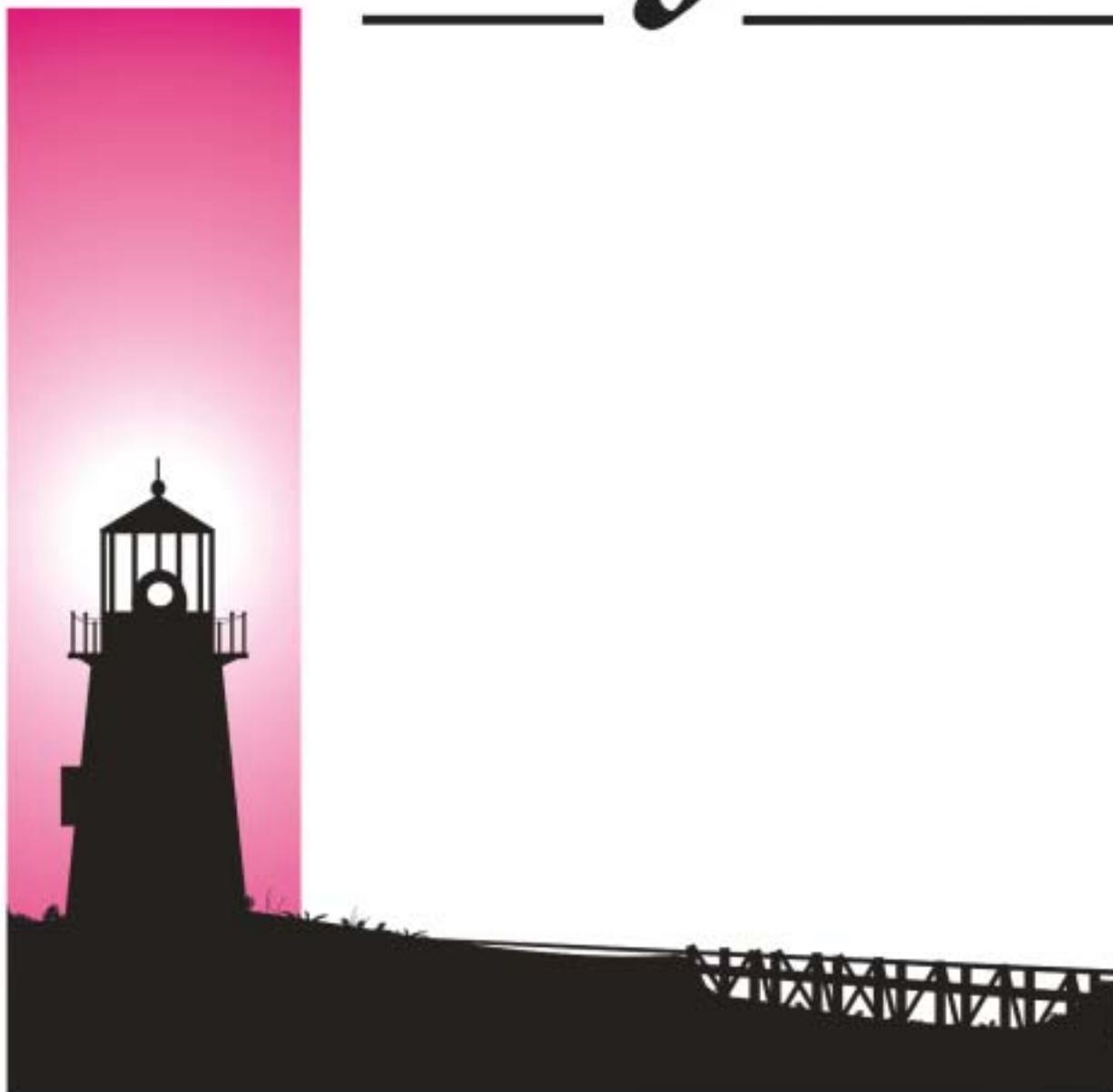

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Our Father is One

by John Huizenga



“**A**nd this is life eternal, that they might know thee the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom thou hast sent” (John 17:3). Do you have eternal life? You have it if you know God. You have it only if you know God as He has revealed Himself in Jesus Christ. Any other way of trying to know God will lead to eternal death. In this article we seek to add a little more to our knowledge of God by considering His oneness.

We know God when we recognize the voice of Christ. We read in John 10:27, “My sheep hear my voice, and I know them, and they follow me.” That voice is heard in the reading of the Bible, in the instruction of godly parents, and in the teaching of godly teachers. That voice is heard especially in the pure preaching of God’s Word.

Even as our bodies and minds develop, so our knowledge of God must grow and develop. Our heavenly Father gives the command, “But grow in grace, and in the knowledge of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ” (II Peter 3:18a). God gives us this earthly life with all of our abilities and experiences so that our knowledge of God will grow and our eternal life will be more fully realized.

We have seen in the previous article that this God, our Father, the one who will have His children seated round about His table in covenant fellowship, is Jehovah. The name “Jehovah” leads us to another attribute or virtue of God: He is one. Other terms used to describe this attribute are His “simplicity,” and “solitude.” As you recall, the name “Jehovah” shows us that God is the one that was not made by someone else. There is no other being greater or equally as great as God. There is only one God and that God is Jehovah. Everything else that exists is a creature made by God. Our heavenly Father is therefore alone as God.

It is not so difficult for us to understand the truth that there is only one God, but this oneness of God goes further than the mathematical idea of the number one. God reveals to us that He is a number of different things. For example, He reveals that He is love, wisdom, good, omnipotent, etc. He also reveals that He is three persons: Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. If we had a mind like God, we would immediately see that all these things are not really different things, but rather are essentially the same thing. He is one in essence. We do not have the mind of God and we are limited to seeing only one attribute of God at a time.

Even though we cannot fully understand the truth that all the attributes of God are really one, God reveals to us that this is true. When God says, “God is love” (I John 4:8), this means that everything that God is, is love. There is no part of God that is not love. God also says “God is light” (I John 1:5). In I Peter 5:10 God says that He is the “God of all grace.” Love, light, grace, etc. are all one in God. God made this known to the children of Israel who were surrounded by people who believed in all kinds of gods. He said to them “Hear, O Israel: The Lord our God is one Lord,” Deuteronomy 6:4.

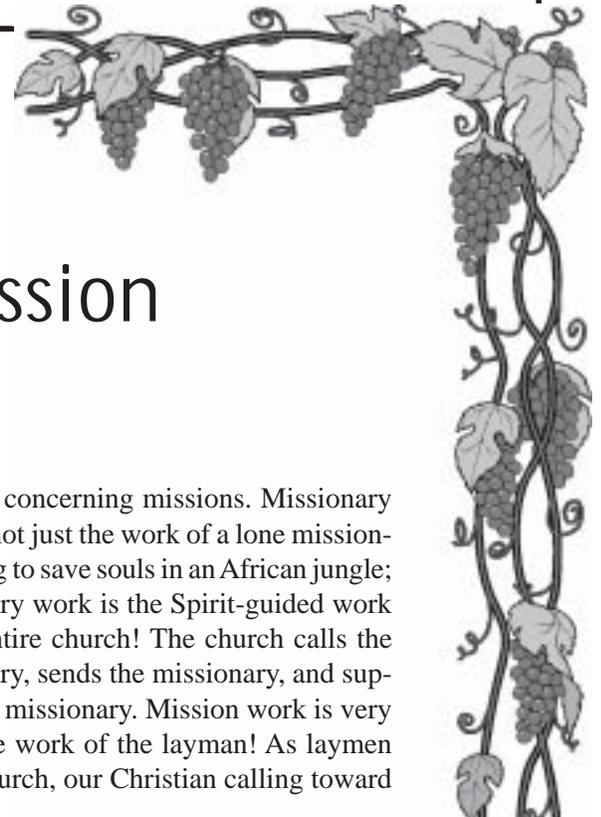
This unity of being is very important for us to know. Many today like to think that all religions really all give glory to the same God. They like to believe that God has many different paths to lead people to heaven. For them, God is a very flexible being who is able to change His Word, voice, nature and plan to suit the variety of people on this earth. For them, God has many different words, not the one Word of God. He has different wills, not one eternal counsel.

This concept of God is no God at all. Such a god would contradict itself saying “Salvation is in Christ alone and also other ways.” Our heavenly Father, Jehovah, reveals in the Bible that life eternal is knowing God in Christ (John 17:4). This is not merely one of many ways to get eternal life. “For there is one God, and one mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus,” I Timothy 2:5. And in Acts 4:12 we read, “Neither is there salvation in any other: for there is none other name under heaven given among men, whereby we must be saved.”

Another error we must not fall into is the error of making a god out of one of the attributes of God and leave out the other attributes of God. We may not take one particular virtue of God such as His love or His sovereignty and say “this alone is Jehovah God,” because then we in our foolishness attempt to take God apart and make many gods. Our heavenly Father is One. There can be no harmony in the covenant family of God with His children if one child says “my Father is all love, he overlooks justice,” while another child says, “my Father is a God of justice and must punish sin.” God is such that His love is a just love and his justice toward His people is a loving justice.

Our heavenly Father reveals to us the importance of His oneness right after He reveals His oneness. First He says “Hear, O Israel: The Lord our God is one Lord” and then tells us what that means for us with the words “And thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thine heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy might” Deuteronomy 6:4-5. Everything we desire, think, and do must be done out of love for God and for His glory. We may not devote one part of our life or one segment of time to our heavenly Father and then the rest to our own goals. Apart from God everything is darkness and death. All that we have we owe to Him. “But to us there is but one God, the Father, of whom are all things, and we in him; and one Lord Jesus Christ, by whom are all things, and we by him” (I Corinthians 8:6). We are made the children of God in the way of Christ dying on the cross and making us co-heirs with Him. ❖

Fruitful Branches



Our Christian Mission

by Dan Van Uffelen

1999 Protestant Reformed Scholarship Paper

I have chosen to write my paper about the layman’s responsibility toward missions. At first I wondered how this topic could relate to my hopes of becoming a teacher in the Protestant Reformed schools. Missionary and teacher seemed like two callings without a whole lot of common ground. My initial reaction was dead wrong. A teacher, as well as the rest of the church, has extremely important respon-

sibilities concerning missions. Missionary work is not just the work of a lone missionary trying to save souls in an African jungle; missionary work is the Spirit-guided work of the entire church! The church calls the missionary, sends the missionary, and supports the missionary. Mission work is very much the work of the layman! As laymen in the church, our Christian calling toward

missions is to provide physical support, spiritual support, and to witness to the world.

