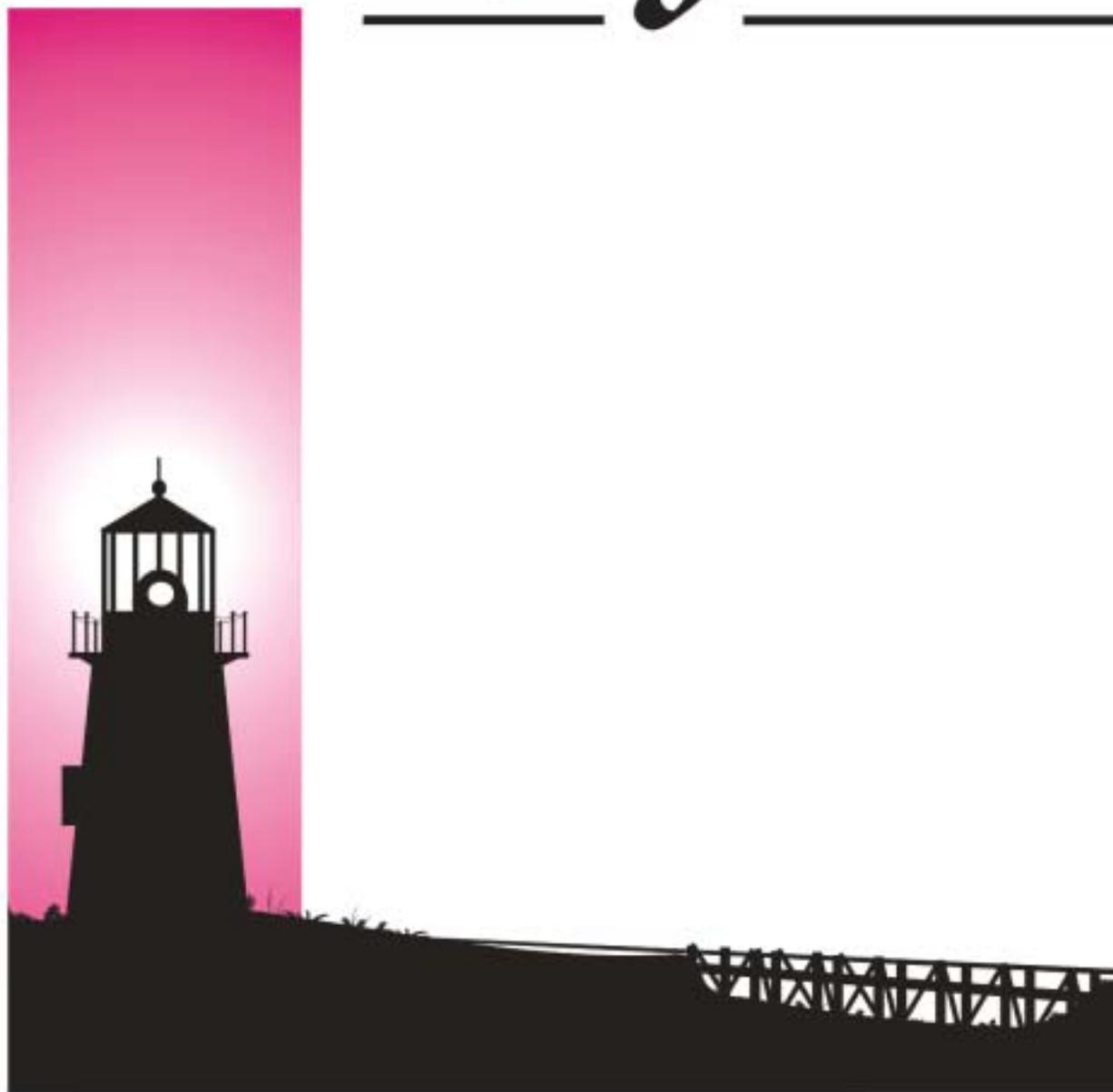


Beacon Lights

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Faithful Wounds of a Friend



by Aaron J. Cleveland

“**O**pen rebuke is better than secret love. Faithful are the wounds of a friend; but the kisses of an enemy are deceitful.” This is God’s Word as found in Proverbs 27:5, 6. In these verses are to be found a principle that is central to all friendships within the body of Christ. Those who truly are friends within the body of Christ are willing to bring admonition to their friends when they are beginning to wander in the paths of sin. Likewise, within the body of Christ, friends are willing to humbly receive and submit to the admonitions of their brothers and sisters. If one refuses to admonish his friend in Christ, he may be sure that he does not truly love his friend. This truth is especially important to the young people of the church, because there is tremendous pressure at this age not to bring admonitions when necessary.

Friendships within the body of Christ are truly unique friendships. These kinds of friendships do not exist in the world. They are different because they are friendships based upon an agreement of the truth about God. “Can two walk together except they be agreed?” (Amos 3:3). Because there is agreement about that truth, it follows that there is fellowship among friends about that truth. Together, friends talk about that truth and walk in the ways of that truth. When one, or a group of friends, says something contrary to the truth and walks in a manner contrary to the truth, the friendship cannot continue until there is once again harmony of confession and walk among the friends.

