
Beacon

April
1998

Lights

Volume LVII
Number 4

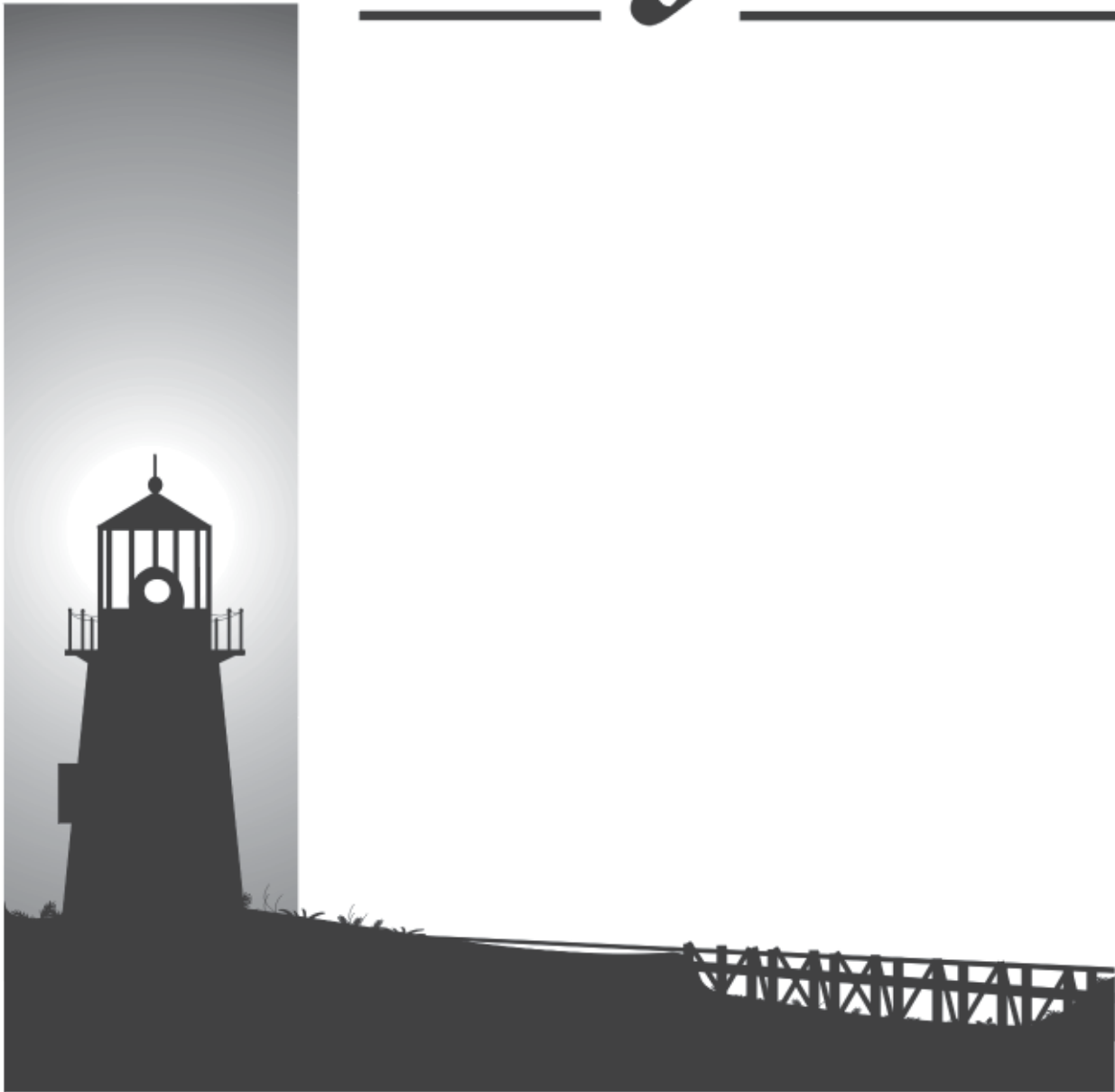


Table of Contents

	EDITORIAL
3	Does God Love All Men and Sincerely Desire To Save All Men?
	FRUITFUL BRANCHES
5	Cloning: A Threat to the Christian Faith
	GEM OF THE MONTH
7	Talents
	STORY TIME
8	Tell It the Children
	FROM THE WEB
9	The Truth Despised
	CREATION THROUGH THE SPECTACLES OF SCRIPTURE
11	The Doctrine of Creation (4)
	DEVOTIONAL
13	The Song of Zion
	MUSIC
17	Psalter #162—God Is Our Strength
	CHURCH FAMILY
18	Odd Girl Out
	BOOK REVIEW
21	Ready To Give An Answer
	WHERE WE STAND
22	Praying for Children: What Is a Proper Attitude Concerning Children?
	CHURCH HISTORY
25	Through Strife to Victory—Chapter 3: Antithesis or Synthesis?
	KIDS PAGE
27	Little Bird
	CHURCH NEWS
	Back Cover

BEACON LIGHTS

BEACON LIGHTS STAFF

Editor-in-Chief John Huizenga
Associate Editor Aaron Cleveland
Finance Manager Steve Faber
Secretary Mindy DeMeester

DEPARTMENT MANAGERS

Fruitful Branches Steve Faber
Dating and Marriage needed
Devotional John Huizenga & Chester Hunter
Science John Huizenga
Poetry needed
Doctrine Jeff Kalsbeek
History Beth DeVries
Little Lights Connie Meyer
Church News Mindy DeMeester
Regional Staff Contributors needed

Subscription Manager Mike Feenstra (616)531-2349
Book Sales Becky Kalsbeek (616)453-6437
Typesetting Bob Vermeer
Printing Jim Huizinga

EXECUTIVE FEDERATION BOARD

President Justin Koole
Vice-President Ben Cammenga
Secretary Kristin Kalsbeek
Treasurer Ted Brummel
Librarian Kristin Wassink
Vice-Secretary Tara Kooienga
Vice-Treasurer Mark Meulenberg
Youth Coordinator Kevin Van Overloop
Spiritual Advisors Prof. R. Dykstra
Rev. C. Terpstra

All information and letters pertaining to the contents of the *Beacon Lights* mail to (e-mail if at all possible, or computer disks preferred):

EDITORIAL OFFICE

John Huizenga
621 Williams
Randolph, WI 53956
Phone: (920)326-6186
Internet: jhuize@centuryinter.net

Subscription Price: \$10.00

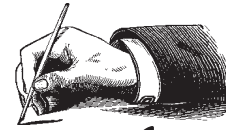
For a subscription or an address change, please write:
Beacon Lights
P.O. Box 375
Jenison, MI 49428

EDITORIAL POLICY

The articles of *Beacon Lights* do not necessarily indicate the viewpoint of the Editorial Staff. Every author is solely responsible for the contents of his own article.

The *Beacon Lights* encourages its readers to contact the editorial office with any questions or comments. Letters may be edited for printing. We will not publish anonymous letters, but will withhold names upon request.

If any material of *Beacon Lights* is reprinted by another periodical, we will appreciate your giving the source and forwarding the printed periodical to the Editorial Office.



Does God Love All Men and Sincerely Desire to Save All Men?

by Aaron J. Cleveland

There is an error which is found in nearly every church today to one degree or another. The error is that God loves ALL (every man, women, and child) men and is sincere in His desire to save ALL men.

Those who teach this error go straight to the Bible in defense of this error. They say that God is exclusively a God of love (I John 4:16). Not only is God a God of love, but the object of His love is ALL men (John 3:16, Psalm 145:9, Acts 14:16,17). And because God loves ALL men, it is His sincere desire that ALL men receive salvation (I Tim. 2:3-4, II Peter 3:9, Ezekiel 33:11). Finally, because it is God's desire that ALL men might be saved, Jesus' death on the cross paid the penalty for the sins of every man (I John 2:2, John 1:29). The error seems quite logical and seemingly has convincing Biblical proof.

But the Reformed young person says, "No!" to this error. It is not Biblical. It is the lie. God does NOT love all men. God does NOT have a sincere desire to save all men. Christ did NOT die on the cross to pay for the sins of all men. Rather, God loves a particular group of people. He sincerely desires to save only that particular group whom He loves. Christ died only to pay for the sins of that group whom God loves. This is Biblical as we shall see.

God loves only those whom He has elected to salvation in Jesus Christ. God hates those whom He has reprobated to damnation. Romans 9:13 reads, "As it is written (Malachi 1:3,4), Jacob have I loved, but Esau have I hated." Despite what the proponents of God's universal love might claim, God is a God of both love and hatred. He is a God of particular love and particular hatred. His love is directed towards His people, and His hatred towards those whom He has chosen for destruction. "Therefore He hath mercy on whom He will have mercy, and whom He will He hardeneth (verse 18).

In verse 22 of the same chapter we read of "vessels of wrath fitted to destruction." These "vessels of wrath fitted to destruction" can hardly be considered objects of God's love. In verse 23, we read that the riches of God's glory will only be made known to the "vessels of mercy" which He has "afore prepared unto glory."

The message of the Bible is one of God's particular love; the love of God for His people only, and not an indiscriminate universal love of all men head for head. Here are just a few of the multitude of examples of God's particular love found in the Bible:

I John 4:10—"Herein is love, not that we loved God, but that He loved US, and sent His son to be the propitiation for OUR sins."

Romans 5:8—"But God commandeth His love toward US, in that, while WE were yet sinners, Christ died for US."

Deuteronomy 7:7—"The Lord did not set His love upon YOU, nor choose YOU, because YE were more in number than any people; for YE were the fewest of all people."

Isaiah 43:21—"This people have I formed for myself; they shall show forth my praise."

Exodus 19:5—“Now therefore, if YE will obey my voice indeed, and keep my covenant, then YE shall be a peculiar treasure unto me above all people: for all the earth is mine.”

Also to be found in Scripture are examples of God’s hatred towards the wicked, those whom He has not chosen and objects of His wrath.

Psalms 5:5,6—“The foolish shall not stand in Thy sight; Thou hatest all workers of iniquity. Thou shalt destroy them that speak leasing: the Lord will abhor the bloody and deceitful man.”

James 4:4—“Ye adulterers and adulteresses, know ye not that the friendship of the world is enmity with God? Whosoever will be a friend of the world is the enemy of God.”

Isaiah 66:14—“And when ye see this, your heart shall rejoice, and your bones shall flourish like an herb: and the hand of the Lord shall be known towards His servants, and His indignation towards His enemies.”

Romans 1:18—“For the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men, who hold the truth in unrighteousness.”

From these and many other verses, we can see that the message of Scripture is one of God’s love towards those whom He has chosen, and His wrath towards those who are His enemies.

The question that then arises is this. If God’s love is particular, does God sincerely desire to save all men? The answer to this question is also, NO. God cannot possibly desire the salvation of those whom He hates.

The call of the gospel, the external call, the call to “repent and believe” as found in the Canons, Second Head, Article 5, is a “serious” and “unfeigned” call. Everyone who hears the gospel has the same responsibility, repentance. This responsibility is the same for the regenerated as well as the unregenerated. The difference is this: God accompanies this call with His Spirit to work repentance and regeneration in the hearts of those whom He has elected. This is the internal call. Nevertheless, the external command, as found in Acts 2:38, is sincere to all men who hear it. However, this external God, does not manifest a love of God to all men. God loves comes only to those who receive His Spirit to work repentance.