Mission work is an incredible task. The New Testament puts heavy emphasis on this responsibility. The bulk of the New Testament is a record of Paul's missionary work. This fact alone puts the importance of missions on another level. God has dedicated a huge section of his perfect Word to the topic of missions. In Matthew 28: 19-20, Jesus gave us the "Great Commission" with these words: "Go ye therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost:

It is clearly the responsibility of every Christian to use his gifts for the cause of Christ's mission work.

Teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you: and, lo, I am with you alway, even unto the end of the world." We are called and commanded to spread the good news of God's Word. What a responsibility! What an honor!

But how can we, as members of the church, assist in this great calling? We can, first of all, provide physical support for our ministers as they carry the Word of God around the world. Missionaries depend on their churches for financial and physical support. As members of the church, we should be generous when it comes to this cause. There are many things we can do to help in this area, whether that be tossing our money into the collection plate, collecting food and clothing, writing letters of support, visiting our ministers on the field, and even traveling with our ministers to lend them a helping hand where they need one. Teachers have the opportunity of working for missions, too, by using their gifts to teach in schools on the mission field. There are limitless ways in which we can strengthen our mission fields.

During one of Paul's missionary journeys, Aquila and his wife Priscilla took Paul in for a year and a half. They show us how every Christian should act toward the cause of missions. They were caring and hospitable, inconveniencing themselves to assist the spread of the Gospel. We should all have the concern and the love for missions that Aquila and Priscilla had. Answer 55 in the Heidelberg Catechism supports this when it declares

"every one must know it to be his duty, readily and cheerfully to employ his gifts, for the advantage and salvation of other members." It is clearly the responsibility of every Christian to use his gifts for the cause of Christ's mission work.

Our involvement in missions must be more than physical though. We need to involve ourselves spiritually as well. We need to involve ourselves in prayer. Mission work is the work of God. In order to be involved in mission work, we need to have a relationship with God, and the only way we can have a relationship with God is through prayer and Bible study. Both are necessary. God hears our prayers and only God can strengthen our mission fields.

We must always remember to pray for the spread of the gospel. God's people can be found in every country of this world, and it's important that we remember that these saints are part of the body of Christ as well. We need to pray fervently for our missions.

Missionaries need our prayers too. In II Thessalonians 3:1, Paul petitions the church: "Finally, brethren, pray for us, that the word of the Lord may have free course, and be glorified, even as it is with you." Prayer is such an important part of mission work. God is the One who saves souls. Without God, we can do nothing. We need to pray that God will strengthen us and use us as His instruments to help his Word flourish.

The third way we can involve ourselves in missions is to be a godly witness to this world. We are not all ordained and called to be missionaries, but we *are* all called to be witnesses to the rest of the world. God can use our witness in this world to bring His chosen people to the Church and to His Word. In this way, we are involved in missions too. Our mission is to be a Christian witness. I Peter 3:15 touches on this when it teaches, "But sanctify the Lord God in your hearts: and be ready always to give an answer to every man that asketh you a reason of the hope that is in you with meekness and fear." We need to be ready, and we need to be prepared. Every Christian has this responsibility. Preachers must reflect the Gospel that they preach, factory workers must live the life of the antithesis at work, young people must reflect the love of Christ when they are with their friends, and teachers must be a godly example to their students. This is the mission of every Christian. Answer 86 in the Heidelberg Catechism stresses this too when it declares that every Christian must "testify, by the whole of our conduct, our gratitude to God for His blessings, and that he may be praised by us; also, that every one may be

assured in himself of his faith, by the fruits thereof and that, by our godly conversation, others may be gained to Christ.”

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Missions are one of the most important callings of the church. We must do all we can for missions both physically and spiritually, remembering that God is in total control. As an aspiring teacher, I see an immense

responsibility for missions. Physically, teachers can encourage their students to support the needs of missionaries and even teach in the schools on a mission field, providing help where the minister and his family need it.

Spiritually, a teacher should always remember to pray for the work of missions and encourage his students to pray for this work too. Above all, a teacher must be a Christian witness. The eyes of students peer up at their teachers all day long. It is an enormous responsibility, one that can never be done perfectly, but can be done to the best of one's ability, by the grace of God. May God bless the work of His missions and the godly witness of His saints. ❖

Dan is a member of First Protestant Reformed Church in Holland, Michigan.

Gem of the Month

My Father's Care

*My Father, God, lives up in Heaven;
His boundless wealth is mine
For thru His Son I am an heir
Of everything Divine.*

*My Father made the world so fair
And put the stars in place,
And thru His wondrous lovely Son,
Sends down His love and grace.*

*My Father knows what's in my heart;
He knows my every need,
And He will surely help me out
For He's a friend indeed.*

*My Father knows when I am ill;
He sees the sparrow's fall
And He who really loves me so
Will hear me when I call.*

*My Father guides each step I take;
He is my shield and song
He watches o'er me day and night
And keeps me all day long.*

*My Father knows just what I need;
He sends down blessings rare,
And all the time both day and night
He lifts my every care.*

*My Father knows how weak I am;
He knows I am but "dust"
And all my "good" compared with Him
Is naught but worthless rust.*

*My Father chastens me when wrong;
Makes use of staff and rod,
And guides me in the narrow way
For I'm a child of God.*

*Reprinted from Feb. 1988 Beacon Lights.
Author unknown.*

The Fourth Man

A Story from the Time of the Afscheiding

by P. S. Kuiper

translated by Rev. Cornelius Hanko

Preface

The articles which will appear in subsequent issues of the *Beacon Lights* are translations of a book with the title, *The Fourth Man*. The book was written in the Dutch by P. S. Kuiper and published by *The Banner* in Utrecht, the Netherlands.

The author informs the readers that the title of the book is taken from Daniel 3:25: "Lo, I see four men loose, walking in the midst of the fire, and they have no hurt; and the form of the fourth is like the Son of God."

As the sub-title indicates, the story is about the Secession of 1834, and what affect that Secession had on the inhabitants of the small village of Hilversum in the year 1835, one year after the Secession began. The author explains the book in these words. "In this story free use is made of the scarce data and traditions that have been saved from this anxious time." That implies that most of what is described in the book did not actually happen. The main persons are the product of the imagination.

The tragic attack on the farm of Gijsbert Haan on June 12, 1836 is, sadly enough, a historical fact. However, similar acts of violence did occur in the Netherlands in those years.

It may be added for the interest of the reader that Gijsbert Haan was among the 800 immigrants who came to America under the leadership of Rev. Scholte. He first settled in Pella, Iowa, later came to Grand Rapids, and was one of the organizers of the Christian Reformed Church in 1857.

The original translation of the book was done by Rev. Cornelius Hanko, my father, and the editing and preparation for publication was done by the undersigned. My father thought the book worth publishing in the *Beacon Lights* for various reasons.

The story itself is a simple story, in fact, almost too simple for the young people who read the *Beacon Lights*. But that may have its own advantage. Its very simplicity

makes it a story that can be read by children and young people from 7 or 8 years old and up. It will introduce them to the *Beacon Lights* at an early age and get them accustomed to reading what will be, in a few years, *their* paper.

But the value of the story makes its simplicity something to overlook in the interests of other advantages. My father saw in the book an accurate and interesting description of life in our Fatherland 180 years ago. (The interested reader might want to know that the same thing has been done in picture form by the Dutch artist Poortvliet, whose books are available in this country.) More importantly, the book gives an accurate description of the effect of the Secession of 1834 on the people in the Netherlands, who suffered persecution for their commitment to the cause of the Lord Christ and the truth of Holy Scripture. This Secession, which took place in 1834, was a true reformation of the church of Christ. Many of these Seceders came to this country, and our own Protestant Reformed Churches have many sons and daughters from immigrants who were a part of this Secession. My own paternal grandmother was herself a daughter of the Secession. It is a book about our roots.

For those of our readers who do not know a great deal about the Secession of 1834, the following brief summary will help them place this momentous event in its proper light. The Secession really began in the Reformed Church of Ulrum, a village in the northern part of the Netherlands when Rev. De Cock and his consistory and deacons signed a Declaration of Secession, which announced their separation from the State Church which had become thoroughly apostate. Joining De Cock in the Secession were other ministers, among whom was Scholte, who later led a group of immigrants to Pella, Iowa, and Van Raalte, who led another group of immigrants to what is now Holland, Michigan, on the shores of Lake Macatawa. In this latter group the Christian Reformed Church had its origin. If anyone desires more

information on this, such information is available in my book *Portraits of Faithful Saints*, and in a syllabus prepared originally for the *Beacon Lights* entitled *From Dordt to Today*.

The editor and publication committee of The Beacon Lights have graciously consented to publish this translation. For this my father is grateful.

One or two remarks by way of explaining some of the translation and formatting. My father (I concur) thought it best to leave the names of people, towns, and streets in their Dutch form. Many can be translated into English, but not all. The names, therefore, may strike our readers as strange.

The author has included a few endnotes will be included in endnotes at the end of the pertinent chapter. I have also included a few additional endnotes when I thought the text needed some explanation. What endnotes belong to the author will be indicated in the endnote itself.

Prof. Herman Hanko
Grand Rapids, Michigan
September 20, 2000

CHAPTER 1

The School by the Creek

According to an old saying, “April sometimes wears a white hat.” But that certainly did not apply to the first of April in the year 1836. Spring came all at once, and the sun, which freely poured out its golden rays over the weaver’s village of Hilversum, was far from lacking in strength.

The farmers plodding behind their plows knew it, and so did the weavers and spinners in their stuffy work areas.