Therefore, we can see the necessity of admonition among friends. These admonitions are necessary in order that those who wander in ways contrary to the truth are brought back into the fellowship of God and the body of Christ. When friends refuse or shrug off their responsibility to admonish one another, many serious consequences follow.

God’s Word makes clear to us that the way of love is through admonition. Our refusal to admonish is likened to hatred. We read in Leviticus 19:17: “Thou shalt not hate thy brother in thine heart: thou shalt in any wise rebuke thy neighbour, and not suffer sin upon him.” When we see our brother in Christ walking in a way contrary to God’s Word, and we refuse to admonish him, then we hate that brother in our hearts because we allow sin to come upon him. Love for the brother is demonstrated in the way of admonition as we have seen from Proverbs 27:5,6. We are willing to rebuke our friends, and in that way, bring them back (according to the will of God) to our fellowship and God’s. We are faithful to God and our friends when we are willing to warn our friends from the ways of sin.

What are the consequences of our refusal to rebuke our friend when we see him go in the way of sin? First of all, we allow him to fall into sin. And if he is already walking in sin, we allow him to wander farther from God and fall deeper into sin. This consequence is set forth in Leviticus 19:17. Secondly, we become a partaker in the sins of our friend when we know he is committing a particular sin and we say nothing to

**When we see our brother in
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him. This connection is made in Ephesians 5:11, where we are commanded to “have no fellowship with the unfruitful works of darkness, but rather reprove them.” While this passage is speaking of the works themselves, it still remains true that our refusal to reprove makes us a partaker of our friend’s sins. Thirdly, when we refuse to admonish, it becomes impossible for us to carry on a true friendship with that brother. Our refusal to admonish means that we can no longer have fellowship with one another about the truth, and our friendship is reduced to nothing more than a hollow relationship based upon nothing more than a few arbitrary likes and dislikes. What is made known is our lack of love for our brother.

This lack of love ought not to characterize our friendships. True love is shown in the way of humble admonition. Humility is required not only by those who receive an admonition, but by those who must bring admonition. In Proverbs 27:6 those admonitions are described as “wounds.” When a surgeon’s desire is to cure his patient of cancer, it becomes necessary for him to make cuts and wounds where needed, in order that the cancer may be removed and healing may take place. His goal is not accomplished until he is willing to take his scalpel to his patient. These “wounds” are described further by David as “smiting” in Psalm 141:5. Here we read, “Let the righteous smite me; it shall be a kindness: and let him reprove me; it shall be an excellent oil, which shall not break my head.” We can understand the humility which must be involved in the “wounding” and “smiting” of our friends. This is not an easy task.

It is very humbling and difficult to bring admonition for a number of reasons. First, we are aware of our own sin and unworthiness. Perhaps we have participated with our friends in a sin and now God has made known to us the evil of this way. How can we reprove our friends for the very same thing we have participated in? Second, we must overcome our sinful pride. Our chief concern when we come to admonish our friend is not his welfare, but our own. We are afraid that he will remind us of our many sins. We are terrified that we will be labeled a “goody-goody” or “holier-than-thou.” And so we must come humbly, not worried about what may be said about us. Third, we are afraid that we will lose our friend. Even though we may recognize that admonition is necessary, we do not want to “rock the boat,” and so we tolerate the sin of our brother in order that a relationship may still be maintained.

As hard as it is to humbly bring rebuke, it is even harder to humbly receive rebuke. When a friend comes to us and shows us the error of our ways, our old man immediately bristles. Our sinful pride arises and we are quick to think of the sins of the brother who is reproving us. It may even be that we are so bold as to let these thoughts be known to our brother in a spirit of contempt. We had been quite content walking the path of sin and we find the “smiting” of our friend to be painful at first.

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But, the reward of humbly giving and receiving admonition is great. Those who humbly receive admonition are turned from ways of sin. When our friend has turned from his walk in the ways of sin, he is again restored to closer fellowship with God and with us. We must understand this. We cannot have fellowship with one who is walking unrepentantly in the way of sin. Neither can we have fellowship with those who do not confess the truth. When a brother is restored to closer fellowship with God and with us, he will find that he has a renewed love for the friend who admonished him. He will find that his love for his friend has been deepened. This truth is found in Psalm 141:5. David says that the “smiting” of the righteous is an “excellent oil.” Further, he says that he will pray for those who corrected him when they are in trouble.