Those who claim that God indeed does have a desire to save all men commonly cite three passages: I Timothy 2:3,4, II Peter 3:9, and I John 2:2. Sadly, contrary to the proper interpretation of Scripture, these passages must be separated from the verses surrounding them and the context of all Scripture in order to have the intended false meaning that God loves and desires to save all men.

With respect to the passage in I Timothy, the proponents of God’s universal love need only read the first two verses of the chapter. It is evident that when “all men” is referred to in verse 4, it means all men in the sense of all levels of men, from kings to slaves. Verse 2 tells us that we must pray for men in authority because God will save some who have positions of authority as well as those who are common folk.

I John 2:2 must also be separated from the message of Scripture. Read I John 4:10. John Calvin does a good job explaining how this verse melds with the message of Scripture in his commentary on the verse:

Here a question may be raised, how have the sins of the whole world been expiated (atoned for)? I pass the dotages of the fanatics, who under this pretense extend salvation to all the reprobate, and therefore to Satan himself. Such a monstrous thing deserves no refutation. They who seek to avoid this absurdity, have said that Christ suffered sufficiently for the whole world, but efficiently only for the elect. This solution has commonly prevailed in the schools. Though then I allow that what has been said is true, yet I deny that is suitable to this passage; for the design of John was no other than to make this benefit common to the whole Church. Then under the word all or whole, he does not include the reprobate, but designates those who should believe as well as those who were scattered through various parts of the world. For then is really made evident, as it is meet, the grace of Christ, when it is declared to be the only true salvation of the world.

Neither does II Peter 3:9 speak of God’s love and desire to save all men. This is evident from the verse itself. God is “longsuffering to US-WARD.” God will not let any of His own perish. All of His own will come to repentance. This verse does not speak of God’s desire to save all men.

None of these three verses, as well as the rest of the Bible, speak of God's love of all men. Nor do they speak of God's desire to save all men. Nor do they speak of Christ's death for all men. Rather, they speak of the God who loves His people and sent His Son to die for His people and His people only.

For those who would still claim that God loves all men and desires to save all men, there are a few questions they must answer.

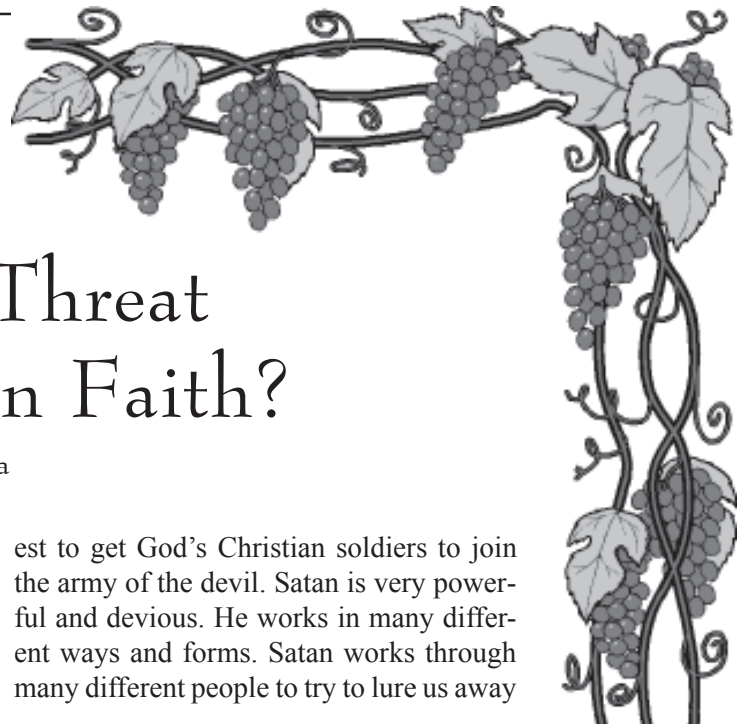
1. If God loves all men and desires to save all men, why then are not all men saved? God certainly has the power. God certainly carries out everything in His counsel. But yet, not all men are saved. Fact is, most are not. "And if the righteous scarcely be saved, where shall the ungodly and the sinner appear?" (I Peter 4:18). The proponents of God's universal love are left with a helpless god, unable to accomplish his plan and fulfill his desire to save all men.

2. If God desires to save all men, how is this explained in light of Romans 9:18 and 11:7 where we read that God "hardeneth" the hearts of unbelievers and blinds them to the truth? How can God, on the one hand love and desire to save men, and on the other hand, harden their hearts and give them "eyes that they should not see?" This is a contradiction. This is not possible. So the defenders of God's universal love are left with a hopelessly contradictory god.

3. If God loves all men, is not it then our duty to love all men and become friends with the world? How can this be, if we are called to be in this world, but not of this world? I John 2:15 reads: "Love not the world, neither the things that are in the world. If any man love the world, the love of the Father is not in him." James 4:4 reads: "Know ye not that the friendship of the world is enmity with God? Whosoever therefore will be a friend of the world is the enemy of God." Is it possible to befriend the very enemies of God?

These are just three of many questions that must be answered by opponents of God's particular love and limited atonement. If God's salvation is indeed extended to all men, then there must necessarily be such things as resistible grace and universal atonement. If God loves and desires to save all men, then Christ must have died for all men. If God desired to save all men, and some men go unsaved, then God's grace must be resistible. Both of these ideas are clearly unbiblical and impossible. The Reformed Christian faith must have total depravity, unconditional election, limited atonement, irresistible grace, and preservation of the saints. Removing or twisting just one of these elements destroys the whole. All of them are necessary. ❖

Fruitful Branches



Cloning: A Threat to the Christian Faith?

by Penny Jansma

Recent scientific breakthroughs are a danger to the Christian faith. As we move closer and closer into the 21st century, we can see signs all around us that point to Christ's second return. It is now, and in times to come, that Satan will work his hard-

est to get God's Christian soldiers to join the army of the devil. Satan is very powerful and devious. He works in many different ways and forms. Satan works through many different people to try to lure us away

from God. He works through government officials, scientists, and many of the professors at colleges today. We as Christians must be very careful living in this world today. For, “they that trust in the Lord shall be as Mount Zion which cannot be removed, but abideth for ever” (Psalm 125:1).

For many worldly people, scientists have been the ones to whom they look for answers to their questions. It was scientists that told us that the world in which we live was created from a massive explosion. Also according to scientists, our ancestors are the banana-eating, furry animals that swing from one vine to another making their way through the jungle. Recently, scientists have discovered a way to replace the nucleus of an unfertilized egg with the nucleus from another cell. We know this as cloning. The word ‘cloning’ has many meanings, but we know it as creating an organism genetically identical to another organism. Scientists attempt cloning by having a nucleus from a very early embryo replace an unfertilized egg’s nucleus. If this works, the offspring generated grows into a fertile adult.

When many of us think of cloning, we tend to think of Dolly (the cloned sheep). Ian Wilmut and his colleagues were allowed (by God) to create Dolly. In a story in Science News on how Wilmut created Dolly, he reported that his strategy was to starve the adult cells. This strategy involves depriving the intended donor cells of almost all nutrients for five days. This diet causes the cells to abandon their normal cycle of growth and division and to enter a stage which starts chromatin remodeling, making it easier for the egg cell to finish its job. For scientists, this is a miracle. Dolly is the only survivor of 277 cloning attempts with adult sheep cells.

Scientists hope that by cloning animals, they will be able to transplant organs from animals into humans. Cloning would also enable farmers to clone their livestock, making a herd of good, productive animals.

All of this scientific breakthrough might cause us as Christians to wonder, “Is this what God intended?” Obviously it’s not. If God intended for all sheep to be as one sheep, He would have created all sheep the same. Although, God created all animals as well as man differently. Genesis 1:27 as well as Article 1 under the 3rd and 4th Heads Of Doctrine tells us that man was created in the image of God; this is one of the few ways that every man is similar. Everybody is different from one another. Even identical twins are different in one form or another. If God wanted us “to be someone else,” He would have created us that way. God is the only one

who is three in one. Number three of the Confession of Faith reminds us that God is one is Essence, but distinguished in three persons: God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Spirit. God is the only source of all creativity. He made only one of you and me. He didn’t use a mold to form us- He used His hands, and He will never use His hands in exactly the same way ever again. This is why every child must be treated differently. In the classroom, every student is different and needs individual attention to meet their different needs.

As Christians, we must be ever so grateful to God for making us who we are, and for choosing us to be partakers of the body of Christ. Faith is to be considered as the gift of God because it is conferred, breathed, and infused into man by God who produces the will to believe as well as the act of believing (Canons of Dort, 3rd and 4th Heads of Doctrine, Article 14). We must remember that we are a special remnant, a chosen few in this world. Christ only chose a few to be called His own. For “many are called, but few are chosen.” Lord’s Day VII, Q&A 20 tells us that only those engrafted into Christ and receive all His benefits by a true faith are saved. We must always remember this, lest we falter. We must always turn to God for help in times of trouble. Even though the world is becoming more perverse and wicked every day, let’s remember this as we are to be Christian examples to the world. ❖

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



Talents

by Viola De Boer

Think not if you had five talents what great things you would do,
 Look not with envy on him with five and fret with your lot of two.
 Think not it would be better if the Lord five had given you,
 That then you could better praise Him and do more service too.
 Think not you are neglected; that you have received the less,
 Strive not against the Master who is always wise to bless.
 Neglect not the talents in you , be it two or three,
 Thinking if you had the five, then happy you could be.
 For the wise Lord of heaven is the giver of the talents five,
 And the same wise Lord has given you two wherewith to thrive.
 For our Lord despises not the one whom He has given two,
 But commands we use our talents wisely; seek His will to do.
 For the Lord will shower His rich blessings by the score
 So soon your two talents will be multiplied to four.
 How severely are rebuked the ones who bury talents deep;
 Who seek not to use them but to be slothful and to sleep.
 For from them the Master takes whatever they were given,
 And they endure His righteous wrath poured out from heaven.
 But what says He to His servants who use the talents well?
 "Come, blessed of the Father, in my mansions dwell.
 For as you have been faithful in your talents few,
 You will be ruler over much as you wisely used your two."
 So the issue of the talents is not more or less,
 But do you use them wisely the Master to confess?
 Be thankful for your talents whatever they may be
 So you may stand in your last day with heart and conscience free,
 Confessing: "All I have and all I am is all a gift from Thee."

*Viola is a teacher at N.W. Iowa Protestant
 Reformed School in Doon, Iowa.*

Wanted: Poetry from the pens of poets young or old.
 Please send us those flashes of inspiration. If you do
 not want your name published just let me know. Send
 your poetry to the editor via e-mail or regular mail.

Tell It the Children

by J.P. de Klerk

Elena did not like it very much, but because her mother had the flu, she had to spend a whole day with the twins, Jim and Anna. She had to change her plans for that day. There was a lot to do at home as well as in the garden, but to her pleasant surprise, the two ten-year-olds helped her bravely. Since she became a student at the university she did not pay much attention to the twins; she had a lot of studying to do. Her father was a barrister, and she had a married brother in Scotland. It was early September and the weather was fine.