But the greatest sigh came from the old town school at the Kerkbrink, where instructor Dirk De Liefde and the assistant, J. J. Van Oostveen, gave lessons to about 190 children.

“Children, we have now finished our arithmetic lesson!”

The solemn voice of instructor De Liefde rang through the schoolroom. His words did not fall on deaf ears!

Immediately all the pencils were laid aside.

“One: Take up your slates!”

A hundred hands took up the slates.

“Two: Slates in your desks!”

A hundred slates disappeared in the desks.

“Three: Arms crossed!”

Two hundred arms were crossed.

Like frozen snowmen the children sat in their black-painted seats, each of which held six persons. It was most advisable to sit still because the rod and the ruler did not hang on the straight-backed chair of the instructor in vain.

All eyes were focused on the blackboard where the instructor De Liefde had written a poem in very neat letters.

His piercing eyes wandered for a moment over the class until they settled on a blond, sturdy lad. “Martin Boelhouwer, come and stand here by the blackboard!”

The boy’s face went white. Had he unawares done something wrong for which he would now be punished?

Instructor De Liefde noticed his fear and smiled slightly.

“Do not be afraid, boy,” he said encouragingly. Martin shuffled to the front, still not quite at ease. “Children, this morning I have written a very fine poem on the blackboard. Martin Boelhouwer, you try to read this for us in a proper and clear tone of voice!”

The lad blushed from both shyness and pride. He put his feet together and his hands behind his back.

At that moment the side door creaked softly open and Mr. Van Oostveen entered the room.

When he saw Martin standing at the blackboard he immediately saw what was happening. He nodded as if to say: “I will wait a moment.”

Martin looked at the blackboard, cleared his throat and read with a clear voice:

He who strives after virtue,
And values her worth,
Finds peace and contentment,
A paradise here on earth.

“Every one of us enjoyed that,” instructor De Liefde said in praise, “don’t you think so, Mr. Van Oostveen?” The assistant nodded, after which he hastily took something out of the cabinet and disappeared.

A rising tumult in his room proved that his hasty departure was necessary.

The teacher signaled Martin to be seated. Martin walked to his seat with his head in the clouds.

It was a great honor to be chosen to read a poem.

Usually his friend Cornelis Van Ravenswaay was asked to do this.

Slyly Martin looked at him. Would his friend be jealous?

But Cornelis only looking longingly outside while instructor De Liefde admonished the children: “Let us

all live according to the spirit of the wisdom in this poem.” The children all nodded in full agreement, although they understood very little of it.

They understood still less that this ”very nice” poem was exactly the opposite of what the Bible taught. They never heard anything else but “virtue.”

Twelve strokes, announcing deliverance to the children, rang from the church tower high above the school. A hundred sighs arose.

When Bollebakker, who had been rubbing his always-hungry stomach for some time, arose part way from his seat, one look from the eyes of the instructor brought him back to the required position.

“In order to enjoy our noonday meal we turn homeward decently and orderly.”

Row after row the children now left the room. First the children of the dime-seats. Those were the children whose parents paid a dime tuition and who therefore might sit in front. Toon Bollebakker was also among them, for his father was in a double sense a big farmer: his stomach was as fat as his wallet.

After that the children of the “nickel seats” might go out, among which were Martin and Cornelis.

The children of the back seats, the “flea” and “louse” seats, were the last to stand up. Their parents paid 2½ cents or less. But the fleas and the lice, which infected the back seats, were, for that matter, less considerate of these differences, for they regularly paid a visit also to the middle and front seats.

In the hall the children hastily slid into their wooden shoes, while the boys also put on their caps. Because of the nice weather, most of them left their jackets hang until later. The class of Mr. Van Oostveen was also excused. All at once the entire village rang with the pleasant voices of the children. The geese, chickens, and cats, which wandered about in the village, hastily sought refuge.

While Martin pulled on his wooden shoes and reached for his cap among his jostling and cheerful classmates, his eyes attentively watched the door. He was preoccupied with his daily problem: How do I escape Toon? Part of the way Toon Bollebakker and he had to walk the same way. However, Martin hated it when Toon walked with him, for he always boasted of his father’s fortune and impressed upon Martin that Martin’s father was only a small farmer.

However, since Toon sat in the front seat he was always the first one out, so that it was difficult to escape him.

This time things were in Martin’s favor. He heard the husky voice of Toon asking where his wooden shoe could be.

Martin realized that now he had the opportunity to get ahead of his unpleasant companion.

He hurried out of the door and turned to his right into Moleneind Street. His wooden shoes clattered loudly on the road. Past Doodweg Avenue he took off his wooden shoes and ran the rest of the way on his socks.

This was certainly not good for his socks, but his mother was far away, and his danger was near!

Martin raced like a greyhound through Moleneind Street with the pleasant thought that that fat boaster could never catch up with him. This occupied his attention so completely that he hardly noticed that he had arrived at a corner. That was his mistake. At that very moment out of the Dieperweg Avenue, a peddler was trudging along. His name was Aalt Boor and he was pushing a handcart. He was one of the fish peddlers from Huizen who traveled through the surrounding villages to sell his wares.

Botje—that is what he was commonly called—was in an especially bad humor that day. Yet, up to that moment he had done a good business, for Friday was always his best day, because on that day the Roman Catholics might eat no meat. Besides, today was Good Friday, when his business was at its best. But it was also April 1 and many villagers could not resist the temptation of playing tricks on the not-so-sharp Botje.

He crossed Moleneind Street with an angry jerk of his cart and a face that looked like ten rainy days.

When Martin saw him suddenly appear at the corner of Dieperweg Avenue, he could not slow down quickly enough to avoid colliding with the peddler. With a crash both tumbled to the ground.

Martin fell on unpaved Dieperweg Avenue—it was fortunate for him that it was still unpaved—and his wooden shoes and cap flew through the air.

Aalt Boor was less fortunate. He tried to keep his balance by holding on to his rickety handcart. When that failed he tipped the cart over with him as he fell, and the whole slippery load spilled on top of him. The fish peddler was so shocked that he sat for a while staring with open eyes and a gaping mouth. He had a striking and noticeable likeness to his wares.

Martin was the first to come to his senses. He stood up pale and shaking. A few drops of blood flowed from his nose as a result of the collision. Hastily he went to Botje, who was wrapped in a dangerous silence.

“Excuse me, Botje...er...Boor,” he stuttered. “I’ll help you clean up a moment.” And while his classmates came shouting to the spot, he tried to set the handcart upright.

At that point it seemed as if something snapped in the peddler. Snorting with rage, he got up and gave the boy a ringing slap around his ears so that the poor boy saw the stars and the constellations.

“Look out of your eyes, you clumsy clown!” he shouted, hoarse with rage, “and keep your claws off from my cart!”

Martin decided that he’d better take his departure as soon as he could; his enemy had given in to his anger. Crying in his misery and hurt, he picked up his wooden shoes and cap and trudged away, giving no further thought to the fish peddler.

In the meantime the peddler was surrounded by a troop of noisy schoolboys. First they laughed heartily

about the man, but before long many of them felt sorry for him. Finally, together they set up the handcart and with a grin of pleasure they took to their legs.

Aalt Boor stood watching all this with suspicion, but let the boys go their way. Zadok Pakkendrager, a Jewish boy, whose nickname was Dokkie, saw the fish peddler secretly brush the fish scales from the seat of his pants.

“Shall I do that for you?” he asked with a straight face. The peddler gave the boy a look of an angry spider, but was wise enough to say nothing.

“You all are thanked,” he grumbled briefly and set his cart in motion. “No thanks,” answered Dokkie hypocritically, and took off his cap. “Give the greetings to the people in Huizen and be careful at the corners.” With a red face the fish peddler crossed over the creek of Rijk Das and disappeared like a beaten dog down Zonen Maanstraat Avenue. ❖

Creation Through the Spectacles of Scripture

Singing Sands

by Deane Wassink

The lakeshore is filled with many wonders. Sometimes they are so basic that we tend to overlook them.

There is a feature of the shore that has only one or two duplicates in the world. It is Michigan’s “singing sands.” Our Creator has through wave action created grains of sand of particular size and shape that when rubbed together, through walking etc., they produce a somewhat melodic sound like thousands of vibrating reeds of praise to God. It is a sound that is in a rather medium pitch like a low hum. It is a little sharper, though not unlike the human vocal cords when a person is humming with their mouth closed. The sound is noticeable when walking and sliding the feet or dragging a boat hull over the sand. It occurs where the sand is moist near the shore but not saturated with water. I am told that the reason for this phenomenon is the particular size and angulated shape of the quartz crystals produced by the wave action. I am sure anyone that has been to the lakeshore has heard the sand, though they are probably not aware of its uniqueness.

I am reminded of Jesus’ comment in his triumphal entry that even “the stones would immediately cry out” (Luke 19:40) if the praises of the people were silenced. In a godless society of our day it is striking that man hears even the sand singing praises to our great and omnipotent Creator.

Not only does the sound itself sing His praises as Creator but it also calls the attention to His glory as the sovereign Savior of His people. He has promised to be the Savior of the children of Abraham who will be so great in multitude that they number as the sand of the seashore. So vast a multitude is this seed of Abraham that man cannot number it, though our God had each and every one of us numbered before the beginning of time. He also molds and shapes us to be a particular jewel that is uniquely shaped to reflect His glory. Together we make up the body of Christ a unified living whole, where each member, each saint, no matter how great or small has an important and necessary place. Together we form a harmonic unit like the multiple grains of singing sand

that vibrated in praise to God with one life of Christ worked in us by His Spirit.

May we never think that we do not have an important and special place in the body of Christ. May we also wonder at the creation of our God as ever the sands sing His praises.

May we have hearts full of wonder and thankfulness toward God like the Psalmist when contemplating the wonder of his own creation burst with thanksgiving.

In Psalm 139: 17&18, we read, “How precious also are thy thoughts unto me, O God! How great is the sum of them! If I should count them, they are more in number than the sand: When I awake, I am still with thee.”