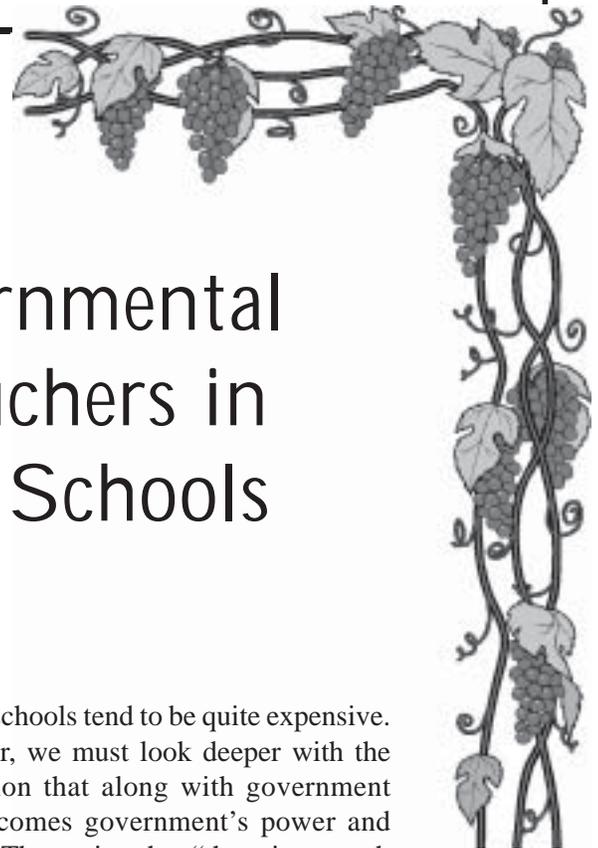
Those who humbly give admonition also find a great reward. When we bring rebuke, we are the instruments of God to demonstrate “kindness” to the brother (Psalm 141:5). Secondly, we will also gain to ourselves an even closer friendship and a deeper love from the brother who received our admonition. Proverbs 9:8 tells us, “rebuke a wise man, and he will love thee.” Finally, when we bring admonition we find favor

with those who receive admonition. We read in Proverbs 28:23, “He that rebuketh a man afterwards shall find more favour than he that flattereth with the tongue.”

It is in the way of humbly giving and receiving correction that we come to know who our true friends are. We must ask ourselves, “Am I willing to bring an admonition to my friend who is walking in the way of sin?” Likewise, “Am I willing to submit to the words of a friend who brings to me correction?” Are we found among the company of the wise who receive correction, or do we find that we are in the company of scorers who despise reproof? (Prov. 15:12).

It is our calling as children of God to grow in this area of our walk. May we say with David the words of Psalm 141:5, “Let the righteous smite me; it shall be a kindness: and let him reprove me; it shall be an excellent oil, which shall not break my head: for yet my prayer also shall be in their calamities.” ❖

Fruitful Branches



The Dangers of Governmental Involvement Via Vouchers in Protestant Reformed Schools

by Faith R. Van Meeteren

Imagine you as a parent are beginning a new school year and once again it is time to pay your child’s expensive tuition. You are flipping through the pile of daily mail with all of its bills, flyers, and letters. Suddenly you see it - a tuition voucher made out for your personal use towards your child’s tuition in the school of your choice. Sounds great, doesn’t it? This voucher would help out greatly and you could spend your own money on other things: monthly bills, clothes, whatever you wish. Doesn’t that sound too good to be true? Well, unfortunately the answer is yes.

A few years ago the United States government proposed a new law that would make this very occurrence possible. This law or proposition would indeed grant money to the school of your choice towards tuition and fees, but it would also do a lot more. At first one might jump at the chance of free money, especially since our

private schools tend to be quite expensive. However, we must look deeper with the realization that along with government money comes government’s power and control. The saying that “there is no such thing as a free lunch” rings especially true in this case. Our schools have worked hard for many years to preserve our Christian way of education and life steadfastly following the rule in Proverbs 22:6, “Train up a child in the way he should go: and when he is old he will not depart from it.” If the government is given permission to interfere with our goals of teaching in a God-fearing manner, then our schools as we know them are doomed.

Many methods of teaching and the curriculum as a whole would be perverted in our Christians schools if the vouchers came into mandatory law. The rights of the

teachers to teach as Christians would be taken away. In its place more liberal and un-religious methods would be utilized. Prayer would be one of the first things to go. In public schools it is definitely not allowed, especially by the teacher in front of the class. Prayer is a fundamental part of a Christian's life. It is our way of praising God, thanking Him for all our many blessings, and obtaining wisdom in our understanding of how to walk in His way. As true Christians we must desire prayer as in Colossians 1:9, "For this cause we also, since the day we heard it, do not cease to pray for you, and to desire that ye might be filled with the knowledge of His will in all wisdom and spiritual understanding."