Elena did the washing, cleaned the rooms, vacuumed, peeled the potatoes and prepared a tasty broth with force, meatballs and vegetables for her mother. The twins picked some late strawberries and Cape gooseberries, cleaned the floor of the hothouse, removed weeds out of the grass field and picked moss from between the tiles in front of the shed with garden tools. Father was two times at the phone to ask whether all went well. After the lunch Elena sat down with Jim and Anna, reading a chapter out of the Bible. Jim asked her thinking what was meant with the remark, that the race will not be won by the one who is the quickest, nor the fight by the one who is the strongest.

“Put it this way,” said Elena, “you cannot do it by yourself, as a human being. God gives you the strength, the staying power, the stamina. We will trust in Him for what we can do in our lives.”

Anna said, “In my class at school, we have Andy Buck, who is quicker and stronger than anybody else. We are all afraid of him.”

“Now, remember what mother told us about a girl-friend of hers, who was clever and handy, and the other one who was slow, but she worked hard. At the end of the school year that slower one won as the best of the class. And remember David and Goliath. That young boy slew the giant, because God wanted him to win the battle.”

“Yes, Goliath was proud. He had insulted God,” said Jim.



“Right. David prayed and asked to give him power and wisdom. The enemies of the Jews had not expected that and they were defeated,” affirmed Elena.

“There is sure a lot in the Bible,” mumbled Anna, dressing up her doll.

“Exactly,” said Elena. “We can find there the answer to all our questions, if we take the trouble to search for it. That is what I have learned at the girls’ society.”

They cleared the table and did the washing up. “We are not so quick as Mum, but we can do it,” jubilated Anna.

“Yes, because God gives us the health and the power to do it,” completed Elena. She almost dropped a plate, but Jim caught it. Then they laughed, the three of them. Anna applauded. ❖

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

The Truth Despised

By Rev. Moore

Question

I have been a Christian since 1978. I am 33 years old. In that time I have attended many churches, most of them Baptist, Evangelical free churches and the like, until I met (a pastor) who is 26 years old and preaching this “reformed theology.” WOW!! I have never heard this before! A light went on that had never been there before. This all happened 4 months ago for me. All of this makes perfect sense, like a well-tuned orchestra. Which now brings me to the question. Why doesn’t every church preach this? I know this doctrine to be true as I have listened very carefully to (this pastor) these past few months. I listened to him very intently and followed it up with Scriptures to make sure I was not getting sucked into some kind of cult. But everything is backed up by Scripture after Scripture. There is no spin put on it, just bold truth. About 4 months ago our pastor came on as a pastor of a church that was dying. Only 2 people in the congregation. He brought the congregation to 60 people in that 4-month period. Just recently, our pastor and the 60 people were asked to leave the church by the 2 original members because they did not like this Reformed “stuff.” Their words were, yes, we agree with most of what you are preaching, but we are afraid that this tough doctrine might frighten people away. Can you believe this? Why won’t the main stream churches preach what is true? What is the point of even going to church if you are not going to preach the truth? I don’t get it. Help me out with this.

Answer

I thank you for sending me this question, and since I was out of town the past week on church visitation I was delayed in the answering of it. But now I shall try to shed some light on the questions that you raise. First of all your experience is one that I underwent some 38 years ago myself. I had been raised in an Arminian or free-will denomination, and when I went to college I visited many other denominations as repre-

sented in local congregations. These consisted of many of the mainline denominations. But then I was led of the Lord to the Protestant Reformed Churches in America. Almost from the very first time that I heard the “reformed” preaching and began studying in the “Reformed Confessions,” I was struck with the fact that now for the first time I was really hearing the truth. The thing that caught my attention was the fact that the Reformed faith was logical, and when it is purely preached there is no contradiction that ever arises in the preaching of the Scripture. This of course must be, for the Scripture is God’s infallible, inspired Word that He has been pleased to give to His people. But even more importantly as that Word was proclaimed Christ applied it to my heart (and there was no doubt that this Reformed faith was the Word of God) it led me to see the horror of my sin, and brought me in humility to the cross, and there God gave testimony that my sins are forgiven for Christ’s sake. The fruit of course, is that it is my joy to live in thanksgiving before my God for the Sovereign and wondrous work of salvation that He works in me by His Word. So I can relate to your joy, and may it continue strong in your heart. And may your young pastor continue to grow in the conviction that he must ever preach alone the truth of the Scripture and therefore the “reformed faith.”

Now to your questions. Why won’t the mainstream churches preach this truth and why go to church if you have not this preaching? To answer this question, one must understand two main things. First, if the Reformed faith is proclaimed faithfully, then the truth of Scripture that man is totally depraved by nature is preached. The apostle Paul points out that before our quickening by the Spirit of Christ we are dead in sin (Ephesians 2:1-3). The true nature of natural man is seen in the third chapter of Romans, and we are taught that no man doeth good, no not one. Already we hear this said of man at the time before the flood when God speaks of fallen man in the following way as seen in Genesis 6:5 “And God saw that the wickedness of man (was) great in the earth, and

(that) every imagination of the thoughts of his heart (was) only evil continually.” Now the preaching of this truth leaves absolutely no room for man to boast, he is dead in sin and can do nothing to save himself. This preaching utterly empties one of all pride and of all self-seeking.

But secondly, to preach the Reformed faith means that one must then attribute salvation alone to the work of God from beginning to end. And this means that one must preach double predestination: that God has from before the foundation of the world elected a particular people to save in Christ, through His work of redemption, and that God has from before the foundation of the world determined to reprobate others unto destruction in the way of their sin. Now, that this must be preached is evident from all that Paul says of the preaching in the whole book of Romans, and this includes the truth set forth in the 9th chapter where we are taught with the strongest of testimonies that it is not of man who willeth, but it is God that showeth mercy. We read in the verse 16, “So then (it is) not of him that willeth, nor of him that runneth, but of God that sheweth mercy.” And again in verse 18, “Therefore hath he mercy on whom he will (have mercy), and whom he will he hardeneth.” And woe unto us if we deny this truth, shall the pot say to him that formed it, why has thou made me thus. Preaching this truth we indeed rejoice with the apostle, and bless God as the apostle directs us in the first chapter of Ephesians.

But brother, again this is not pleasing to the flesh for we are given to understand that from the very beginning, yea from before the creation, God determines the salvation of His people. And it is according to His sovereign decree that He sent His only Begotten Son into our flesh to redeem us. Jesus finished this work of redemption on the cross, and cries this out saying, “It is finished” before commending His spirit into Father’s hand. There is no work left to do to merit our salvation, Christ has satisfied completely God’s judgment against our sin. The natural man is not satisfied with this, he wants to think that he must do something, some of the work in order to be saved. He detests waiting alone upon God for salvation.

The result is that many churches have given in to this natural desire of man, and have determined to bring a gospel that truly is no gospel; one that gives at least a measure of glory to man. But for God’s children such a gospel affords no comfort, nor peace.

However, the Reformed Faith gives to us everlasting comfort and peace. For we are told by the Scripture, that we may be, “confident of this very thing, that he

There is no work left to do to merit our salvation, Christ has satisfied completely God’s judgment against our sin. The natural man is not satisfied with this, he wants to think that he must do something, some of the work in order to be saved. He detests waiting alone upon God for salvation.

which hath begun a good work in you will perform (it) until the day of Jesus Christ:” (Philippians 1:6) God perfects His work in the hearts of His people, and He sustains them in the battle of faith, and in Christ gives us the victory, even everlasting life.

And God’s children rejoice and walk in thanksgiving, repenting of their sin and giving all glory to God for their salvation. This is the fruit of the indwelling Spirit of Christ in our hearts as He applies the Word of Christ to our lives.

One final comment, we must go to church. Christ commands us to gather with the saints, and teaches us that it is under the lively preaching of the Word that we may expect our blessing. It is necessary that we are come under the yoke of Christ’s rule, and partake of His sacraments as well. So if we cannot find this preaching of the reformed faith, then we must seek it out. May God grant that you continue to love and seek the true preaching of the Word. May He sustain you and those you love in Christ in the truth, for only then shall we be humbled to give Him all of our glory and praise. ❖

Remember to write your questions to me at revmo@mtc1.mtcnet.net Also feel free to write follow up questions.

Rev. Moore is pastor of Hull Protestant Reformed Church in Hull, Iowa.

The Doctrine of Creation (4)

by Aaron J. Cleveland

“Through faith we understand that the worlds were framed by the word of God, so that things which are seen were not made of things which do appear” (Hebrews 11:3). It is with faith that a belief in God’s work of creation begins; faith which is one of the blessings of salvation, and a gift of God (Eph. 2:8).

It is the work of the Spirit in the hearts of believers, by which the truth, including the truth of creation, is written in our hearts. This Spirit of truth is given only to those whom God has chosen. This reality is recorded for us in Hebrews 8:10 where we read:

For this is the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel after those days, saith the Lord; I will put my laws into their mind, and write them in their hearts: and I will be to them a God, and they shall be to me a people.

It is only because of this work of the Spirit in our hearts that God’s Word becomes our only rule of faith and life. And it is because of this work of the Spirit that we look at creation through the spectacles of Scripture and not through the spectacles of science and reason.

It is only through the work of the Spirit that we are assured and confess the truth as found in God’s Word. It is only because of this work of the Spirit in our hearts that God’s Word becomes our only rule of faith and life. And it is because of this work of the Spirit that we look at creation through the spectacles of Scripture and not through the spectacles of science and reason. The truth of creation is clearly seen and comes into clear focus when seen through the spectacles of God’s Word. It is blurred and obscured when viewed through the spectacles of so-called scientific discovery and reason.

It is also by faith that we are able to withstand the scoffers of II Peter 3:3-7. And there are and will be multitudes of scoffers; scoffers who deny God’s work of creation and His work of destruction and deliverance in the Flood. We must stand firm in the assurance that the Lord will come again. He will come again with judgment against the ungodly and “the heavens shall pass away with a great noise, and the elements shall melt with fervent heat, the earth also and the works that are therein shall be burned up” (vs. 10). But along with this destruction of the ungodly and the heavens and earth comes the deliverance of the elect and the new heavens and a new earth. Only those who by faith believe in God’s original work of creation have the assurance of this new creation and deliverance.

The comforting doctrine of God’s sovereignty is also seen in the work of creation and the governing of it. God’s purpose from eternity was His own glorification through Christ. And this glorification is accomplished through Christ’s deliverance of all the creation and the bringing about of the new heavens and earth. The heaven and the earth of Genesis 1:1 are a part of God’s sovereign plan of sin, grace, and deliverance whereby His glorification is brought about through the work of Christ. This truth is seen in Revelation 4:11 where we read:

Thou are worthy, O Lord, to receive glory and honour and power: for thou hast created all things, and for thy pleasure they are and were created.

The evolutionists do not have a sovereign God. They cannot. If the work of creation is denied and replaced with an aimless and un-controlled process, then how is Christ able to redeem that which God has no control over? It is not possible. God is robbed of all the glory due Him.

Related to this is the truth of God's providence, whereby He governs the creation. God, through His providence, governs and rules all things in His creation that He might bring about His own glorification through Christ's work. In Colossians 1:16 we read of Christ and the work of creation and their relation: For by Him were all things created, that are in heaven, and that are in earth, visible and invisible, whether they be thrones, or dominions, or principalities, or powers; all things were created by Him, and for Him.