*Let my tongue not silent be
To sing Thy praise eternally
My tongue Thy praise shall confess
Like the singing sands, Thy name do bless.
Not a wonderful voice of a solo is mine
But united with fellow saints brings praise refined
Part of the everlasting throng
Counted as the grains of sand, so strong.
With joy and wonder shall my tongue proclaim
Praise to my Savior's Holy Name. ❖*

Deane is a member of First Protestant Reformed Church in Holland, Michigan.

Church Family

Avoid It, Pass Not By It, Turn From It, And Pass Away (1)

by Aaron J. Cleveland

In Proverbs 4:14-19 we have recorded for us a very distinct description of the antithetical walk of the child of God. The believer, whether young or old, walks a path in the midst of this world that is contrary to the path of the wicked. The believer walks that path despite the opposition of ungodly men, the forces of darkness, and his own evil nature. That path he walks “is as the shining light, that shineth more and more unto the perfect day” (vs. 18).

There are two “ways” or “paths” contrasted in these verses; the “path of the wicked” or the “way of evil men” and the “path of the just.” One walks either one or the other. The main instruction found in these verses is a sharp warning not to walk the path of the wicked. Following the pattern of the whole chapter, we can picture in our minds a father saying to his son, “My son, enter not into the path of the wicked.” The father gives two reasons why his son ought not to enter that path. The first reason is because of the darkness of that path and its deadly end. The second reason is because of the corruption of those who walk that path and their mischievous ways. Let us take a closer look at this warning and encouragement of a father to the son he loves.

Before we begin we must understand what is meant by the terms “path” and “way.” Ordinarily, when we think

of a path, we envision a road or trail that has a definite beginning and follows a course to a definite end. We walk that trail so that we might get to the destination that the trail promises to lead us to. This is the idea that we have in Proverbs 4:14-19. But, there is more to it. If we compare this “path” to our earthly pilgrimage, it involves much more than just walking down a certain path in a certain direction. The believer does not merely walk a certain path in the midst of this world because his eyes tell him that it is the best way to go. No, the believer, living out of the principle of the new man, desires with a “sincere joy of heart in God, through Christ” to “live according to the will of God in all good works” (Heidelberg Catechism, Q & A 90). The path he walks involves his inmost thoughts, the words he speaks to himself, the words he speaks to others, the places he goes, what he allows himself to listen to, and with whom he associates. The path he walks encompasses every thought he has, every word he speaks, and every action he performs. It is much more than a mere external walk of life.

Knowing what this path involves, let us begin by examining the sharp warning to “enter not into the path of the wicked.” This warning is particularly sharp because it does not end with the words “Enter not!” but continues with four more clarifications of that warning.

“Enter not,” says the father to his son. Do not even consider in your heart walking down that evil way. Do not experiment for a short time walking that path with evil men. There is no room for debate or compromise; “Enter not!”

The father continues to sharpen his command by adding, “Avoid it.” Do not put yourself in a position to consider the evil way. If the path of the wicked is put in front of you in the form of association and friendship with those who despise a godly life, stay away from their company. If the temptation comes to you to glance at something you ought not to, look in the other direction. Do not even begin to entertain in your thoughts that which is contrary to God’s law. The father continues by adding, “Pass not by it.” Do not tempt yourself by getting as close to sin as possible. If necessary, go out of your way to avoid passing by the forbidden path. Just as you would be foolish to get as close as possible to a burning gasoline tanker, you would be even more foolish to get as close as possible to that which you know will lead you into sin.

And if you should find yourself confronted with the evil way, “Turn from it.” If you see the evil way directly in front of your eyes, do not stop and take the sight in, but immediately turn and look the other way. Don’t let your heart continue to meditate upon evil thoughts of the brother, but cut those thoughts off and turn from them. When you find yourself in a place you ought not to be, do not linger and look around, but turn around and leave for the sake of your spiritual welfare. Finally, the father tells his son that after he has “turned,” he must “pass away.” Get as far away from that evil way as you can. It is not enough that you simply turn and stay in place, but you must run away. Don’t fool yourself into thinking that there is such a thing as a “safe” distance from sin. Matthew Henry emphasizes this point in his commentary on these verses:

It intimates likewise at what a distance we should keep from sin and sinners; he does not say, keep at a due distance, but at a great distance, the further the better; never think you can get far enough from it. Escape for thy life: look not behind thee.

After discovering the scope of the command “enter not,” we may ask, “But why is this command so sharp and urgent?” The answer is two-fold. First, we are not to enter the evil way because of the way itself. Second, we are not to walk that way because of the wicked men who walk that path.

First we must understand the evil “way” itself. The text tells us a number of things about that way. Verse 19 tells us that this way is “darkness.” That verse also identifies it as the way of stumbling. We can picture a man reeling to and fro in a dark alley hardly moving in any particular direction, standing up, only to trip over that which he cannot see. All of God’s Word gives us a more complete picture of this way and expands on what is found for us in Proverbs 4:14-19. For example, in Psalm 1:6 we read that “the way of the ungodly shall perish.” We do not often think of this as we observe the “great ones” of the world as they accumulate their wealth and make a name for themselves. Proverbs 14:12 (as well as many other texts) reminds us that the evil way is the way of death. The way which seems right to the natural man (ourselves included according to our old man of sin) is the way of death. Those who walk the evil way actually delight in their own death. Those who hate Wisdom, Christ, love death (Proverbs 8:36). That is the evil way. There is no warning too sharp that a father could give to his son to avoid that way.

Secondly, the warning is so emphatic because of the nature of the wicked men who walk that path. Once again, the text itself describes these men. They are men who are continually practicing mischief (vs. 16); and not just any mischief, but that which is designed to cause others to fall into sin. So extremely wicked are they, that they cannot even sleep unless they have succeeded in bringing others down into the pit with them. And when they are awake, it is written that “they eat the bread of wickedness, and drink the wine of violence” (vs. 17). They are continually plotting the downfall of others. There are no means which they will not use, whether it be in the blatant form of wicked music, or in the subtle form of a minister bringing false doctrine. As we read in Proverbs 24:1,2, “Be not thou envious against evil men, neither desire to be with them. For their heart studieth destruction, and their lips talk of mischief.” Therefore, the father says to the son he loves, “Enter not into the path of the wicked.”

Having gone through the different aspects of this command and briefly examining the evil way and those who walk it, next time, Lord willing, we will move on. We must examine the “path of the just”, those who walk this good path, and how the “antithesis” is clearly brought out in this passage. ❖

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The Song of Zion

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

by Skip Hunter

November 1 Read Proverbs 12:1-7

We are approximately two months into the school year, the catechism season, and for many, young people's society. We would do well to heed the admonition found in verse 1. Do you love knowledge, young people? Are you applying yourselves wholeheartedly into your studies and doing as Paul admonished Timothy to: study to show yourselves approved before God? This is your calling, beloved young people and children. Do not fritter away your time in these activities and show yourselves slothful in these endeavors. To do this is a sin against the eighth commandment. Parents, are you making sure your children and teenagers are diligent in these works? This is your calling in this matter. To love the instruction and knowledge of the Lord is the calling of all of God's people. Let us not hate the reproof of those whom God has placed in authority over us and the reproof of God. Let us not be brutish and ignorant. Sing Psalter 213:3-4.

November 2 Read Proverbs 12:8-14

Not only does Solomon admonish us to study, he also in verse 11 admonishes us to work diligently at whatever we place our hand to do. He expresses a truth which seems, and is, straightforward. When we work diligently, we will be rewarded. This may come in the form of a crop or a paycheck. Oh, sometimes the crop or paycheck may not be what we desire but it will be that which God desires to give to us. Our young people need to hear and heed this admonition as they begin their first forays into the work world. They, and we that are older as well, also need the admonition of the second part of verse 11. We may want to team up with the idlers at our jobs and give less than a full hour's work for an hour's pay. Let us not go this way but let us put our whole heart into our work as God has commanded throughout Scripture. Sing Psalter 24.

November 3 Read Proverbs 12:15-22

Several verses in this section speak of our tongue and its use. This is a subject which can be found in the Old and New Testaments alike. Just think of James 3 for example. How are you using your tongues, people of God of all ages? What about lying? It seems to be a very easy matter to tell a lie. Even the youngest of our children can be very proficient in this sin. Parents, do you teach your children to lie by example or by permission? This is very easy to do in order not to suffer the consequences of some words or actions. One of the Psalms is very

succinct in this matter, "Let the lying lips be put to silence." Guard your tongues, young people. Parents, guard the tongues of your children and young people because, as James says, the tongue can start the fires of hell in our lives. Sing Psalter 343.

November 4 Read Proverbs 12:23-28

The words of verse 27 are very applicable in today's society. How much material wealth ends up in the landfills of the world? How much do we have that we just throw away because we do not want it any longer? Just examine the practices of our homes, schools, and churches to see the truth of these words. Our material wealth is a gift from God and should not be wasted. All that we have must be used for His service and is not to end up in the trash. To fall into the sin examined in this verse is to sin against the eighth commandment. The Westminster Shorter Catechism in its exposition of eighth commandment makes it plain that we can sin against the eighth commandment by misusing what God has given to us. Let us heed the admonishment found in this verse. Sing Psalter 27.

November 5 Read Proverbs 13:1-6

In verse three we have more instruction about the tongue. Here the instruction covers a broader area. Are you fond of telling about the misfortunes of one of your neighbors? This is wrong whether the story is true or false. Paul tells us to "speak the truth in love." We do well to heed that admonition. Are you fond of saying swear words that are either vulgar or profane? This seems to be a trade mark of young people and even children of this age, and to my sorrow our children and young people seem to delight in this practice. We as parents, ministers, elders, and teachers need to be on guard to root this sin out of our children and young people's lives. Let us help them keep from destruction and walk in the way of life. Sing Psalter 391.