Another reason for opposing the vouchers is that Bible would no longer be able to be taught as a class. It would most likely be eradicated, and if it was allowed to be kept, the government would require our Christian teachers to teach our Covenant children about other religions as well. Also, it would not be allowed to be taught as the truth. It would be taught as fiction or a "juicy story" as my atheist English professor would put it. At such a crucial time when our children need to really focus on the Protestant Reformed religion, it would be hurtful to waste such precious time on the instruction in other religions. Christian children, especially during their young influential years, need a strong knowledgeable base in their own religion. They need to know how to live in antithesis with the wicked world. There are so many different denominations that trying to list them all off would make one's head spin. In such confusion we do not need the government to hinder our teaching of the true Word. As in Deuteronomy 5:33 which says, "Ye shall walk in all the ways which the Lord your God hath commanded you, that ye may live, and that it may be well with you, and that ye may prolong your days in the land which ye shall possess," we must remain separate and walk in God's way. Only in this way are we to live lives which are pleasant in His sight.

We as God's children must strive to teach our Covenant young children in the way they should go. In the future—when they must enter a public high school, college, and even the job world—they must be prepared with the truth. Teachers, fellow students, employers, co-workers, and all other earthly neighbors may be tools used by the devil, and we must be ready to defend the truth of God's Word. Morals and a pleasant demeanor do not make a true Christian, nor do they qualify a person for being a teacher in one of our schools. If vouchers were to be introduced, the very people we are told to

If vouchers were to introduced, the very people we are told to live in antithesis from would be teaching our young children.

live in antithesis from would be teaching our young children. The reason for this is that the government could easily step in saying that our schools are prejudiced and thereby they would have the "right" to hire teachers from the world to instruct in our schools.

The world which we live in today has severely "watered down" the meaning of Christianity. In my last Pre and Post lesson, Pastor den Hartog spoke on the twenty-eighth article of the Belgic Confession entitled "That every one is bound to join himself to the true church." He said that if one was to poll the citizens in the United States about seventy to eighty percent would say that they are Christians. Also, if we were to ask those same people whether or not they attended church the numbers would drop by at least half. Sadly, this is very true. As any other true Christian, I have seen this lack of true Christianity all throughout my life. These would be the people that we would have to let in to teach our children. For this reason we are to be careful with which influences we allow in our schools, especially concerning the government. It is not our place to judge people here on this earth. Judgment can only be passed by God. However, we do have to be careful, and allowing vouchers in our schools would be a terrible detriment. These false believers would let the world's views and ideas in and oppose our own. At this point (in making a decision on whether or not we want to use vouchers) we must ask

The parents might feel a little less burdened as far as their pocket books are concerned, but the losses which both they and their children will experience as a result will not be worth the money.

ourselves an important question. Are we more concerned about the size of our wallets or in adhering to God's holy Word?

Accepting vouchers into our schools would be a terrible detriment for every one involved. The parents might feel a little less burdened as far as their pocket books are concerned, but the losses which both they and their children will experience as a result will not be worth the money. Also, the very reason that the parents are sending their children to our schools would be taken away.

The teachers would no longer be able to teach as they have always been able to—in a God fearing manner. We are called to live according to God's will and to teach our children in His ways. If vouchers were to be introduced into our education system, God's calling for us to instruct His children in a God-fearing manner would be taken away. ❖

Faith is a member of Hope Protestant Reformed Church in Redlands California.

Creation Through the Spectacles of Scripture

A Look at Matter Through the Spectacles of Scripture

by John Huizenga

"In the beginning God created the heaven and the earth. And the earth was without form, and void; and darkness was upon the face of the deep. And the Spirit of God moved upon the face of the waters" (Genesis 1:1-2). With these words God reveals to us that He, with the power of His Word, brought every particle of matter in the universe into existence and also created the space which that matter fills. Today we define matter as "anything that has mass and takes up space."

It may help to think of matter as clay that begins as a formless lump. That lump, however, can be squeezed and formed into an infinite array of different shapes. The clay is one substance, but it can be made into many different things. All the matter of this earth, and perhaps the entire universe, is made out of the one substance we call matter. This matter is all made out of atoms, and atoms are all made out of three smaller particles we call "protons, neutrons, and electrons." When God called this world into existence, He created every single proton, neutron, and electron. All the material that He created was in His hands as clay that would be formed into the earth with everything in it.

Having created all the substance of the universe, God then began to divide and form the various things with which we are familiar. From the formless mass of mat-

ter, God made the water and the earth. From the earth the creative voice of God fashioned the plants. God then called forth the galaxies and stars out of the matter that filled the rest of the universe. Out of the matter that was found in the waters of the earth God fashioned all the life of the oceans and the birds that fly in the air. Finally on the sixth day, the Word of God gathered the necessary matter from the earth and formed the animals. With His own hands God arranged every atom, chemical, and piece of tissue in the body of man and breathed into him the breath of life. God formed all these things from the matter which He created out of nothing.