Also closely related to the work of creation is the work of salvation. The two cannot be separated as the evolutionists claims. The two works are closely connected and there is no work of salvation apart from creation. This is evident after reading the second half of verse 17 of Romans chapter 4 which states: "even God, who quickeneth the dead, and calleth those things which be not as though they were." In the same breath we read of God who makes living the dead and from nothing calls everything. The creation is living proof that we have a God of salvation who makes living that which was dead. In unbelief, the evolutionist who denies the work of creation also rejects the work of salvation and leaves himself utterly helpless and hopeless.

But standing in contrast to the hopelessness of evolutionism we have the six-day creation work. This is a work so amazing and complex that we can only begin to have an understanding of it; a work that requires that we bow in humble obedience and believe. Every time, it seems, that we read the opening chapters of Genesis there is something new to be found and we grow in understanding.

Beyond Genesis, the Bible is full of references to creation and God's rule of creation. The whole of Scripture testifies to creation. The work of creation is one of the threads which runs through the cloth of God's Word. Pulling that thread out, irreparably unravels the cloth and makes it of no use.

After reading Isaiah 45:18 we are left with no doubt about God's work of creation:

The work of creation is one of the threads which runs through the cloth of God's Word. Pulling that thread out, irreparably unravels the cloth and makes it of no use.

For thus saith the Lord that created the heavens; God himself that formed the earth and made it; he hath established it, he created it not in vain, he formed it to be inhabited: I am the Lord; and there is none else.

That creation testifies to God's might and sovereign rule is seen in Romans 1:20 where we read:

For the invisible things of him from the creation of the world are clearly seen, being understood by the things that are made, even his eternal power and Godhead; so that they are without excuse.

The testimony of creation is so powerful, that it leaves even those with the hardest of hearts without excuse. How much more of a testimony it is to us who have been given the gift of faith.

The Belgic Confession, written long before the lie of evolution raised its ugly head, summarizes very nicely in Article 12, what exactly the work of creation is. This ought to be our confession also:

We believe that the Father, by the Word, that is, by his Son, hath created of nothing, the heaven, the earth, and all creatures, as it seemed good unto him, giving unto every creature its being, shape, form, and several offices to serve its Creator. That he doth also still uphold and govern them by his eternal providence, and infinite power, for the service of mankind, to the end that man may serve his God. ❖

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



The Song of Zion

by Skip Hunter

A Psalter-Psalm Devotional of Praise to Our Sovereign Covenant God

April 1 Read Psalm 50

Psalm 50:1-3 God speaks! Do we listen? Everyday God speaks to the world and the church. We know the world does not listen. What about the church? Are we listening to what God says to us? He speaks to us in creation. He speaks to us in what happens in our daily lives whether that be at home, at school, at work, or where ever He has placed us. Are we listening? Are there troubles around us through which God is telling us that we are not living a life of sanctification or are not walking according to His Word. Verse three tells us that God will speak to us. He will not keep silence about our sins. Our God is a consuming fire and this fire burns both elect and reprobate. Fear not, however, for we do have the comfort that we will not be consumed because He cares for His people. God speaks! People of God, we must listen. Sing Psalms 137:1 and 139:1-3.

April 2 Read Micah 6:1-9

Psalm 50:4-6 Yesterday we explored the idea of our speaking God. Today we see something of the process. First of all there is a gathering together to listen. Do we gather enough to listen to God? We gather often; of that there is no doubt. But are our gatherings devoted to listening to God. This means first of all attendance at the worship service. But this also implies attendance at lectures and Bible studies. These are means the church has historically used to listen to God. Secondly there is the content of that gathering. Micah told us that He shows us what is good. This is not something that we can learn from anywhere else but His Word. God speaks the truth. We must hear it. We see this truth in creation. All creation testifies to the righteousness of God. Finally we see that He is judge. We may never usurp this attribute of our sovereign God. He is Judge and He alone. Sing Psalms 137:2 and 139:4-6.

April 3 Read Hebrews 10:1-10

Psalm 50:7-8 In two days we go to worship our God. Is our worship totally God glorifying? Are we committed to worshipping Him only in the way He has commanded in His Word? To do otherwise, you know, is a violation of the second commandment. Man loves to tinker with the worship service to make it more palatable for more people. Sermons are shortened or done away with. Hymns or worse are sung or played in the worship service. Much is added which is forbidden by Scripture. Wor-

ship is not for man; it is for God! Israel as a nation was reprimanded, taken into captivity, and finally pruned from the vine for not worshipping God or not worshipping Him as He commanded. What about us? Are we worshipping to pay honor to God or to impress man? Sing Psalter 137:3.

April 4 Read Matthew 6:25-34

Psalm 50:9-11 People of God, have you ever pondered the greatness of our God? Today is Saturday. Many of us may use this break from our everyday labors to get out into His creation. What do you see? Do you realize that everything is God's, and He knows every rock, animal, and plant? He not only knows about them, but He knows where they are and what is happening to them. God does not need us to make Him great. He is great within Himself. He gives to us some pictures of His greatness so that we with our minuscule minds can have some insight into His greatness. Go ahead, look around you, see God's greatness, and then do nothing which detracts from that greatness. Sing Psalter 137:4.

April 5 Read Isaiah 43:1-13

Psalm 50:12-13 We are creatures; God is the creator. What are the implications of this truth for us and our lives? First of all we must keep that relationship foremost in our minds. As we carry out our daily work, and especially as we worship we must confess that God is the creator. This confession will help us live lives pleasing in His sight. It will help us in decisions about our family and its life. Secondly we must acknowledge that God is God. How many people wish to do away with this truth and allow man a part in his salvation. God is not a man. God is God! Confess this truth and live this truth until the day that Christ returns to take His church to heaven to live in sweet communion with God. Sing Psalter 137:5.

April 6 Read Deuteronomy 26:10-15

Psalm 50:14-15 Three commands are given in these two verses. Offer God thanksgiving. Did we do that yesterday? Are we doing it today? Will we do it tomorrow? Pay our vows to God. These are not just the vows of desperation, but these are the solemn vows made in our lives. For example there are the baptismal vows, the vows made at confession of faith, or the marriage vows. Are we keeping those? Finally we are commanded to call upon God in trouble. We need not run to earthly counselors or earthly means of help. Our God is faithful. He

has promised to help us in times of trouble. He will deliver us. Why? So that we can glorify Him. Sing Psalters 137:6.

April 7 Read Acts 17:29-31

Psalm 50:16-17 People of God and especially young people and children, do you hate the instruction of God? What a terrible thing if you do! What is our attitude to the study of God, His Word, and His works whether it be at catechism, school, society, or elsewhere? To disregard it or despise it is horrible. God has terrible punishments for those who despise Him and His Word. Paul warned the Athenians about this terrible sin. That warning is for us as well. We have many opportunities to learn and study about our God. First of all we must make good use of them. Secondly we must do it out of love and gratitude for our God. Sing Psalters 138:1.

April 8 Read Proverbs 24:21-29

Psalm 50:18-20 I am always amazed and sobered when I hear the commandments preached in church. We tend to dismiss them as either being general guidelines or being against really bad sins. The three verses of today's text are for us. When we hear the commandments preached, we must realize that we sin against them daily. We do it by actions, and as these verses tell us we do it by not reprimanding or stopping another who is sinning. The principle of corporate responsibility is very important for all of those who are members of God's church. We must be holy even as our God in heaven is holy. Let us live a life of sanctification in gratitude for our salvation. Sing Psalter 138:2.

April 9 Read Isaiah 42:1-9

Psalm 50:21 Sometimes it appears to us that God overlooks sin. Is this true? We know that He sees all that happens on this earth, but does He excuse some sins? The answer is no, No, NO! It is an often repeated truth in the Bible that every work of man must be accounted for. What does this verse mean for us then? First of all we see that the character of sin is that we make ourselves greater than God. God will never allow that to stand, will He? It appears that He overlooks sin because one or two things are happening. First of all, the cup of iniquity of the wicked is being filled. Think, for example, of the lives of Ahab and Jezebel. Secondly, He may be using our "lamentable falls," as the Canons call them, to work for our repentance and to cause us to flee back to His love and care. He will reprove us, and He will set our lives in order. Pray that God leads us not into temptation but delivers us from evil. Sing Psalter 138:3.

April 10 Read Psalm 50

Psalm 50:22-23 The final two verses serve as a summary of the teaching found in this beautiful Psalm. First of all, we see that the wicked will not be delivered but they will be destroyed. This should be a solemn warning about how we must live our lives. Secondly, we see that those who do the commandments of God will be blessed both in this life and the life to come. We see that we must praise Him in all of our lives. We may never do anything that is not praiseworthy to God. We also see that a conscious walk of sanctification will result in the final glory given to us by God. We are saved by grace alone. We will be sanctified by the Holy Spirit. God will lead us to glory and

give to us all the blessings of salvation. Thanks be to Him for His gift! Sing Psalter 138:4.

April 11 Read Psalm 51

Psalm 51:1-2 In this Psalm we not only have David's confession of sin but also his return to grace. The second is not possible without the first. He begins by throwing himself upon the mercy seat of God's throne of justice. He knows that he has sinned against the all-righteous God and now seeks forgiveness for that sin. He knows that God is merciful and has a fountain of mercy for His people. Is this our experience, people of God? Do we confess our sins daily? Do we throw ourselves upon the mercies of God that are new every morning? We must wish to be washed completely clean. Not one speck of filthy sin can remain in us in order to enter the eternal rest. By God's grace and mercy it is possible. Christ died for us! We are washed clean! Thanks be to God! Sing Psalters 140:1, 142:1, and 143:1.

April 12 Read Acts 5:1-11

Psalm 51:3-4 Ananias and Sapphira thought that their sin was against man. They thought that by fooling Peter and the other apostles they could gain for themselves some notoriety in the church. They were wrong...dead wrong. Sin, though it may be an offense against a brother, is always against God. David thought that Uriah's death would clear him from judgment. After all Uriah was dead and Bathsheba needed a husband, didn't she? God knew as Nathan pronounced with the words, "Thou art the man." Those same words convict us of our sins. We sin and we sin against God. This is what we must confess. Our sins offend the righteous God. We must confess our sins to God, knowing that by His mercy He will forgive us our sins. Sing Psalters 140:2 and 143:2.

April 13 Read Job 14:1-12

Psalm 51:5-7 The truth of total depravity is not a popular doctrine today, but it is the truth. That is David's testimony in verse five. Job knew it as well, as we read in Job 14. But both men knew that God desires and demands that His people remain truthful. They both knew that by God's grace they would be redeemed and cleansed from the filth of sin. Man can never do this by his own strength; it can only be the work of God. David knew that this was not easy even as he asked God to scrub him clean with strong methods. But David knew that these strong methods were the only way he could obtain the cleanliness demanded by God. We, too, must seek that cleanliness, and we, too, must know that it is only available through the blood of the Lamb. Sing Psalters 140:3 and 142:2.

April 14 Read Isaiah 38:9-20

Psalm 51:8-9 Hezekiah's prayer provides all the commentary we need on these two verses. Read them slowly and savor their full blessings for the child of God. And then turn to God yourself and pray that he will grant forgiveness for all your sins. By this means we find peace with God. Sing Psalters 140:4 and 143:3.