November 6 Read Proverbs 13:7-12

This book speaks often of wisdom. This wisdom is the wisdom which comes from above. But part of that wisdom is wisdom about our earthly life. Part of that wisdom means that we do not become proud about our accomplishments in this life. Have we become successful in business? To whom do we give the credit? Are we doing well in some aspect of our school work? Do we give to God the glory due to His name? According to verse ten, pride causes contention. How true this is in many aspects of our lives. We contend with our neighbors to

be number one at something and we begin to fight and bicker about it. Let us be well advised and follow after the wisdom which warns us to flee pride. Sing Psalter 81.

November 7 Read Proverbs 13:13-18

Verse 13 can serve as a theme verse for this section of chapters in the book of Proverbs. The “word,” of course, is the Word of God as we have it in the Bible. The synonym as found in the second half of this antithetical parallelism is also God’s Word. We are commanded to not despise the Word of Almighty God. In that Word we can find instruction on *all* of life’s situations. I challenge you to find one thing that is not addressed in Scripture. Let us flee destruction and seek the reward that God gives to those who obey His Word in all things. Sing Psalter 338.

November 8 Read Proverbs 13:19-25

Parents, who are your friends? What kind of example are you providing your children with your friendships in this world? Those with whom we keep company affect our lives in many ways. They shape our patterns of speech and our choices of entertainment. If we do not show discretion in our choices of companions in this life, neither will our children. We will have no one to blame for their bad choices but ourselves. When we mourn their choice of a life’s mate, we must remember who taught them to pick. If we walk with fools, we face destruction. If we teach our children to walk with fools, we should have the millstone spoken of by Christ hung about our necks. Sing Psalter 170.

November 9 Read Proverbs 14:1-7

Young people, but also people of all ages, how easy is it for you to leave someone who shows himself a fool by his words? Can you leave someone who with his mouth speaks evil words? Can you refuse to socialize with one who denies the God of the Bible? We must realize that our presence with this kind of a person condones what they say. We may say we are trying to witness but the best kind of a witness in such a circumstance is to leave this person, tell him why you are leaving, and do not keep company with him until his manner of speech changes. Notice that Solomon does not give this as a suggestion; it is given as a command. Leave the presence of such persons, people of God, and be blessed. Sing Psalter 369.

November 10 Read Proverbs 14:8-14

We might be inclined after reading verse 12 to say that we are capable of making decisions that are right and prudent. This is not the testimony of Solomon to his son and to the church of all ages. Man’s nature, which we have, is inclined to all evil. We make decisions that we might justify, but are wrong. We must examine our chosen way in the light of Scripture and see that our way is in accord with God’s Way. It may seem *Oh so right to us, but really Oh so wrong*. Our way may end up leading to eternal death in hell. Let us not walk in that way but rather walk in the Ways of God. Sing Psalter 16:1-3, 7-8.

November 11 Read Proverbs 14:15-21

Verse 21 is another example of antithetical parallelism. First of all we are admonished not to despise our neighbors. While the verse does not tell us exactly what form this despising might take, we can tell from the second part that it is not helping our neighbor in distress. This distress may be monetary, emotional,

or spiritual in form. According to the second half of the verse, we are to have mercy upon those who are poor. People may be poor in any of the three ways mentioned above. Are you merciful to the poor, people of God? Children, do you show mercy to all in your class who may need your mercy? Young people, how merciful are you? Parents and other adults, what kind of examples are you toward your children and young people in this matter? Let us show mercy because we have been shown mercy by a merciful God who sent His Son to die on the cross in our place. Sing Psalter 305

November 12 Read Proverbs 14:22-28

In verses 26 and 27 Solomon comes back to the main theme of this book—wisdom as expressed in the fear of Jehovah. He does this because it is only in the fear of Jehovah that we can flee all types of sin. Each of the sins that he warns against in this book can only be avoided by the grace of God. These are comforting words to parents. Parents who worry daily about their children’s salvation can rest assured that in the fear of Jehovah they and their children have a refuge. Parents can also take instruction in that they must hold the fear of Jehovah before their covenant seed. There is no refuge in the devil’s practices; do not teach them to your children, God-fearing parents! Children and young people, you, too, have the assurance of a refuge in the fear of Jehovah. Seek that fear and walk in it. Sing Psalter 88.

November 13 Read Proverbs 14:29-35

Verse 29 speaks volumes to God’s people. To be slow to anger is a characteristic we must cultivate in our lives. We must teach this to our children and young people by word and by example. Young people, you can exercise patience. You must exercise patience. To lose one’s cool or temper is to fall into Satan’s snare. To do this is to break the sixth commandment and murder whomever we are angry with. We must think first and speak or act second. Counting to ten may not be enough; maybe we need to count to one hundred and if that does not help, we should fall upon our knees in prayer for help in this matter. Seek to be known for great understanding and flee the folly of flying into a rage. Make this part of your daily meditation and prayers. Sing Psalter 51.

November 14 Read Proverbs 15:1-7

Stop and ponder verse three. ... Are you finished? Do it again. ... The truth of this verse should excite in us a prayer for help from our God. If His eyes are in every place, He sees all of our sins. We know that He hates sin and requires it to be paid for. We cannot hide from the all-seeing God. Jonah tried; he found out that it was impossible. Ananias and Sapphira tried and look where it got them. Little children, you cannot hide from God for He sees all that you do. Young people, the darkness does not cover your sins. Walk in the light as found in the Bible. Adults, show your children and young people that God sees all of your works too. Confess your sins and walk wisely. Sing Psalter 384.

November 15 Read Proverbs 15:8-13

After sin came into this world, God instituted outward forms of worship of Himself. The way of the bloody sacrifice was the way that He prescribed to find assurance of the forgiveness of

sin. Cain tried to change that method and God was not pleased with his sacrifice. Many people have tried to sacrifice in their own way. God is not pleased with them either. Verse eight tells us that a wicked sacrifice is an abomination to the Lord. This sacrifice does not delight him as the prayer of the righteous. Let us learn how to pray, let us teach our children to pray, and let us seek to delight the Lord in our prayers knowing that He will hear them through the sacrifice of His Son. Sing Psalter 9.

November 16 Read Proverbs 15:14-20

In this age of materialism we would do well to ponder the truths presented in verses 16 and 17. We live in a world where more is better and if you do not have more of this world's goods you have nothing. Over against this philosophy is the philosophy that if the fear of Jehovah does not characterize our lives we have nothing. Out of a desire for more worldly pleasures comes a strife that breaks out even within a family. Family peace is found in having peace with God. Having godly contentedness will give to us the peace that passeth understanding. Seek this peace and shun the world's pleasures and goods. Sing Psalter 246.

November 17 Read Proverbs 15:21-27

Back to the tongue we go in verse 23. Do you have joy with the answers of your mouths, young people and children? You will not have it if your speech is full of putdowns and sarcastic words to those around you. Oh, you may get a laugh at first, and some may think you clever, but those words will soon turn bitter and become hard to swallow. Rather than this course, seek to speak words of comfort and love to those whom God places on your paths. Those words may not make you popular with the "in" crowd, but they will be approved by God who hears all things. Speak the good words of wisdom and you will speak words which taste sweet for ever! Sing Psalter 25.

November 18 Read Proverbs 15:28-33

Children and young people, you might have in your head that every adult in the world loves to "yell at you". They seem to correct you for every little thing. You wish that they would leave you alone and quit picking on you. If this is your feeling, go and read verse 32 again. Do you hate your souls? Is your opinion that you want to go to hell and be left alone? Then refuse your parents' good correction and you will find yourself being absent from God's good favor. But if you listen to the correction of those whom God has placed over you, you will get understanding, and, as we have seen before, this is a good thing. Seek correction, people of God, for in doing so you will be seeking wisdom. Sing Psalter 334.

November 19 Read Proverbs 16:1-7

There is both a wonderful and a sobering truth in verse 4. First of all we find that God has made all things for Himself. What does that mean? First of all, we see that all things must serve His glory. Whether it is the bright blue sunny day which radiates with glory or the gloomy gray day which seems to be suffocating, both are for God's glory alone. Secondly, this truth should make us very humble as we see that all things are for God and not for us. It is a sobering thought that even the wicked are made for the day of destruction. This day is coming. We will be judged for our sins. This should cause us to think about

how we are living our lives. Let us give God all glory and all thanks. Glory for the wonders that He has created, and thanks for His work of salvation in our hearts and lives. Sing Psalter 15.

November 20 Read Proverbs 16:8-13

We are a planning people. Look at the date books, computer reminders, and other types of organizers that we own. Some of us have each day and hour planned for the next six months. We think we know what we are going to do far in advance. Is this so wrong? Not necessarily. It depends how we look at what we have planned. Is it because we want to be in control of our destiny? Is it because we think that we shape the course of our own lives? Nothing can be farther from the truth. It is the testimony of verse nine and James 4:13-15 that it is God who controls our destiny and the shape of our lives. We must properly say *if the Lord wills* as we write down each date. We must bow before the will and good counsel of Him who knows best. Let us be conscious of the fact that it is God who controls our steps, and let us bow before His will as we live our daily lives. Sing Psalter 29

November 21 Read Proverbs 16:14-20

If there is ever a verse that bears repeating each day of our lives, it is verse 18. Along with the thought of yesterday's verse, this one should bring us to our senses and help to shape our attitude about life. If we become proud of who we are and what we accomplish, rest assured, people of God, He will haul us up short and bring about a fall. If we think that we are some great one or have done some great things, we must prepare for the crash that will soon come upon us. Sometimes the crash will be just a bump to remind us of who we are, and sometimes it will be a huge crash that reduces us to a mass of shivering pulp. Pray for the grace not to walk in pride, and pray for this daily. Sing Psalter 136.

November 22 Read Proverbs 16:21-27

We have seen the thought of verse 25 before. Repetition should cause us to stop and give a long look to that which is written by God in His Word. Man thinks a lot about his way. Man plans his way. Some, and we must include ourselves in this, even work to make our way go around God if that were at all possible. The way of a man is to get for himself as much honor and glory as he can. Whether this is done by amassing huge amounts of some physical properties or wealth, or if it is done by making oneself famous in the world; man wants to make his own way in this world. By doing this we are putting ourselves on the paths of destruction. This is not God's way. God's way rests in humble obedience to His will. God's way means that we do all things for His glory even as He has created all things. Let us stop and consider our way and ask God to help us not to make our way the path to destruction. Sing Psalter 354.