When we look at matter through the spectacles of Scripture, we see that matter is a created substance. Man has studied matter and has formulated the law which states, "matter cannot be created or destroyed." This is called "The law of conservation of mass." Within the earthly realm this law is true—since the time of creation, neither man nor any earthly creature can create more matter nor destroy it. Matter only changes from one form to another. When two pounds of wood is burned, it turns into two pounds of ash, carbon dioxide, and water. But sinful man takes this law and extrapolates it to make matter an eternal substance. Instead of believing the word of God, he imagines that all the matter of the universe was at one time, billions and billions of years ago,

crammed into a tiny speck which exploded. He imagines that matter naturally condensed into the elements we have today and, as the universe expands, all things including living things evolve into the forms we have today. Through the spectacles of Scripture we see that matter was created by the almighty Word of God and every star and creature on the earth was formed by God according to His eternal plan and design. "Who hath measured the waters in the hollow of his hand, and meted out heaven with the span, and comprehended the dust of the earth in a measure, and weighed the mountains in scales, and the hills in a balance?" (Isaiah 40:12). It is our God.

When we look at matter through the spectacles of Scripture we also see that it is God who upholds the existence of matter. We read in Psalm 75:3, "The earth and all the inhabitants thereof are dissolved: I bear up the pillars of it. Selah." Man in rebellion looks turns from this truth and stubbornly asserts that matter is such that it exists of its own accord. Man also asserts that matter can never be destroyed. On the contrary we read in II Peter 3:12-13, "Looking for and hasting unto the coming of the day of God, wherein the heavens being on fire shall be dissolved, and the elements shall melt with fervent heat? Nevertheless we, according to his promise, look for new heavens and a new earth, wherein dwelleth righteousness." True, it does not say that the elements will cease to exist. Nevertheless, God makes it clear that He is in sovereign control and will do with elements as He pleases.

The Bible says nothing specific about the matter that God created. God does not tell us that matter consists of neutrons, protons, and electrons. God does not tell us that an atom of Hydrogen consists of one proton, one neutron, and one electron. He does not tell us that Helium has two protons, two neutrons, and two electrons. He does not tell us that each element in order after with one more of each particle than the element before is a distinct element with distinct properties. He did not tell us that He attached two Hydrogen atoms to an Oxygen atom to create the water. But He has from the beginning of the world revealed to man that it was He Who created matter with all the amazing properties that it has and it was He Who fashioned the matter into the trees, creatures, and everything else in the world around us.

God determined in His counsel that man would discover how to work with the atoms. The philosopher Thales (c. 640-546 B.C.) observed that things could change from one thing to another (for example a piece

of wood burning to ashes) and concluded that the basic substance, or element, was water. Anaximenes of Miletus concluded that the basic element was air and that as it was compressed, it would become water and finally earth and stone. Heraclitus of Ephesus (c. 540-475 B.C.) suggested that if change characterized the universe then the ever changing fire must be the basic element. Finally Empedocle of Sicily (c.490-c.430 B.C.) came along and suggested that there were four basic elements (earth, fire, air, and water) instead of just one. Democritus (c 470-380 B.C.) was the only one who proposed the idea of different kinds of atoms.

The alchemists worked with the ideas of earth, fire, air, and water for some 2000 years trying to convert various metals into gold without success. It was not until the late 18th century that the idea of atoms became popular and God allowed certain scientists to discover some concrete facts about atoms. Today man has developed in his understanding of the matter of the creation to the point where he also is able to arrange the atoms and make things that never before existed.

As man studies the living creatures and plants he is able to see how the various atoms are arranged to make a particular kind of tissue or structure. Man has recently finished mapping out the long series of molecules that encode the instructions for making every tissue, chemical, and hormone of the human body. This knowledge is at the heart of the whole Industrial Revolution. With every increase of knowledge, man puffs himself up even more with pride, and in doing so God makes known more and more of "his eternal power and Godhead; so that they are without excuse" (Romans 1:20b).

As believers we hold by faith the truth that God created the various kinds of atoms that He hooked together to bring man into existence. Wicked man says, "no, matter is such that the atoms will of their own natural properties connect together and develop into living creatures." By nature we would all deny God. "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 God who from eternity determined that code of instructions within a strand of DNA. God also preserves the existence of the matter and the life within every creature. Looking at matter through the spectacles of Scripture we give continual praise to the Creator. ❖

John is a member of Randolph Protestant Reformed Church and is the editor of Beacon Lights.

Reverend Bernard Woudenberg

edited by Kris Moelker

Rev. Bernard Woudenberg was born to Bernard and Lucy (Hanko) Woudenberg on February 16, 1931. He was born and raised in Grand Rapids, Michigan, in the old First Church area and he was baptized by Rev. Hoeksema.

He attended Baxter Christian School as a boy. This school was located in the First Church area. More than half of the school's student body came from First Church.

After high school, Rev. Woudenberg attended Calvin College. At that time, Calvin College was located just one block away from First Church. While in college, he and his friends would schedule their classes around Rev. Hoeksema's dogmatics classes, and they would walk to the church and audit these classes. Before they started seminary, they had audited all his courses,

Rev. Woudenberg has always enjoyed photography as a hobby.

As he was growing up, Rev. Woudenberg didn't experience the peer pressure that young people face today. There was a certain tendency to follow certain styles, but he can't remember any pressure being placed on the youth to conform to these styles.