April 15 Read John 13:1-11

Psalm 51:10-12 Notice David's six requests in these verses. He and we can only ask these things if we feel the work of the Spirit in our hearts. Sometimes we must be brought to the depths

of despair in order to see our need of a Savior. Sometimes we need to see that we can do nothing to earn salvation. It is a fearful thing to be cast out of God's sight. Think of Judas Iscariot. Think of Peter. Only through confession of sin was Peter restored to the fellowship of Christ. Salvation's joys are many, but they are not for the unrepentant sinner. Read these requests and then turn with me in prayer and take these requests upon your lips and from the heart confess your sin before God. David did, and he found the joy of salvation once again. Sing Psalters 141:1, 142:3, and 143:4.

April 16 Read Acts 11:19-26

Psalm 51:13-15 David recounts two results of his return to grace. First of all, he will teach transgressors God's ways. David must do this by experience. Words alone will not convince others in this case. We must walk a proper walk in order to show others the error of a sinful way. David realizes that sin is not the proper path of the child of God. We, too, must realize and live out of that truth. Secondly, David says that he will praise God through the use of song. This is a very proper way to show gratitude for deliverance from sin. Only a redeemed child of God can sing with the joy acceptable to God. We, the redeemed, must confess our sin and then open our mouths in praise to our heavenly Father. By this method God will turn sinners to His way. Sing Psalters 141:2, 142:3, and 144 1-2.

April 17 Read I Samuel 15:13-26

Psalm 51:16-17 David realizes that outward actions are not enough. Saul could never learn this lesson. He thought he could do wrong, make a sacrifice, and all would be well. That is not the testimony of Scripture. God desires a true sorrow of heart. We must empty ourselves even as Jesus did for us. We must put self last and God first. We must be content and accepting of the will of God for our lives. Like Samuel we must constantly say, "Speak, Lord, for thy servant heareth." This is the only thing that God desires. Outward sacrifices only pointed to Christ; they were not the way to salvation. Even as we prepare to worship on the Sabbath, let us make sure it is from the heart that we do all things. Sing Psalters 141:3 and 144:3-4.

April 18 Read Psalm 51

Psalm 51:18-19 David opened this Psalm with the truth of total depravity. By his experience he led us through the way of forgiveness. Now he closes with the truth that the whole way of salvation is unconditional. It is all of God. When God does His sovereign good pleasure in the church and in the heart of the elect, then He is pleased with the sacrifices that we offer. Cain did not understand this, Saul did not understand this, and there are many today that do not and will not understand this. Pray for God to do His good pleasure in your lives. This is a prayer that we must utter daily. Then and only then will our worship, whether in or out of church, be acceptable in His sight. Sing Psalter 141:4.

April 19 Read Psalm 52

Psalm 52:1 At first glance it seems peculiar to put the two thoughts together that we see in this verse. But yet when we consider what they say, we see that it shows off God's goodness very well. Man by nature likes to do mischief. We see this

in very young children, we see this in young people, and sad to say we see this in adults. This is not the innocent mischief, but rather an attempt to discredit either our brother or even God. On the other hand, God only knows good. He can only do good; He can only will good. That goodness is something that the child of God experiences daily. God does not play tricks on us. God loves us as a father loves his children. Stop and think of the numerous times you have experienced the goodness of God. Then stop and give thanks for that goodness, for His mercies do endure forever. Sing Psalter 145:1.

April 20 Read James 3:5-13

Psalm 52:2-3 The context of this Psalm is David fleeing from Doeg. David must feel that all is against him. In verse 1, he shows that even though man tries mischief against him, God is good. Today David confronts Doeg's sin. Doeg had gone to Saul and reported what had happened at the tabernacle. This sin is not peculiar to the reprobate. This sin of using the tongue for evil rears its ugly head in the church. The church must not only combat those without who report evil against them. The church must also make it her business to stamp out the same evil within. Yes there are wicked out there trying to do us in. We must have two responses. First of all, we must remember that God is good. Secondly, we must root this sin out of our lives. Sing Psalter 145:2.

April 21 Read III John

Psalm 52:4-5 The apostle John had spent three years listening to the teachings of Jesus. He heard Jesus tell the parable of the wheat and the tares. John knew that there were wicked in the church and that it was by the will of God. He warned the church to whom he was writing about one of those wicked people. David, too, had that experience. He knew that there were those in Israel who hated him and hated God. We must also come to that realization. Satan works in the church to try to cause the people of God to fall. Like John and David, we have the comfort that God will deal with the wicked in His sovereign way. We must not despair; we must serve God and know that He will take care of us. Sing Psalter 145:3.

April 22 Read Micah 7:1-7

Psalm 52:6-7 We read this text, and we may get the idea that we can make fun of the evildoer or that God will allow us to see the wicked's destruction. This is not always the case. We may see the wicked fall, but we must remember that it is only by God's grace that we stand. We must be sobered at the sight of the wicked's destruction. David is talking about a future time. David is not experiencing this sight now. We must wait for God's time and realize that any reaction we have will be to give God the glory. Our reaction must be that we fall on our knees and thank Him for the salvation He has wrought for us through Christ. Sing Psalter 145:4.

April 23 Read Psalm 1

Psalm 52:8 David now makes the comparison between the child of God and the wicked. After seeing the source of the wicked's trust, David confesses that his trust must only be in the mercies of God. This was a mighty confession, seeing that David was fleeing for his life before Saul. David, even in that

flight, saw the goodness of God's mercy. David realized that God would bring him back to worship in the tabernacle. That was the only place where the fountain of God's truth and mercy flowed. Is this our confession? Do we see that the church is the source of our election? The church is that source only because it is the body of Christ, not because of its earthly characteristics. Psalm 1 tells us about the blessed man. Can we take its words upon our lips? Do we want to take its words upon our lips? Sing Psalter 145:5.

April 24 Read Psalm 52

Psalm 52:9 The final verse of this Psalm is an exclamation of praise by David to our God. David realizes that this trial at the hands of Doeg has been ordained by his heavenly Father. He realizes that there is nothing else he can or must do but glorify God who reigns sovereignly above. In the second part of the verse, he says that he will wait upon God's name. In the name of God, David and we can do all things. He says that it is good to do this. Is this our confession, people of God? Do we realize that all trials come at the hand of God, and that He will give to us the way of escape from them? Do we praise God in this realization? We must do that, you know. Remember to cast your cares upon Him who careth for His people. Sing Psalter 145:6.

April 25 Read Psalm 53

Psalm 53:1 The word fool is a very strong word in Scripture. It is one which portrays a lack of knowledge about that which is Godly. The book of Proverbs spends much time talking about the fool and the wise. This verse gives us a capsule definition of a fool. He is one that says that there is no God. A person who says this is a person who has no hope. He is on the way to hell. We must not lightly label someone a fool as Jesus tells us in Matthew 6. But yet we must never walk in foolish ways ourselves. We must never say there is no God. We must not say this with our mouths or show it in our lives. God does good—His good, and by that good, He saves us from our sins. Sing Psalter 146:1.

April 26 Read Genesis 6:1-8

Psalm 53:2 The passage we read for today gives to us the history before the flood. In that history, God found little good upon the earth. David saw that God looked down upon men in his day. God found little that was good then. What about today? Does God still look down upon us? He most certainly does! He looks upon our every work whether public or secret. He judges every work because He is the supreme judge. We know that He sees little good in the world around us. It just takes a little looking at a newspaper to see how depraved the world is. What about in our lives? Do we find "grace in the eyes of the LORD?" The answer is yes, we do. By the grace given to us by Jehovah we find grace. We need not fear a flood to destroy the world. God has promised that He will never destroy the world by that means again. We must however live in the realization that He is coming "to judge the living and the dead." Sing Psalter 146:2.

April 27 Read Romans 3:10-23

Psalm 53:3 Paul quotes this text in his treatment of the doctrine of justification as we read today. Justification is that act of God in which we are declared righteous. To see how wonderful this idea is we must see what we were before being justified. According to this text and others like it, man by nature is dead in his sins. There is nothing that he can do to help himself out of sin's mire. There is not one little bit of goodness in us that would help us to become saved. This has been an unpopular truth in the church world in the past and still is today. Man does not want to bow before God's sovereignty and give to Him the honor He deserves for man's salvation. Man in his "I'm great" attitude wishes to claim as much credit for himself as possible. Let us confess that we are nothing and God is everything. Only with this attitude will God be pleased. Sing Psalter 146:3.

April 28 Read Isaiah 43:22-28

Psalm 53:4 In this verse David talks about the wicked not calling upon God. What about us? Do we call upon God daily? Do we pray prayers that are pleasing in His sight? God gives us all things. He cares for us so that not even a hair can fall from our heads unless it be by His will. God gives to us salvation and will take us to glory at His time. Do we pray to Him? Do we call upon him often? How do we pray? Are our prayers reverent, or are they prayers like the Pharisees. Praying to God is the chief means of thankfulness that He has given to us. Let us pray often. Let us pray properly. When we do that we can be assured that God will bless us and take care of us. Sing Psalter 146:4.

April 29 Read Proverbs 28:1-10

Psalm 53:5 At the end of yesterday's devotional, I stated that God would care for us. That truth is shown in verse 5 of Psalm 53. As David lived his life, he had many enemies who came up against him. David knew that these enemies were God's enemies and were going against God. We must see that God's enemies come up against us. Then we must see that God will fight for us in these battles. Only in this way will we find deliverance from the enemy who tries to defeat us. We can confidently call upon God knowing that He will protect us from all who seek to do us hurt. Sing Psalter 146:5-6.

April 30 Read Psalm 53

Psalm 53:6 Yesterday we spoke of deliverance from God. In today's verse we see that it is sure. The salvation we seek comes out of God's church. We may be captive under the powers of sin for a time, but like Israel God will deliver us from the Babylon and Egypt we face on this earth. This is certain as the verse states. We also see that the reaction of the child of God from such deliverance will be songs of joy to God. God has delivered us and is delivering us. People of God, are you singing? Are you singing the songs of Zion which make us glad? These are not the man-centered songs of the world. These are the songs which give to God all the glory and honor due his name. Sing and be glad, people of God, for our God has delivered us from sin and from Satan. Sing Psalter 146:7-8.

Psalter #162— God Our Strength

By Kris Moelker

Do you ever become discouraged when you see the world increasing in wickedness? Has the Lord brought you through severe trials?

Psalter number 162 speaks of our reliance upon God in the midst of all the difficulties of this life. Just as a little child has confidence that his father will keep him safe in his arms from danger, so do we. God gives us the faith to believe that He does carry us through the perils of this life. By faith we are able to sing this song from the heart. Without God as the Rock to which we can flee we would not be able to stand for a moment against sin, Satan, and this wicked world.

We must continually be assured that although the battle is fierce, God is for us and nothing is against us. Christ has already conquered our foes for us

through His death on the cross. He is the tower to which we are to flee consciously for safety.

Oh how many times have we become discouraged

when, in our sinful pride, we forget that God is protecting us. It can be so easy for us to believe that we can stand in our own strength. Then our gracious Lord reminds us through His Word and the trials He sends us that He is in control. As Lord, He alone has all the power and strength to work all things together for our good.

