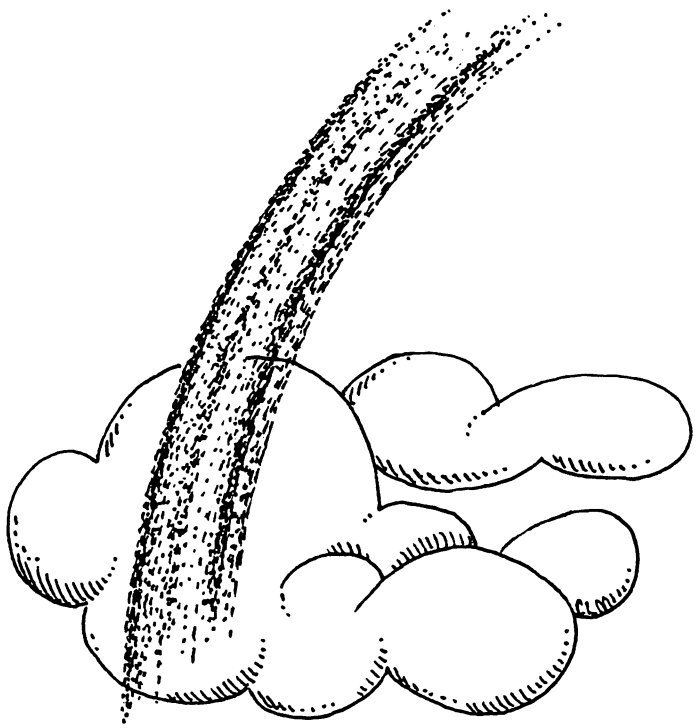
"What sign?" Chad and Becky asked together.

"The rainbow of course," smiled Grandpa. "God told Noah that the rainbow would be a sign of the covenant between Himself and the earth, and that He would never again send a flood that would destroy all flesh. That covenant is a beautiful thing."

Then Grandpa turned and tapped Chad's shoulder. "You might want to see what's pullin' on that hook of yours."

"Huh? Oh!" Chad turned just in time to see the red and white bobber disappear under water. He grabbed his pole and after a short struggle reeled in an amazing catch.

"Look at this," exclaimed Grandpa, "—a rainbow trout!"



Chad thought a moment and asked, "Do you think this is a sign, too?"

Grandpa laughed, "Well, I'm not sure about that, but is *does* look like a sign of dinner!" And with this said, Grandpa and his two grandchildren packed up to go home for exactly that.

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

r	e	d	o	r	a	n	g	e	y	e	l	l	o	w	g	r	e	e	n	b	l	u	e	i	n	d	i	g	o	v	i	o	l	e	t
1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17	18	19	20	21	22	23	24	25	26	27	28	29	30	31	32	33	34	35	36

Start with 1: _1_, then add 5: ___, now add 22: ___, divide by 4: ___, multiply by 3: ___, subtract 7: ___, and add 1: ___. Using the key, what does it spell?

__ __ __ __ __ __ __

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Rev. Gritters: ***Friendships in Dating and Marriage***

All interested in being a chaperone
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