On November 19, 1953, Rev. Woudenberg married Frances J. Kerkstra.

At a young age, Rev. Woudenberg was being led and prepared by the Lord for the ministry. "As a child I had developed a deep interest in mission work, and my original intent was to do that kind of work; but with the pressure of the split of 1953, there simply was no option in that direction. Denominational efforts were focused completely on recovering from the rupture in the churches." During high school and college, he and his friends began to have a deep interest in theology.

Undoubtedly, attending seminary during the aftermath of the split of 1953 was a memorable experience for Rev. Woudenberg. He also found interacting intel-

lectually with Rev. Hoeksema, Rev. Ophoff and Rev. Vos to be fascinating.

Ordained a minister of the Word in 1956, Rev. Woudenberg's first charge was in Creston Protestant Reformed Church in Grand Rapids, Michigan. In 1960, the Lord called him to labor in Edgerton, Minnesota. When his labors in Edgerton were finished in 1965, the Lord called him to labor in Lynden, Washington. In 1976, he was called to return to Michigan to serve the congregation in Kalamazoo until he retired in 1996, and became a minister emeritus.

Teaching catechism and Bible classes have always been among Rev. Woudenberg's favorite activities. He enjoyed holding these activities with members of his congregations and people outside the denomination. In these classes, he and those attending these classes would struggle to understand the meaning of a text or a doctrine. He used the dialectical method of teaching throughout his ministry which he learned from Rev. Hoeksema. In this method, the quantity of knowledge was not important, but the attitude one had when approaching the Scriptures was strongly emphasized.

As he labored among his congregations, Rev. Woudenberg knew the importance of being sensitive to the members of congregations. A minister has to speak in terms of what the Scriptures have to say of the members spiritual needs. A pastor may not drive his flock, but he must lead them in the way they are called to go.

Rev. Woudenberg remembers the split of 1953 as a time of great interest and excitement, but it was also a time of confusion. Many did not have a clear understanding of what the split was all about and went where they did to remain loyal to their families and friends. There were often sad consequences of this misunderstanding. "Some soon drifted off in misdirected ways and became very liberal, while others found themselves in areas where they clearly did not belong, and grieved because

of it all through their days. But even we who remained often became more interested in rebuilding our organization than in understanding the principles which were at stake and led to that very sad event.”

There have been many other controversies which we as churches have faced during our existence. Rev. Woudenberg says the consequences were often the same. People had wounded spirits which carried scars that marked the rest of their days.

Rev. Woudenberg has good memories of working with people of God throughout the world. Besides having the privilege to work with many people in our denomination, he has been able to work with saints in Jamaica, Australia and Transylvania. “Everywhere people battle with the spiritual conflicts of life, to which only the Word and Spirit of God has the answer.”

For young men who are considering the ministry of the Word to be their calling, Rev. Woudenberg has this advice. “Learn to deal with the Word of God openly and honestly, and be sensitive to the working of the Spirit of God among His people. Very simple people can often be used by God to confront us with truths which books can never provide.”

Rev. Woudenberg says the interest in the Word of God is not as lively among us as it once was. “We are always in need of the Spirit of God to humble our own pride and to arouse among His people an interest in what He has to say to us.”



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

Thorns

by Tina Zuverink

*You walked into the room today,
You saw me standing there.
The tears were streaming down my face,
You didn't seem to care.*

*I swung and missed the first two times.
I missed the third time too.
And as I walked back into line,
So many laughed with you.*

*The test we took in class was hard.
You knew that I'd do bad.
"It was so easy!" you exclaimed.
You tried to make me sad.*

*Our class is numbered twenty-one,
Can't split up evenly.
The biggest argument of all
Is who gets stuck with me.*

*I wonder if you were to know
Just who you mock and scorn,
If it would make a difference if
You saw My crown of thorns.*

*You see each time you hurt a soul
By something done or said,
You drive the nails into My hands,
Place thorns atop My head.*

*"...Inasmuch as you have done it unto the
least of these my brethren, ye have done it
unto me." Matthew 25:40b*

*Tina is in the ninth grade at Heritage Christian School
in Hudsonville, Michigan.*

Watching Daily At My Gates

by Cornelius Jonker

April 1 Read Genesis 3:15-21

This is one of the best known verses in Scripture and what volumes of comfort it speaks to us. Our first parents, Adam and Eve, succumbed to the devil's lie, plunging themselves and the entire human race into sin. They were filled with dread and were painfully aware of their nakedness inside and out. God in His great mercy comes with the gospel, "I will put enmity..." Then he took a life, shed blood, and covered them with coats of skin. By faith Adam and Eve must look for the Lamb of God Who will lay down His life for His sheep and cover them with His blood of righteousness and redemption. We must understand that this is God's work; our works must be discarded as were the aprons of fig leaves. Our calling is to walk antithetically over against the world, clinging by grace to the promise that God will crush the head of the serpent. Listen to that gospel today—that blessed gospel of the Lamb that was slain for our sin. Thank God for covering your sins and mine with that precious blood and dedicate your lives to His service. Sing Psalter 111:1, 4.