God hates the wicked with a perfect hatred and rewards them with the everlasting punishment in Hell. He graciously gives His people the everlasting life of fellowship with Him in Heaven. He also enables us to cling to these great promises by faith. ❖

162 God our Strength
PSALM 62 C. M. FOUNTAIN Lowell Mason

137 [Selected Stanzas]

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

Odd Girl Out

by D. Scott Connerley

Cassandra strolled over to the stone bench and plopped herself down next to Rebekah. The afternoon had that kind of cool that one anticipates at the start of autumn, and the sun was delightfully bright. The branches of yellow overhead gave these young women a comforting shade. A breeze occasionally brushed by and made the drying leaves rattle quietly.

The young woman shrugged the book bag from her shoulder onto the ground and flipped off her sandals. Rebekah was seated longways on the bench so that her feet were at the end of it. Cassandra threw hers to the opposite end and leaned against Rebekah's back. Rebekah didn't seem to notice the new benchmate—that is, until she found herself a living headrest.

"This isn't going to work," Rebekah protested. Cassandra sighed as she whirled her feet to the ground again. "But I'm tired! It's hard to get up early after summer break!" Rebekah moved herself around to a proper sitting position. Together they could now see the line of students at the bookstore ahead of them. It was only at the beginning of the first semester that there seemed any time to be lazy and just talk. Today was such a day for Cassandra and Rebekah.

"There's Amy again this year. Funny, I thought of her this morning." Cassandra remarked concerning the young woman at the back of the line. "Oh, yeah?" answered Rebekah.

"Yeah. Like when I couldn't find any of my skirts. I bet I left them at home and my little sister is before a mirror modeling each one as we speak. And, all my jeans were in the hamper. So I threw on this T-shirt and overalls. I couldn't help but thinking how Amy...." Cassandra's conscience halted her tongue. She leaned back, supporting herself on her arms and turned away from Amy to look up at the waving branches. "Rebekah, don't you sometimes find her ways hard to understand? You know, how she dresses."

Rebekah thought it good to lean back for a view of the branches as well. "I don't know."

"Have you ever seen her in something that Laura Ingalls wouldn't wear?"

Rebekah cracked a smile at that, but only needed a second to reply. "Yeah, I know I've seen her in slacks once before. But I suppose more often than not it's dresses and long skirts. If she has skin I know I've never seen it." As Cass smiled she noticed that Rebekah fidgeted with the hem of her skirt, trying to pull it over her knees. The moment she seemed successful it stubbornly creeped up again.

"I think its taking things a bit too far." Cassandra assured her friend. "I mean, I've got absolutely nothing against her personally. She's certainly friendly to me and well, she's neat, I guess. And so smart—and she knows the Bible inside and out. Maybe she could be a good preacher! But she'd sure look funny in the pulpit in one of those long-sleeved dresses like she's wearing today!" Cassandra snickered as she imagined Amy in the pulpit with just such a garment.

Rebekah giggled, too, and bumped her friend's shoulder with her own in mock chastisement. The two sat silently as the breeze animated the branches some more. Soon Amy disappeared into the bookstore as the line behind her continued to grow.

"She was over here just before you came. Amy, I mean."

"Oh, yeah?"

"And I asked her just what you said—like, if she ever thought about being a preacher."

"And what'd she say?"

"She laughed for a long time. I was getting a little red-faced. I don't think she realized I was serious. She finally saw I was upset. That's when she apologized and explained that in her church, women don't even vote at the congregational meetings."

"You're kidding!" Cassandra sat upright to face her friend again. "Did you tell her that you were thinking of being a minister?"

"Well, not right then. First I wanted to understand how her church could take a stand that seemed to me so—"

“Primitive,” Cassandra offered.

“I guess it would seem like that. Like Victorian maybe. She said that her church did it because the Bible said so.”

“And? You didn’t try to argue Scripture with Ms. Moses herself, did you?” And that provoked another spell of mutual giggling.

“Well, I was so mad I dove for my book bag and pulled out my Bible. I turned to Galatians 3:28 and read where it said there was neither male nor female for we are all one in Christ. I told her that we are all believers, and the Reformers and confessions would say that we were all prophets, priests, and kings in Christ Jesus. We therefore can work right alongside of men in the service of the church. I told her I know I could do things a lot better than some of the men in my church”

“Did she whip out her Bible and gun you down?” Cassandra giggled as she made the motion of a quick draw from the hip and shouted “Pow! pow!”

Rebekah liked Cassandra. She could talk seriously and still have fun. But now her friend’s lightness seemed out of place as she recalled the recent encounter with Amy. “No, Cass. It was neat. She was very reasonable. She said, ‘Rebekah, do you believe that God in the beginning made man and woman as it says in Genesis?’ I told her I don’t believe the garbage about evolution that they’re trying to dump down our throats in this so-called Christian school. And she said, ‘I appreciate that remark very much. And so you would have to say that God made men and women differently?’ Well, what else could I say but, ‘Sure.’”

“I take it she wouldn’t like Jimmy Grebeken’s earrings,” Cass jested.

“I suppose not.” Cassandra could tell now that her friend was not really interested in her kidding. Rebekah continued. “But she wasn’t just talking about how we dress. She was talking about behavior, too. She said the churches were in serious trouble today because they are blurring the distinctions right along with the world.”

“OK, grant her that for the sake of argument. But then I would have asked her point blank how she could justify women having no voice in the church. What about equal rights? That’s pure subjection!”

Rebekah smiled. “That’s the exact word I used. Subjection. She patted me on the back and said, ‘Exactly!’ Well, if that was designed to make me hot it did, but she didn’t seem to notice. Then she said that, being made different by God, men and women serve Him in different ways and places. For instance, she said God tells us

to be subject to our husbands. He says women are to remain silent and not to usurp authority over the man. In these ways we are showing ourselves as subject to the One who created women for His purposes. At that point I just had to see the scriptures. And she showed them to me. Here. I wrote them down.” And she handed her Bible to Cassandra with the paper sticking out of it. Cassandra looked at all the scriptures Rebekah had written on the paper. The ones Amy had shared with Rebekah were I Cor. 14:34-35; I Tim. 2:8-15 & 5:14; I Pet. 3:1-6; Eph. 5:22-33; Tit. 2:3-5. But as Amy pointed out there were others that they could look at later. The Bible gives clear direction for how God would have us each conduct ourselves as women or men. It may take some effort on our part to search out all the answers to our questions and, granted, much grace to carry it all out; but the help is there. He promised it would be, and our God is faithful to His promises.

So Rebekah talked as Cass turned the pages. “She also explained that God made man first, and the woman was made for man. I told her I didn’t like that. She said she finds it hard, too, but in order to please God and honor His role for her, she must submit to the truth.”

“But tell me what difference it makes whether or not a woman votes in church. I mean, why do they have to be so strict?”

Just then both girls heard a giggle from behind. And standing behind them was...

“Amy!” Cass tried to not to look surprised but her face was crimson. Rebekah tried to be welcoming, but her tongue was a bit tied, too.

Amy came to the bench and set a pile of new textbooks on the ground. “I should be ashamed for eavesdropping, but I had just come to invite Rebekah over for pizza. Cassandra, would you come, too?”

“I’d like that,” replied Cassandra. Rebekah urged Amy to sit and Cass quickly made room on the bench.

“Really, I didn’t hear much, but I did catch the question Cassandra just posed. May I chime in? It’s sort of like my favorite topic.” And that invited a little laughter, easing the tension. Cass smiled at Amy and gave her a nod.

“As Rebekah and I had discussed, women in the churches are accepted by God as believers just as are men, but we are not the same as men. And we have different ways than men in reflecting and fulfilling that office of believer simply because God made us different inside as well as outwardly.”

“Different ways of serving. You mean like changing diapers, scrubbing floors and genuflecting to men while dressed like a Muslim grandmother?” Cass said sarcastically. “Did you know that girls call you ‘Queen Victoria’ and guys call you ‘Frumpy Amy’?”

“Cass!” began Rebekah.

But Amy was laughing at Cass. “That’s OK. I know all about it,” she replied. “Do the names and jabs hurt? Well, sure. Particularly when it comes from the guys ‘cause you’d think they would honor a woman who is trying to please God by adorning the inner man and trying to be modest for their soul’s sakes. But forget the guys so much. First of all, I want to please God. Look. For me, the principles that guide my attitude toward my behavior as a woman are femininity and modesty. When I am picking from my closet each day I should have those two principles in mind. I do it to glorify God by, as I like to put it, ‘Glorying modestly in my femininity’.”

The conversation halted for a few moments. There wasn’t much of a line at the bookstore anymore. The sun had moved and the trio was losing its shade quickly. Cass squirmed on the bench as if she were struggling with something to say. Rebekah extended her bared legs a bit, then drew them back under the bench. In the end,

God has graciously taught me to glorify Him. I want to be noticed as distinctively woman—and, most importantly, as distinctively God’s woman—not my own woman.

she decided to go ahead and be comfortable but to throw her jacket over them.

Something finally bubbled to the surface and Cass interrupted the silence. “Amy, are you and the women of your church truly happy?”

Rebekah jerked at the frankness of her friend’s question. But Amy didn’t miss a beat.

“I can only speak for myself, Cass, but I couldn’t be happier. I have found peace. The women at the NOW chapter downtown stomp in anger and play at glorifying the woman while trying so hard to be men! God has graciously taught me to glorify Him. I want to be noticed as distinctively woman—and, most importantly, as distinctively God’s woman—not my own woman. And in our

church we women gladly allow the men to lead and represent our families in the church. We realize they are often weak, too. Though we might think we are better off wresting from them their authority when they are weak, we choose rather to support them to make them strong. That includes encouraging them to represent us in the decisions of the church. Understand that doesn’t mean Mom and I don’t have our say with Dad. Our family discussions can become rather lively! But Mom and I recognize that Dad is the one that ultimately must cast the determining votes. He is the one whom God will hold most accountable for how he guided our family and our church. And that because he is a man. When I really think of that it’s hard for me to envy him at all.”

“Why does that seem so strange to me?” Cass mused. “And why do you seem the odd girl out these days. And what about Rebekah and women like her? She feels God is calling her to be a pastor. Is she wrong?”

“I somehow don’t feel the call anymore, Cass.” Rebekah interjected. “I’m wondering if the principles which Amy lives out each day that bring her reproach are really God’s will for all women. I’m thinking at least at this moment of being a teacher like you and Amy.”

“If you dressed like Amy, I’d recommend you teach a living history class!” Cass retorted with sputtering laughter.

Amy laughed and then took up the reply. “Actually, I think rather we’d be great models to those classrooms of girls—and boys—of what it truly is to be women of God. But first your heart must convince you of the principles of femininity and modesty that scripture speaks of, Cassandra.”

Rebekah rose from the bench and reached for her book bag. “I’d like you guys to come back to my room for a prayer session—and I’ll buy the pizza if it’s OK with Amy. And I’d like to show Amy my wardrobe and talk some more about all this. I know some other girls to call over, too. Maybe Amy is onto some inward and outward changes that we’d best consider as Christian women—even if it will seem out of place at the end of the 20th century. Cass, I once heard you say in a class that anything not popular in this post-Christian era is probably something God-honoring, right?”