November 23 Read Proverbs 16:28-33

In the words of verse 31 we find two admonitions. First of all, we find the admonition to honor those to whom God has given great age. Those who have attained the age of three score years and ten have attained a measure of glory on this earth. That glory is found in the wisdom with which God has given

that elderly saint. The second admonition is that all elderly people are not covered with glory if they did not attain their age walking in the fear of Jehovah. As those of us who reside in the United States celebrate Thanksgiving Day today, let us give thanks for elderly saints who walk with us and show us the way of righteousness. They are part of the cloud of witnesses who line the course as we run the race set before us. Thank you parents and grandparents who show to us the way of a Godly life. Sing Psalter 360.

November 24 Read Proverbs 17:1-7

Yesterday we saw that Solomon acknowledged the wisdom that God gives to those aged saints among the church. Today in verse 6 we see the beauty of the covenant as shown in the children and grandchildren of the church. It is a joy to grandparents to see their children walk in the same faith that they themselves do. They love to see them make confession of faith in front of the congregation. And they love to hold their great-grandchildren after baptism. The covenant which God has established with us is a most precious thing. Let us give thanks to God for the covenant blessings that he has given to us. Sing Psalter 359.

November 25 Read Proverbs 17:8-14

Today we gain a respite from the world and its activities. We have the privilege of going to His house and receiving rest for our weary souls. We need this rest as we take up our labors again tomorrow. In verse thirteen we have instruction given to us about our life in the world. We must never look to bring evil upon someone. We have many opportunities to do this in our business dealings, in our school relationships, and even with our next door neighbors. Let us not do evil to those whom God has placed in our paths. In the first place, this is not a neighborly thing to do. Secondly, it brings despite upon the name of Christ and His church. Finally, it is no way to show thanksgiving for God's love toward us. Let us do good to all men even those who treat us evilly. Sing Psalter 13:1,2, and 5.

November 26 Read Proverbs 17:15-21

People of God, do you act as true friends and brothers to those who are in the family of faith? Young people, are you friends with those whom God has called to be your spiritual brothers and sisters? Children, how do you act toward all of your classmates? Verse seventeen tells us that a friend loveth at all times. True friends are not friends only when it is convenient and profitable. True friends are friends in good times and bad times. True friends do not ignore each other when "certain" other people are around. A true brother and sister stands by his or her family members when the world is ridiculing them for the faith. Do you consider yourself a friend? Do you act as Christ acted toward us? Think about these things, children and young people, and apply them in your lives as Christ wants you to. Sing Psalter 369

November 27 Read Proverbs 17:22-28

In verses 27-28 Solomon comes back to the theme of the tongue. We have spent much time on this idea as does Solomon. We might be inclined to think that another meditation on this topic is overdoing it. The Holy Spirit does not. He inspired

Solomon to pen these words because they are needed by the church. Think back over today's conversations, people of God. Did you hold your tongues when your words were not needed. Did you consciously refrain from breaking the third and ninth commandments today? Notice that the world understands that holding the tongue is wise. How much more should not we who have been redeemed by the blood of the Lamb keep our tongues from all evil? Let us be wise and let us apply wisdom as we speak. Sing Psalter 105.

November 28 Read Proverbs 18:1-8

Verse one may appear a hard one to understand. But if we see that one of the ideas found in this verse is selfishness, we can understand it better. One way that we can understand the word "desire" is that which we want for ourselves no matter what the cost. We may be so selfish that we separate ourselves from our friends and scorn their wise counsel. In doing this we scorn the wisdom of God in many areas of life. We are told to "love our neighbors as ourselves." Yes, we are to love ourselves, but we are not to love ourselves at the expense of our neighbors. Let us watch out for our selfish desires that they not cause us to stray from the paths of wisdom. Sing Psalter 96.

November 29 Read Proverbs 18:9-16

In verse 9 we find two admonitions to which all of God's people do well to take heed. Especially students need these admonitions of a wise father. First of all, we are told not to be lazy in our work. How do you carry out the assignments or chores given to you by your parents, teachers, or bosses? Do you do them to the best of your ability? Do you carry them out completely or just enough to get by? Do you let things slide for your own desires? Secondly, we are told not to be wasters. We can waste many things. Our time, money, abilities, are just a few of these. One of the worst ways to waste something is to waste the opportunity to serve God in whatever way we are called. Students are called to be students. To waste anything in that calling is foolish. Heed Solomon, young people, and be wise in your calling to be a student. Sing Psalter 70.

November 30 Read Proverbs 18:17-24

Are you looking for a wife, young men? Verse 22 assumes that you are looking because you will not find anything with out looking for it. A young man has three areas to fulfill along the path God has laid out for Him. One of these is confession of faith. Another is finding the occupation by which he will serve God in his life. And then there is this business of finding a wife. Now it is true that God does not give to every man a wife. This is the exception not the rule. Even though the verse uses "a" wife, we must heed all of Scripture and know that that means a godly wife. This should go with out saying. Finding the godly wife meant for you is to gain favor with the Lord. Why, we might ask? To find a wife is to carry out the calling of picturing the marriage of Christ and His church and also to carry out the calling to bring forth covenant seed. Find the wife God has chosen for you and know that this will bring favor from Jehovah. Sing Psalter 360.

Psalter 104— The Frailty of Life

by Beth DeVries

How do we live our lives? Do we think that we can worry about spiritual things later, when we get older? After all, we have a long life ahead of us, don't we? We tend to think this way. Then we hear of someone that God takes to be with Him at a young age. We are surprised or even shocked by this. We are reminded then that all things are in God's plan. This Psalter versification of Psalm 39:1-6 reminds us to reflect on the frailty of life. The Psalm begins with the Psalmist speaking of holding his peace in the face of the wicked. The Psalmist then turns to reflect on how frail and short man's life really is. The truth then emerges that through it all we are to trust in God and not in the things of this earth.

We turn to the opening lines of Psalm 39 and hear the Psalmist speaking of bridling his tongue in the presence of the wicked. We can learn from this. Here is an example of a man of God not giving occasion for the wicked to condemn him. He recognizes the many wicked things that come from our mouths and he attempts to restrain his tongue. I fear that our tongues are vessels of great sin. We are called to be especially aware of this when we are in front of the wicked world. They need little encouragement to speak against God and how often don't we give them occasion for this. May we follow the Psalmist's example and guard our tongues.

In stanza two the Psalmist goes on to speak about his suppressed inward feelings and thoughts. It appears that he was struggling with thoughts but dared not open his mouth for what may come out. He speaks of being on fire inside. This would indicate a fierce battle of the mind. He speaks of how the silence increased the burn-

ing inside. This indicates that he was also keeping his thoughts from God. We see this when he then turns to God with his request.

We, too, are prone to battle in our minds and thoughts. We think that then no one else will know, but God always knows. We read of this in Psalm 139 especially in verse 2 which reads "Thou knowest my downsitting and mine uprising, thou understandest my thought afar off." This does not exempt us from turning to God. We see this in the Psalmist in Psalm 39:3, when he finally spoke with his tongue and made request to God. We, too, must continue in prayer to God and make our requests to Him with confidence that

He knows all our thoughts; as we saw in Psalm 139.

The Psalmist next turns to the idea of his own life. He speaks of wanting to know his end. He remembers his own frailty. It is not often that we would ask God what is the length of our days. We don't like to think of them as ending soon. We have come to love this earth and the pleasures we find in it. Yet, as we reflected on earlier, our earthly life may end at any time. We read of

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PSALM 39 L. M. DERA John E. Gould

this in James 4:14 “Whereas ye know not what shall be on the morrow. For what is life? It is even a vapour, that appeareth for a little time, and then vanisheth away.” We remember that our goal is the heavenly kingdom. We strive towards that end. This means that we flee from pride and sinful ways. May we with the Psalmist ask God to help us remember our days.

The fourth stanza continues with this idea that our life is really nothing: but a hand span in eternity. It seems to us that our life is long and there is so much to do; yet it is not even a second compared to eternity. We concern ourselves so much with the things of this life and easily forget that our real life is in heaven with God. Our lives are but vanity in God’s sight. We read of this repeatedly in Scripture. We turn to Psalm 144:4, “Man is like to vanity: his days are as a shadow that passeth away” and Ecclesiastes 11:8, “But if a man live many years, and rejoice in them all; yet let him remember the days of darkness; for they shall be many. All that cometh is van-

ity.” May we remember the exhortation of the Psalmist that our life on earth is vanity and turn to God.

The fifth stanza is the final one we will consider this time. It continues to speak of man’s life being vain. It reminds us that we spend much time in gaining things on this earth but that they avail us nothing in the end. What we experience in this life may seem difficult and at times overwhelming. Yet we are assured that this life will quickly pass away. We shall then go to our eternal home and live in glory and peace forevermore. It is difficult for us to imagine eternity but if we think of our life as but a breath and how many breaths we need per minute then we can appreciate eternity. As we look forward to that eternal life, we are reminded to guard our tongues. This helps us keep before us that goal of heavenly life as we deal with the struggles on this earth. ❖

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

Where We Stand

Knowledge of the Truth (2)

by Rev. Kenneth Koole

Speech given at the Young People’s Convention, Redlands, 1999. In the last article, Rev. Koole explained that the knowledge that we need is the Knowledge of the Truth.

Now, there are a few things in connection with this Knowledge of the Truth that I want to emphasize.

In the first place, I want to point out that we live in days of tremendous doctrinal ignorance. Churches are filled with people ignorant of the most basic and biblical of truths. As a result they have spiritual AIDS. Their immunity to the simplest and most unbiblical of errors is destroyed. They can defend themselves against nothing.

It is worth remembering where this spirit of ignorance and “anti-knowledge” began, namely when the church of the 1600’s lost its confidence in the authority and infallibility of the Scriptures.