April 2 Read Genesis 6:5-8

We read that sin developed rapidly in the earth after man's fall into sin. People lived to be nine hundred years or more and so were able to grow in various ways of wickedness and teach it to the generations following. Unholy marriages of the sons of God with the daughters of men resulted in a race that increased in sin. God determined to destroy man from the face of the earth. Then we read these wonderful words, "But Noah found grace in the eyes of the Lord." Was Noah any better than the hordes of evildoers surrounding him? And the answer is no; by nature Noah was sinful and depraved, therefore God did not find something good in Noah. But Noah found grace in the eyes of the Lord. He did find something in his own life that assured him that he was the object of God's favor. By grace he hated the wickedness surrounding him and condemned it. What about you, dear reader? Do you find evidence of the Spirit's work in your heart so that you hate the works of sin and love righteousness? Pray then that you may find grace in the eyes of the Lord. Sing Psalter 68:1, 3, 4.

April 3 Read Genesis 44:14-34

We have here one of the most touching passages in all of Scripture. Judah, son of Jacob who with his brothers wickedly conspired to sell Joseph as a slave into Egypt, now faces him and hears that Benjamin must forfeit his freedom and be made a slave. This was the final step in the test which Joseph planned to determine what kind of men his brothers were at present. Judah unburdens his soul, confesses their iniquity and pleads that he himself be made a bondman in the place of Benjamin. This is one of the noblest and most pathos filled speeches in Scripture, and points to a descendent of Judah, namely, our Lord Himself Who said "Greater love hath no

man than this, that a man lay down his life for his friends" John 15:13. He was the perfect substitute. He did lay down His life for us. The world hated Him because He was not of this world. The world also hates us and persecutes us in the measure that we love Him and keep His commandments. If and when this happens, rejoice that we may be counted worthy to suffer for His sake. Sing Psalter 103:1-4.

April 4 Read Genesis 50:14-21

This passage deals with the death of Jacob resulting in the fear of Joseph's brothers that now Joseph might avenge himself for their selling him into slavery. Their consciences still smote them, and they fall at his feet and beg forgiveness. Joseph not only assures their troubled hearts, but answers with a remarkable speech showing his great faith in God that He is sovereign and executes His will also through the deeds of sinful men. "Ye thought evil against me, but God meant it unto good." What a comfort that we too can take from this and a similar passage in Rom. 8:28 "And we know that all things work together for good to them that love God..." Not only the so-called pleasant things but also the afflictions, the sorrows, the heartbreaks work together for good to those who love God. People of God, may this Word comfort and sustain you day by day. Sing Psalter 329:1, 4.

April 5 Read Exodus 12:1-13

The day of Israel's deliverance from Egypt was at hand. The Lord gave specific instructions for this exodus from bondage and demanded absolute obedience to His commands. A lamb without blemish must be killed and roasted whole in the fire. This must be eaten with haste with unleavened bread and bitter herbs. We see symbolism here. The children of Israel must be free of the leaven of Egypt, must know that the way of deliverance will not be easy for the flesh. The lamb with its sprinkled blood pointed in shadow form to the perfect Lamb of God, "When I see the blood I will pass over you." What blessed words then and what blessed words today. What does this mean to you and me, dear reader? Do we walk in obedience to God's commands and worship Him as He requires in His Word? Do we flee from the leaven of this world even though it means a bitter way for the flesh? Is your only hope in the Lamb of God crucified and risen? Pray that the Lord may say to us also when He comes in judgment: "When I see the blood, I will pass over you." Sing Psalter 312:1, 5, 6.

April 6 Read Ruth 1:8-18

How much do you love the truth and the pure preaching of the gospel? Most of us were born into covenant homes and were, or perhaps are, being catechised in the distinctive Reformed truths of Scripture. Do you tend to take this for granted? Others who may read this might have come from a background of Arminianism or

no church at all, and if the Lord opened their heart, they are most enthusiastic for this truth. Our passage today tells about Ruth who was born in a country where idols were worshiped. In God's sovereign mercy she was brought into a family of Israel who dwelt there for a time. She heard about Jehovah from them and when her mother-in-law, Naomi, determined to return to Israel after the death of her husband and two sons, she bade farewell to her two daughters-in-law. One returned to her heathen gods but Ruth would not leave Naomi and spoke the beautiful confession "Thy God is my God," for nothing would deter her, nothing would shake her faith. Young people especially, hold fast to the truth. By God's grace develop in the truth and never forsake it! Sing Psalter 48:1, 3, 8,

April 7 Read Luke 23:33-38

As our attention is drawn to the bitter suffering of our Lord, we wish to devote several meditations to the Savior's words that He uttered on the cross. His first words were "Father forgive them; for they know not what they do." This was such a terrible crime—seemingly unforgivable, for they were shedding the blood of the covenant, the very blood of atonement. For whom did Jesus pray? The Roman soldiers, the Roman government or the Jewish nation? We shouldn't look for individuals or a specific nation, but view this prayer as universal in its extent which includes all of the elect. Shortly before his crucifixion Jesus prayed "I pray not for the world, but for them which thou hast given me; for they are thine" (John 17:9). When Peter at Pentecost charged the multitude with being partakers of the crucifixion although adding that they did this in ignorance, they were pricked in their hearts and cried "what shall we do?" Peter answered "Repent." Are you and I pricked in our hearts as well? Let us pray for daily conversion and rest assured that we are the objects of our Savior's prayer and find rest for our souls. Sing Psalter 362:1, 3.