Cass sighed. “You would remember that. Well, I copied it from my dad,” she admitted sheepishly. “But in the back of my mind I know there’s truth in that. I know pleasing God comes first, though you know more than anyone, Rebekah, how I struggle so much with the kind of heart He wants me to have. Maybe Ms. Moses has got it straight. I don’t know. It’s definitely worth

some prayer and more discussion. And pizza! Can I come, too?”

“Of course, you goofball!” Rebekah said as she pulled her friend from the bench. And soon the three of them headed toward the dorms, arm in arm.

“Jimmy Grebekken is an Ed major, too.” Cass observed. “Think we girls can convince him to sell his ear-

ring collection to us?” And that cued a long roll of laughter. ❖

D. Scott is a member of South Holland Protestant Reformed Church in South Holland, Illinois.

Book Review

“Ready To Give An Answer”

by Beth DeVries

Many of us know about the founding of our churches, but the issues can be difficult to understand. The book *Ready To Give An Answer* provides a easy to read summary of the history and doctrines that were involved in the formation and preservation of the Protestant Reformed Churches of America.

The book is partially a reprint from *The Protestant Reformed Churches in America* which was written by Rev Herman Hoeksema. The catechism dealing with the issue of common grace which was at the root of the problems in 1924, has been reprinted.

Professor Herman Hanko adds a brief history of 1924 and 1953 to this catechism as well as a new catechism about the issues that presented themselves in 1953. These difficult times in our history impact us greatly. We have been richly blessed in our churches by the doctrines and truths of the Bible which God has preserved through us.

The history is presented first and brings out the fact that the battle between common and particular grace was not new to the church. The historical section contains many details about the early and formative years of the Protestant Reformed Churches in America and is an easy-to-understand summary of this important time. Although it speaks only of the most important developments and events during 1924 and 1953, it provides a solid basis for the catechism which follows. This brief history may well pique the interest of those who haven't read the detailed history in *Therefore Have I Spoken* by Rev Herman Hoeksema and *The Watered Garden* by Gertrude Hoeksema. The reading of these books in conjunction with the catechism may be very beneficial for those wish-

ing to fully understand the events and attitudes of this history.

Rev. Hoeksema's catechism first looks at the doctrine of common grace from the Arminian and the Kuyperian view points. The views of these two men are the foundation for the three points of common grace as adopted by the Christian Reformed Church of America in 1924. Through a question and answer format, the views and doctrines of these men are explained.

The first point of common grace is studied in detail in the next several sections and begins with quoting the point as adopted by the CRC in 1924. Rev Hoeksema then shows how scripture and the Canons of Dordrecht were used to support the doctrines, and how they were incorrectly interpreted or pulled out of context. Rev. Hoeksema goes on to explain how the common grace theory of Abraham Kuyper is evident in the first point of common grace and then explains how the scriptural passages do not support this view.

The general grace theory, which has Arminian roots, is also taught in the first point. There is much evidence present in these questions and answers to demonstrate the Biblical and reformed explanation of the texts used to defend the first point of common grace.

The following section gives a very good and thorough explanation of the texts commonly used to defend the general offer of the gospel. This is very useful as this idea is so prevalent in today's church world.

Sections 6 through 10 give a detailed explanation of the second and third points of common grace and how they were supported. These sections are less detailed than the first section because Rev. Hoeksema deals with the

false doctrines thoroughly in the first section. He explains what each of these points must imply when fully understood and how they are fundamentally in error. He demonstrates how the third point is Pelagian at its root, denying the total depravity of natural man. Rev. Hoeksema also gives a detailed exposition of the confessional and scriptural proofs for the third point of common grace.

The book then shifts to the catechism of the doctrinal issues of 1953. There is a brief historical question and answer section to refresh our memories to the events surrounding this controversy. The issue this time was specifically God's everlasting covenant of grace and whether it is conditional or unconditional. Prof. Hanks first gives a thorough explanation of God's covenant as shown in the Bible, and how it is completely a work of God to His elect people. According to this book, a common view that was taught at this time offered salvation to all, if the person would accept the condition of faith to believe. This makes it an Arminian view dependent on the work of man. The questions related to this are handled in a very concise and thorough manner so that it can clearly be seen how this teaching was incorrect. He also goes on to explain the idea of conditions in detail to provide a better understanding of these difficult ideas.

The last section of the book is brief but extremely important, because it shows how the issues of 1924 and 1953 are related, and at heart the same. This section clearly shows how a belief in common grace naturally

leads to the free offer of the gospel and a conditional covenant.

The battle for the truth wages on in this day. God has graciously preserved the Protestant Reformed Churches in America despite the onslaughts of heresies. Professor Hanks ends the book with this question and answer: "Ought we, therefore, to be thankful for this controversy? All glory belongs to God, who preserves His cause in the midst of the world and makes His truth to triumph."

There is also an appendix in this book, which gives the complete declaration of principles as adopted by the synod of 1953 to deal with the conditional covenant. This is also a very worthwhile section to read. The scriptural and creedal indexes also can be used for quick reference when studying these issues.

I would wholeheartedly recommend this book for all to read as it is easy reading. Though the doctrines at times become complicated, the format of a catechism allows the reader to understand the issues in a step by step format.

The book has a hard cover and the pictures on the cover are a definite help in putting faces to names for those of us who did not or do not know these individuals. May we all benefit from their knowledge and insight as God has used many faithful men to preserve His truth for us. "To God be the Glory." ❖

Beth is a member of Grace Protestant Reformed Church in Standale, Michigan.

Where We Stand

Praying for Children: What Is a Proper Attitude Concerning Children?

by Rev. Ronald Van Overloop

People often pray for children. Young couples often talk about how many children they want to have when they get married.

That a married couple would include such a petition in their prayers is good. Their act of asking God for a child indicates that they see themselves as dependent on God. They ought not simply to assume that they can have

children or that they will have children. Sometimes, God, according to His infinite wisdom, closes wombs, preventing conception and/or birth. The fact that a married couple would pray for children indicates that they are very conscious that nothing is to be assumed and that it is the Lord Who opens and shuts the womb.

Does God allow us to pray for a child or for children? On the one hand, we do not find in the Scriptures a specific command to do so, as we do for daily bread or for the forgiveness of our sins. But on the other hand, nor do the Scriptures forbid us to pray this petition.

That we are not commanded nor forbidden indicates that we may pray for children, but that we must be careful. We may not demand that God give us a child or a certain kind of child. Also we must be careful concerning why we want to pray for children. Why do we want a child or children in our marriage?

We must be careful why we want to have children. There are right reasons and motives, and there are wrong reasons and motives. It is so easy to want children for ourselves. Sometimes it is wrongly thought that children make a home. Sometimes it is wrongly thought that children make a marriage. Some want a child to carry on their family's name or reputation. If we consider the depravity of our human nature it is very easy to pray this petition in a wrong way. It is so easy to pray for children selfishly.

So we may pray for children. However, we must pray this petition with care, striving to have the right motives and the right purposes. In fact, the concern that we pray this petition correctly will often itself be a petition: "Help me to pray correctly." And we must realize that we must always submit our will to God's will. Always, concerning petitions which are not commanded of us, we must add "if it be Thy will." We must recognize God's sovereignty and His wisdom. He alone is able to give a child or children, and He alone knows when and how to give a child or children, or not to give any.



A beautiful example of praying correctly for a child is Hannah. The history of her prayer is found in I Samuel 1 and 2. Although I wrote above that we may not demand of God a certain kind of child and that we must always submit our desires to His will, Hannah did neither. She did not add, "if it be Thy will" and she was very specific in her request.

Although God had "shut her womb" (I Samuel 1:5), Hannah was bold to ask for a child. In fact, she did not

just ask for a child, but a specific kind of child - a son. She wanted a boy. Further, she did not just ask for a son, but for a special kind of son—a Nazarite. A Nazaritic vow was a vow of separation from sin and of devotion to God. Hannah wanted a son who would take a Nazaritic vow for life, and thus serve "Jehovah all the days of his life."

Notice, first, that Hannah knew that if she was going to have a child, it would have to be because God gave one to her. She considers the prayer for a child to be a legitimate request. And so may we. It is not wrong to pray for a child.

Notice, secondly and more importantly, that we must have the right motives for such a request. It is natural (according to our sinful human nature) to ask just for ourselves. This is a matter of pride on our part. Some couples wrongly feel that they are incomplete in their marriage without a child. Some women wrongly believe that they are not real women if they have no children, concluding they are a failure. (In both cases, this is an imposition put on God's institution of marriage and on womanhood.) Others simply want to satisfy an instinctive craving for a child, to have one, to hold one, to nurture one. Such couples and such women cannot find an example in Hannah.

While Hannah was very bold, she was not selfish. That Hannah was not selfish is evidenced in her willingness to give up her child to the care of Eli as soon as possible. She was willing to let go of her child as soon as he was weaned. This shows that Hannah was not selfish.

And Hannah was not jealous that her husband's other wife had many children. Hannah did not ask for many children, but only for one. She was not interested in beating a rival, or in increasing the population. Hannah only wanted a spiritual seed.

And Hannah was not making a contract with God: if I am given a son, then I will give him back. Such a contract is contrary to the relationship of human with the Divine. And Hannah knew that. She calls God "the Lord of hosts," which name indicates God's infinite greatness, majesty, and rulership over every creature in the universe. And, on the other hand, she knew herself to be God's "handmaid." With this name she said that she was insignificant and unworthy. She knew herself to be unworthy of a child, let alone one which would fear God and deliver Israel from its enemies. Such is not the attitude of selfishness, of wanting something for herself. Instead of making a contract, Hannah was making a

promise. She made a request of God, and she told her Lord that if He gave, she would return.

Why did Hannah make such a promise? Hannah's prayer for a child was occasioned by her consciousness of the needs in Israel. Consider the situation in Israel at this time. First, "everyone did that which was right in his own eyes" because there was no king in Israel. Such is the case today, especially in America. Wickedness in the days of Hannah was everywhere. Also, there was no prophet in the land, so there was no vision or revelation from God to guide and encourage His people. To make matters even worse, horrible evils were being committed by those who were in the position of priests of God. We read that the sons of the High Priest, Eli, were committing terrible sins and were doing so in the place of worship. In the position which represented devotion to God there were men who were horribly evil. The wicked in Israel seemed to be destroying everything that was truly spiritual. It seemed that God had forgotten His people and His promises to His people.

Hannah was truly conscious of this spiritually distressing situation in the church of her day. She saw the great need for the pure Word of God to be brought in all the power of God, to convict and to bring to repentance. She wanted a son whose life would be devoted to God and whose life would cause others in Israel to repent and to believe. She wanted God's people to be delivered from the oppression of the enemy, both in Israel (Eli's sons) and outside of Israel (the Philistines). She wanted a God-fearing son whose devotion to God would occasion a spiritual revival in Israel.

When we consider praying for children, we have to be careful. We do well to look to Hannah as an example of such a prayer. Hannah's example does not allow us to pray simply to overcome barrenness. And Hannah's example does not allow us to ask for a child so we can be satisfied or fulfilled.



Why do you pray for a child?

Does your petition have anything to do with the good of the church of Jesus Christ on earth? Is such a motive too lofty? Absolutely not!