The age of scientific discovery exploded on the scene. Unbelieving preachers and bible teachers were enamored with it. Man and science knows everything, the Bible is filled with errors and mistakes, and it contains man’s words mixed with God’s. In fact, they con-

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cluded, it is mainly men’s word as they react to what they THINK might be the revelation of God. But, then again, who can really know for sure.

The point is, when you loose your faith and confidence in the Bible as the inspired and infallible Word of God, you will also lose your interest in biblical and doc-

trinal knowledge. I mean, what's the point? It is just a fabrication anyway—irrelevant to our times. Why waste one's time on something irrelevant to our age anyway?

And so the interest in knowledge has gone out.

Remember, once you begin to question the trustworthiness of Scripture, it is just an old book filled with outdated ideas, you can kiss the interest in spiritual and doctrinal knowledge good-bye as well.

The second thing I want to point out in connection with doctrinal knowledge is that it has everything to do with your relationship to God!

That is why you and I are called to grow in knowledge. Not first of all so that you can tell others about it, but so that you may know God better yourself. The more you and I know about spiritual and biblical things the

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better we ourselves should know God. That's where it all has to start.

So the question, how well do you know God yourself? How close is your relationship with Him? Would you say you know Him well?

The first thing that will suffer if you have no interest in doctrinal knowledge and as a result are ignorant of all these things will not be your ability to witness, but your relationship to God.

The point is, the better we understand why God sent this Christ Jesus, and who this Lord Jesus is, and what he worked in his atonement and death, the more you ought to marvel that you are the child of such a God. And that to this God, invisible to you, but who fills this auditorium with his presence and sees you clear as day, you are important and of interest.

So that is the first benefit of this knowledge, it will make you closer to God. The deeper will be your own appreciation and gratitude for what God has done for me, for us. And when you think of it, that's the heart of true religion is it not!

And the point is that the by-product of that personal knowledge of Who God really is will be an enhancement of your ability to witness to others. After all, who is the best promoter of something? Someone who him-

self is personally convinced of that something's (or someone's) value and worth.

Further I point out that what we are speaking of is a knowledge of the TRUTH. In order to bear witness of the truth, you must be convinced there is such a thing as TRUTH!—that there is something that is really true, the correct answer, the final conclusion, if you will, of it all. You must be convinced that there is a standard of right and wrong, good and evil, and it is knowable because God has made it known.

People do not believe that anymore. They have been told there is no final truth. Everything is relative to the age in which you live. As a result they wander about confused, and they are wide open to every sort of lie and error. Why? Because, they have been taught, when it comes to what God thinks is right and what is wrong, what is good and what is evil, and what is true and what is the lie, well, no one knows.

Young people, your calling is to say that is not true! The truth is knowable and what God considers right and true and what He disapproves of as wrong and evil and the lie is knowable as well. In other words, you must be convinced that the WORD of God is 'the Word of God' indeed the standard of all that is right and true. And that it is knowable.

It is with this conviction that you can witness.

You have to understand that your calling and mine is not to convince any one of the truth, persuade them, get them to acknowledge you are right and they are wrong. You cannot do that anyway. If someone does not want to be convinced they will not be convinced even if someone arose from the dead and looked them in the eye.

**Your calling is not to
convince them of truth, it is
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the truth.**

Your calling is not to *convince* them of truth, it is simply *to confront them* with the truth. That is all you have to do, confront them with the truth. And if you do that, you do not have to win the debate or out argue them.

That other person may win the debate, evidently score more points than you, and have asked harder questions and given more impressive sounding answers. For

fear of that perhaps you do not even dare open your mouth. The point is you do not have to be afraid of that, because the thing about the truth is it is God's truth. And God has a way of taking the truth you spoke and making it stick like a burr to a man's conscience. It simply will not go away. It nags and pricks and troubles one because it is God's truth.

So someone may leave you, and it does not appear that you've made any headway or any impression at all. They are just as unconvinced or unimpressed as they ever were. So it appears. But if what you have spoken is the biblical truth, then be assured an impression has been made!

The truth is like that. It simply will not leave one and go away. The person may not want to give you the satisfaction that what you said troubled him, but you will have whether he wants to give you the satisfaction of knowing that or not.

Maybe someone has done something wrong, committed some sin, but does not want to admit that. He will not admit that what he is promoting and trying to justify is sin (such as saying that abortion is alright, or pornography is harmless, or what have you. And it does not seem you can get the person to concede he is wrong. The point is, you do not have to. All you have to say is, "You know that is sin, that it is displeasing to God. It is murder and it is filth and God is going to hold you accountable and judge you if you do not repent."

They may argue and justify themselves and get all upset and angry and accuse you of judging and all the rest. "Prove it, prove it, prove it!" they say. And perhaps it will seem you have not touched them in the least. But you want to know something? You did. You confronted them with the Truth. And they know your point was valid. The Holy Spirit will press it home. That's the way it is.

So do not worry first of all about being able to out argue and out debate people, and answer all their questions right off. You do not have to. Just confront them with the simple, straight-forward, Biblical truth, and the Spirit has His way of bringing it home. When you speak God's truth, He sees to it that in some shape or form it is brought home to a man's conscience and heart.

And further, knowledge of the truth means that you and I should acquaint ourselves with the views and teachings of others and where they go astray, and what their error is.

This too is important—your ability to refute error as best you can. It does not make for popularity, but it is important.

It's as if you are in a sword fight, and your opponent is as interested in disarming and defeating you as you are him. When swordsmen in the Middle Ages taught young knights the art of sword play (armed combat) then they would begin by teaching the young squire how defend himself, what strokes and thrusts the opponent would likely make, and how to deflect and parry those strokes and thrusts.

So in the arena of discussion and debate on biblical things, know the strokes and arguments of the various false teachers and errors. Then you will be able to better stand your ground, and disarm them instead.

Finally, I would like to remind you of a few basic things you ought to keep in mind if you want to introduce us to others.

People say, you are Reformed? Protestant Reformed? What do you people believe? What is distinctive about you? Where do you stand?

Let me suggest your remembering and mentioning 3 things.

First, point out that our churches, and you yourself I hope, have a high view of the Bible. We still view it as infallibly true, the very Word of God. We believe everything it says and teaches.

Everything? Even 6 day creation? and Jesus walking on water? and women being in subjection to the men in marriage and the church?

Yes! Everything. We still believe it to be God's own Word.

You may not realize just how distinctive that is today (even in religious circles), and what an impression that will make on people. Many will be attracted to what you say simply because of your unashamed commitment to the Bible.

Second, remember our emphasis is all on 'grace'. Salvation by grace and grace alone. This is why we believe in election and predestination and all those other doctrines of Calvinism. Why? Because they make plain everything is of the sovereign, free grace of God, and is nothing of man.

And that is why we reject so many other doctrines too—they contradict, are contrary to salvation being all of grace. They emphasize man and self, rather than the free grace of God thru Christ, contrary to all deserving.

And finally, remember that what we teach is that a person must be spiritually alive, and been made spiritually alive, before he can make spiritual choices.

Almost everyone else these days teaches just the opposite. The say, a man must make spiritual choices before he is even spiritually alive. Before one is ever

born again, one must love God, want to seek God, sorrow over sin, and have faith, or as they put it, let Christ into one's heart. In other words, a man must engage in the most basic and fundamental spiritual activities before he is even spiritually alive.

How is that possible? This is why Arminianism and modernism is so wrong. Man, who is DEAD in trespasses and sins according to Ephesians 2:1-3, must engage in the highest of spiritual activities (such as seeking, loving, and believing in God and Christ) before they have even been made spiritually alive. How can anyone engage in spiritual activities before God has made one spiritually alive?

Keep that in mind! Before one can make spiritual choices and engage in spiritual activities, one must be spiritually alive, that is, be made spiritually alive by God!

Keep these basic principles of knowledge in mind and you should have sufficient knowledge at least to begin to witness to others of who and what you are.

Just keep in mind, more is needed than knowledge in your life (such as sincerity and zeal), but not less. Knowledge is foundational.

Have a thirst for knowledge. Knowledge will feed your faith, faith your courage, and courage your zeal. In these latter days, that is a *rare* commodity indeed. Be assured this will make you a great encouragement to others as well. ❖

Rev. Koole is pastor of Faith Protestant Reformed Church in Jenison, Michigan.

Church History

The St. Bavo Church of Aardenburg

By J.P. de Klerk

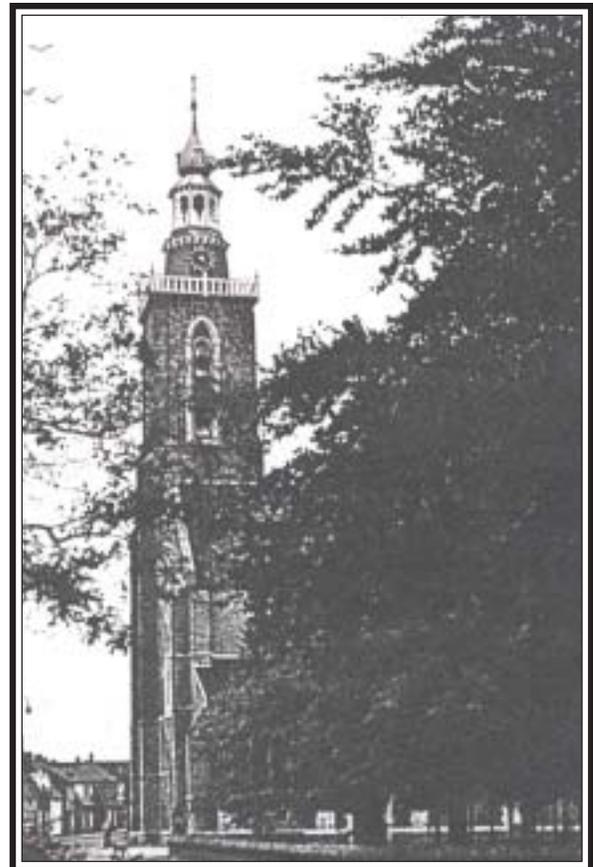
In the Western part of Zeeland-Flanders (The Netherlands), not far from the frontier with Belgium, you find a small old city with the name of Aardenburg. In the photo you see the tower of the State Reformed St. Bavo Church, built already in 1243, and several times restored.

An interesting fact is that Aardenburg is mainly Roman Catholic, but it has two Reformed Churches.

Originally, in the twelfth and thirteenth centuries, Aardenburg was named Rodenberg. At that time it was an important outpost and staple-town for the trade with Brugge (city in Belgium).

Over the centuries the church was destroyed many times by wars. In its history, it was important as a city of refuge for many Huguenots from France (Protestants who spread out over the whole of The Netherlands). They had a very good influence on the activities of the Reformed Churches. ❖

J.P. de Klerk is an author and journalist from Ashherst, New Zealand.



Reverend Peter Breen

edited by Kris Moelker

On September 2, 1919, John and Grace (Timmer) Breen became the parents of Rev. Peter Breen. Rev. Breen was born on a farm east of Coopersville, Michigan. Coopersville is located fourteen miles west of Grand Rapids.

As a student, Rev. Breen attended two one-room country schools. They were each located east of Coopersville. He also attended and graduated from Coopersville High School. Nine years after he graduated from high school, Rev. Breen became a student at Hope College in Holland, Michigan.

While he was growing up Rev. Breen enjoyed playing softball. He also enjoyed going hunting and trapping. Now he reads, goes for walks in the country, and he also follows the athletic contests of his grandchildren.

Rev. Breen is married to Pauline Stegenga. The Lord has given them five children and twenty two grandchildren. Two of their sons are pastors of churches.

Regarding peer pressure, Rev. Breen says, "Just at the close of the 1932 Depression, there was always a shortage of money. One learned to do without. One of the common activities young people practiced was to chivalry newlyweds. I felt I had to discontinue going to chivalries because some young people started to use dynamite to create noise and confusion."

There was a nine-year gap between Rev. Breen's high school graduation and his entrance into college because he tried to resist the call to enter the ministry. Some of his family and friends were surprised when they learned he would attend seminary. His widowed mother, who often prayed that one of her sons would enter the ministry, was pleased. As a seminary student, Rev. Breen had summer appointments. He spent one summer in South Dakota and another summer in the inner city of Chicago.

In 1952, Rev. Breen was ordained a minister of the Word. His first charge was Corinth Reformed Church in Byron Center, Michigan. In 1957, he became the pastor of First Reformed Church in Fremont, Michigan. The Lord then called him to Calvary Reformed Church in

Grand Rapids, Michigan in 1967. His labors in Fourth Reformed Church began in 1979. In 1984, he began his labors in the Orthodox Reformed Church in Grand Rapids Michigan. In 1993, Rev. Breen became Minister Emeritus of the Word in the Protestant Reformed Churches.

Rev. Breen's most memorable experience teaching young children catechism was teaching first graders. "One of my first graders asked me repeatedly to draw a picture of the subject we were discussing. Many spiritual truths cannot be illustrated by a picture."

During his labors as pastor in the churches he served, Rev. Breen saw many young men enter the ministry. He thinks there were eleven in all. This was rewarding for him to see.

To young men considering the ministry as their calling, Rev. Breen says, "Appreciate our standards and preach the word with enthusiasm and sincerity."

Rev. Breen would like to see the young people have "an intolerance for the use of tobacco and alcohol and attempt to discourage their peers from the use of it." He also wishes the young people of our churches would have more appreciation for the Christian education they receive.

Rev. Breen is encouraged to see the young people attending conventions and singing Psalms. He also likes to see the encouragement they give to their peers when they make confession of their faith.

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

Poetry Wanted: *Beacon Lights* is looking for poetry from our readers. You can send your work to the editor via mail or email. See the inside front cover for the address.

"LITTLE LIGHTS"

... let it shine!

by Connie Meyer

Tulip (4)

"What does the 'L' stand for again?" Krystal asked her mother.

"Limited atonement," Mother answered. "It means that Christ died only for a limited amount of people, His chosen elect. He did not die for everyone."

Krystal nodded, but before she could say any more, she and her mother heard a sound and paused to listen. A little boy's melodious voice was coming from the porch. He was singing, "Jesus loves the little children, all His children of the world. Red and yellow, black and white, they are precious in His sight..."

Mother smiled. "There's the 'L' again!" she said. "That song is usually sung—'all *the* children of the world,' but we taught you and Jamie to sing it this way—'all *His* children of the world.' Jesus loves only His children, and He died and paid for the sins of only His children. No more—and no less."

Suddenly the singing stopped and Jamie came in from the porch. "Whew, I'm hot! I swept the who-ole porch. Is there anything to drink?"

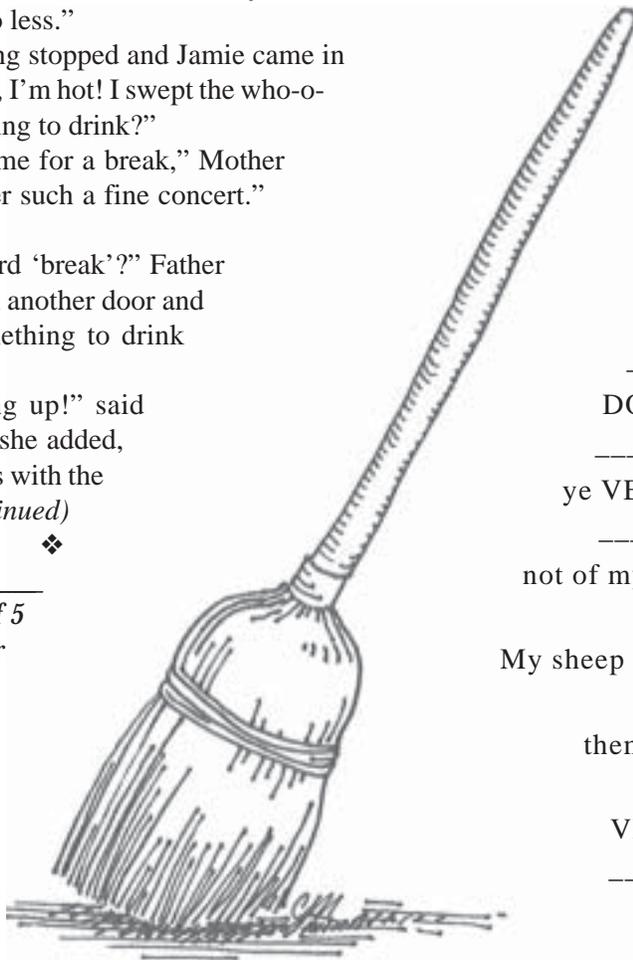
"Yes, I think it's time for a break," Mother agreed, "especially after such a fine concert." She winked at Krystal.

"Did I hear the word 'break'?" Father said as he came in from another door and wiped his brow. "Something to drink does sound good."

"Lemonade coming up!" said Mother. And to Father she added, "Maybe you can help us with the next letter." (*to be continued*)



Connie is the mother of 5 children and a member of Hope Protestant Reformed Church in Grand Rapids, Michigan.



Puzzle

The following words of Jesus are found in John 10:15-16 and 26-28, where He was speaking to the Pharisees and unbelieving Jews. He makes it clear to them, and to us, that He died for ONLY His elect sheep. Unscramble the letters:

"...I lay down my FEIL _____
 for the PEHES. And _____
 RETOH sheep I _____
 VEAH...them also I must _____
 NIBGR...and there shall be one _____
 DOLF, and one DREPESH... But _____
 ye VEELIEB not, ABUSECE ye are _____
 not of my SPEHE, as I DISA unto you. _____
 My sheep RAEH my ICEVO, and I WOKN _____
 them, and they FLOOWL me: And I _____
 VEGI unto them NEARLET life..."

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Church News

BAPTISMS

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

Mark 16:16

The sacrament of Holy Baptism was administered to:

Lindsey Jeanne, daughter of Mr. & Mrs. Rick Gritters—
Byron Center, MI
Justin Michael, son of Mr. & Mrs. Cornelis Kleyn—Byron
Center, MI
Laura Mae, daughter of Mr. & Mrs. Sid Miedema—
Byron Center, MI
Caleb Jon, son of Mr. & Mrs. Brent Meyer—Doon, IA
Whitney Joy, daughter of Mr. & Mrs. Jason Scholten—
Faith, MI
Kathryn Emma, daughter of Mr. & Mrs. Pete DeKryger—
Georgetown, MI
Madalyn Rose, daughter of Mr. & Mrs. Eric Bouma—
Georgetown, MI
Melanie Jennifer, daughter of Mr. & Mrs. Dave Hanco—
Grace, MI
Paul Samuel, son of Rev. and Mrs. Mitchell Dick—Grace,
MI
Allysa Joy, daughter of Mr. & Mrs. Tom Mastbergen—
Grace, MI
Bryant Seth, son of Mr. & Mrs. Dan Hanco—Grace, MI
Caitlin Danielle, daughter of Mr. & Mrs. Kevin Van
Engen—Hull, IA

Logan Christopher, son of Mr. & Mrs. Chris Cleveringa—
Hull, IA
Nolan Lee, son of Mr. & Mrs. Ron Kaptein—Lynden, WA

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:**

Daniel Blankespoor—Doon, IA
Andon De Boer—Doon, IA
Catherine Koole—Faith, MI
Aimee Tanis—Hope, MI
Carolyn Hoekstra—Peace, IL
Jeremy Houck—Peace, IL
Frank VanBaren—Peace, IL
Melanie VanBaren—Peace, IL
Jolene Wiersma—Peace, IL
Brenda Doezema—Southeast, MI

MARRIAGES

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

Matthew 19:5

United in the bond of Holy Matrimony were:

Mr. Dan Barnhill and Miss Kolleen Moelker—Hope, MI
Mr. Stefan Englesma and Miss Kristin Velthouse—
Southwest, MI

P.R.Y.P. Convention

Plan to
attend!

Dates: August 13-17, 2001

Location: Lake Ann Baptist Camp, near Traverse City, MI

Host: First Protestant Reformed Church of Holland
Young People's Society