Do you see the need of the Church of Jesus Christ of the next generation for godly members—sons and daugh-

ters who will become faithful and godly members, upholding the glory of God in the way they do their job, in the way they conduct themselves toward their fellow-saints, in the way they act towards their neighbor, in the kind of homes they establish? Yes, some sons will be teachers, elders, deacons, ministers, and missionaries. And we have to see the need for men who are willing to bring the Word of God to the ends of the world, boldly proclaiming the holy God and the Gospel of salvation? But as much as the Church of tomorrow needs faithful proclaimers of the Word, it needs faithful hearers and doers of the Word.

Is the future of God's cause on earth your concern? Is this why you might pray for children? It ought to be! Then we are not selfish in our request. Then we are mortifying our selfish desires. Tremendously important in helping us to pray for children correctly is the fact that we must be praying for the Church of today more than we are praying for children. We must be conscious of our serving willingly and cheerfully the cause of God in all of our life. After all, any children the Lord may be pleased to give us are going to learn from our example more than from our words. They must see that the Church of God is of primary importance to us. They must see that we are striving to serve the Lord with our all. And then, if the Lord is pleased not to give us children, we will find it easier to accept and go on, ourselves deliberately and cheerfully serving the Lord without children in our home or with adoption. But our goal and purpose will be the same.

Then the faith and spirit of Hannah lives on. It lives on in spite of all the materialism of our age. It lives on in spite of the power of sin within every believer.

As sinful believers let us consider ourselves to be dead to sin and alive to God in Christ (Romans 6:11). The knowledge of this truth enables us to strive mightily to develop and maintain right motives for everything we do, including the desire for children.

Pray for children! ❖

Rev. Van Overloop is pastor of Georgetown Protestant Reformed Church in Hudsonville, Michigan.

Through Strife to Victory

Chapter 3

Antithesis or Synthesis

by Rev. C. Hanko

Grand Rapids, Michigan was at one time considered to be the city “with a church on every corner” and the Jerusalem of the Christian Reformed Churches, since many of the churches in the city were Christian Reformed Churches. The early immigrants who came to America from the Netherlands were mainly members of the Afscheiding (The Secession of 1834) who were being sorely oppressed by the authorities of the Netherlands. We should bear in mind that the State Church from which they seceded was controlled by the Netherlands’ government. Therefore, the churches of the Secession had to pay their ministers’ salaries, build their own schools for the children, and were persecuted in many ways. Therefore, many sought religious freedom in America.

These people, who came with Van Raalte, settled in the Holland-Grand Rapids area, so that this was at first an entire Dutch community. As you travel through the area you meet such names as: Holland, Zeeland, Drenthe, Overijssel, Friesland, and others. The same was true in Grand Rapids. Some of the Hollanders had settled in the southeast end of the city, some on the west side, and some on the south-west. Those that settled in the southeast section of the city, and more particularly with those of the Eastern Avenue Christian Reformed Church, of which I was a member since my baptism, is now my focus.

Today this whole area lies virtually in shambles. The stores are boarded shut, the houses are dilapidated, the lawns are not kept up, and even many crimes are reported in this area. It is a bit hard to realize that in the early part of this century these stores—bakery shops,



Photo courtesy of Calvin College Archives

Eastern Avenue CRC as it looked in the 1920's

meat markets, grocery stores, drug stores, clothing stores and book stores were doing a thriving business, owned mainly by the Dutch community. The houses were not expensive homes, but they were very neat, and the lawns and yards were well kept. Moreover, it was a peaceful, quiet community of people living contentedly together.

Besides the Eastern Avenue Church, which had a membership of about five hundred families, there were five more Christian Reformed Churches in the area. The Dutch had pretty well taken over that part of the city. On Sunday the streets were black with people going to or coming from the various churches.

It may be interesting to note that in the early years of Eastern Avenue congregation the street car company planned to run a horse drawn street car past the church. The members objected, but to no avail. The company began to lay tracks. But at five o'clock in the afternoon the church bell rang, men came from all directions and pulled up the tracks. The next day the same thing happened. It became a matter of perseverance. The street car company gave up, and a street car never rumbled and clattered by to disturb the Sunday worship services.

By 1918, the Eastern Avenue Church had been served 18 years by a certain Rev. Johannes Groen, who tended toward more liberal preaching. He was accustomed to address the congregation, not as "Beloved congregation," or "Congregation of our Lord Jesus Christ, but rather as "Esteemed audience." Many had grown up under that preaching and seemed content with it. The older element in the congregation realized that there was something radically wrong, but most of them had difficulty laying their finger on the problem.

Groen retired in 1918, and the congregation called Rev. Herman Hoeksema to be their pastor. This call Rev. Hoeksema accepted, and at thirty-four years of age he became the pastor of Eastern Avenue CRC.

There were at that time two elements in the churches, the one quite contrary to the other. There were the "conservatives" who maintained the truth of the antithesis between the church and the world and there were the "liberals" who asserted a "synthesis" between the two. The word 'antithesis', according to the dictionary, means "a direct opposite." There is a thesis, a reality, and there is an antithesis, the very opposite of the reality. Since the dawn of history God has made separation, an antithesis between day and night. There is also an antithesis between white and black; white being the combination of all colors and black the absence of all color. Immediately after the fall God made separation, the antithesis, between the seed of the woman and the seed of the serpent (Gen. 3:15), thus making a separation between the elect in Christ Jesus and the reprobate, who perish in their sins under the righteous judgment of God. Throughout history there is the enmity, the conflict between Cain and Abel, Esau and Jacob, carnal and spiritual Israel, the nations of the world and the true Israel, the kingdoms of Satan and the kingdom of Christ, the world and the church. Paul teaches us in II Corinthians 6:12-18: "Be ye not unequally yoked together with unbelievers: for what fellowship hath righteousness with unrighteousness? and what communion hath light with

darkness? and what concord hath Christ with Belial? What part hath he that believeth with an infidel? And what agreement hath the temple of God with idols? for ye are the temple of the living God; as God hath said. I will dwell with them, and walk with them; and I will be their God, and they shall be my people, Wherefore come out from among them, and be ye separate, saith the Lord, and touch not the unclean thing; and I will receive you, and will be a Father unto you, and ye shall be my sons and daughters, saith the Lord Almighty."

On the other hand, there were those in the Christian Reformed Church who wanted to maintain a *synthesis*, that is, a combining of or cooperation between the church and the world. Rev. Herman Hoeksema wrote in "Niet Doopers Maar Gereformeerd" (Not Anabaptistic but Reformed):

There were those in the Netherlands of late, who cried for something new, something different, something that would make it possible for them to move about more freely in the world and would fit the existing government. They have forgotten the antithesis and have appealed to the theory of common grace to let that determine their world and life view. The result is worldly-mindedness in every respect.

There is a cry for culture! A cry for art! There is an attempt to cooperate with the world. A demand for the dance and for the opera and for the theater. Any desire for something edifying has disappeared. The outcome is worldly-mindedness.

This is true in the Netherlands. This is true also in America.... It is quite remarkable that we can expect from these "culture men" no praise for our Reformed confessions. They do not readily speak of principle, unless it is the principle of common grace. It is also remarkable in this connection that the doctrine of free, sovereign election is forced to the background. The very essence of the Reformed truth is forgotten, so minimized that it can hardly be found. But common grace, which our confessions do not mention, is exalted to a fundamental tenet of our Confession.

This is the situation into which Rev. Hoeksema found himself in 1920. ❖

Rev. Hanko is an emeritus minister of the Protestant Reformed Churches of America and is a member of Hudsonville Protestant Reformed Church in Hudsonville, Michigan.

"LITTLE LIGHTS"

Little Bird

... let it shine!

by Connie Meyer

As I was walking on my way,
A tiny sound told me to stay.
It bade me stop and listen still,
As often little secrets will.

I looked and looked until I found
The hiding place that held the sound,
And there, not high up in a tree,
Were nest and bird and babies three!

They peeped and peeped with beaks full wide,
While mother bird beside them tried
To fill each mouth, but never filled
Enough to keep their voices stilled!

Such hunger made me quite surprised,
Until this truth I saw realized:
Am I as hungry for the Word,
As hungry as a little bird? v

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

Using the secret code, spell out the following verse:

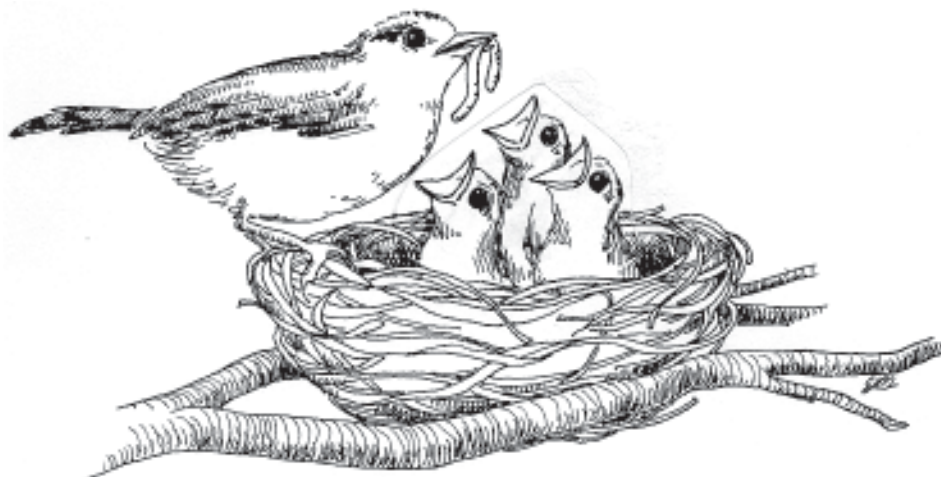
secret code:

a b c d e f g h i j k l m n o p q r s t u v w x y z
z y x w v u t s r q p o n m l k j i h g f e d c b a

“ _____ , _____ :
R lkvmvw nb nlfgs zmw kzmvgvw

uli R olmtvw uli Gsb

_____.” Psalm 119:131
xlennzmwnvmgh



BEACON LIGHTS

P.O. BOX 375
Jenison, MI 49428

Periodical
Postage
paid at
Jenison, MI
(UPSS046-840)

Church News

BAPTISMS

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

Mark 16:16

The sacrament of Holy Baptism was administered to:

Serena Sharon, daughter of Mr. & Mrs. Randy Vaalburg–Byron Center,
MI

Sharon Rene and Neil Anthony, infant children of Mr. & Mrs. Tony
Van Gelderen–Edmonton, Alberta, Canada

Emma Margaret, daughter of Mr. & Mrs. Bill Atwood–Southeast, MI

Lydia Wynn, daughter of Mr. & Mrs. Calvin Dykstra–Southwest, MI

Lorraine Marie, daughter of Mr. & Mrs. Peter Smit–Redlands, CA

CONFESSIONS OF FAITH

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

Romans 10:10

Public profession of faith in our Lord Jesus Christ was made by:

Esther Tolsma–Lynden, WA

Ed Tolsma–Lynden, WA

Victor Kuiper–Southeast, MI

Brent Snippe–Southeast, MI

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

Matthew 19:5

United in the bonds of Holy Matrimony were:

Mr. Travis Beute and Miss Stephanie Peterson–Grandville, MI

Mr. Mike Haveman and Miss Heidi Lotterman–Hudsonville, MI