April 8 Read Luke 23:39-43

Have any words ever been spoken which are more comforting and blessed than these, "Today shalt thou be with me in paradise?" Two thieves, each facing Jesus on their crosses, could not help but read the inscription above his head, "JESUS, THE KING OF THE JEWS." The one, a reprobate void of grace, reviled Him to the end; the other, an elect, who by the wonder of grace had his heart and his eyes opened to see that blessed name "Jesus," or "Jehovah is salvation." An unusual conversion indeed, but he was a confessed sinner supernaturally changed in his last moments of earthly life. One was hardened by the Living Word and the other softened. Today the same effect is wrought by the preaching of the Word. It never returns to God void but accomplishes the purpose whereunto He sends it. Dear reader, you have the privilege to sit under that Word today in divine worship. Pray that your hearts may be opened to respond, "Lord remember me when thou comest into thy kingdom." Sing Psalter 32:1, 3, 4.

April 9 Read John 19:25-27

The experience of seeing a loved one pass away is undoubtedly one of the most difficult and painful events that one ever faces. For the child of God who dies, it is an entrance into unspeakable glory. But it is a severing of ties and, for those left behind, life is never the same. Jesus also had to sever His earthly ties with His mother. This was a loving relationship, one of the strongest and most precious of all earthly ties. Jesus also felt this aspect of sorrow most keenly and his heart was filled with pain at the sight of His mother's grief. He addresses His mother as "Woman," not out of disrespect but because this relationship must not interfere with His suffering as the

Son of God for His people. He lovingly transferred His earthly sonship to His beloved disciple John. For us, death is the last enemy. But Christ took away the sting of death. When we are plunged into sorrow, we may be comforted because our Savior Himself experienced similar grief and loss. Turn to Him, people of God, and look beyond our earthly sorrows to heavenly joys. Sing Psalter 281:1-4.

April 10 Read Matthew 27:46

It is difficult for us to express in words the horrible agony and desolation our Savior experienced in this the acme or culmination of His suffering on the cross. To be forsaken by the world or by friends, we can possibly understand; but to be forsaken by God is unimaginable. Yet this is what Jesus experienced—the Son of God in the flesh forsaken by God the Father. Only in this way could God's holy justice be satisfied. He Who knew no sin had to face the living God in blackness of darkness and drink the bitter cup of God's wrath on account of our sins. Because He was sinless, we are justified. Only in this way could God's mercy and justice be harmonized. For whom did Christ suffer? For everybody, as some would say? No, for those only whom the Father gave to Christ before the foundation of the world. Do you believe in that Christ? Do you love Him? Then be assured of His work of grace in your heart and go forward in thankful obedience. Sing Psalter 47:1, 6.

April 11 Read John 19:28-30

Our passage today begins with the words, "after this," and we might ask "after what?" The apostle apparently refers to Jesus' words which immediately precede our text, namely the severing of earthly ties. However, we learn from other gospels that Jesus spoke an intervening word when He was plunged into the utter depths of the abyss of His suffering and was forsaken by His God. Redemption was now accomplished. He finished His perfect work. Now He might think of Himself in His physical suffering. His fevered body cried out for some relief of His thirst. He had refused wine mixed with myrrh as an intended anesthetic at the beginning of His crucifixion in order to be fully aware of His calling to atone for sin. This was accomplished and now He must fulfill the Scripture that said "I lay down my life...no man taketh it from me." To do this He must be refreshed in His body by a drink. Dear readers, we also have thirsts, don't we? Oh, we can't possibly compare our thirst with that of the dying Savior. More importantly, pray that our souls may long to hear Jesus say to us, "If any man thirst, let him come unto me and drink." Sing Psalter 47:7, 8.

April 12 Read John 19:28-30

After Jesus received the vinegar to slake His thirst, He said these words, "It is finished." Only three words but how fraught with meaning and how comforting to God's people. This is a victory cry. This is the culmination of Jesus' redemptive work. All His earthly life pointed to this moment. He Who was very God took upon Himself our flesh, was mocked, scorned and hated. He was led as a lamb to the slaughter, yet He opened not His mouth. In all this He was the obedient Servant, Who reconciled us to God. What a huge price was paid for that reconciliation. Do you hear the apostle Paul speak to us "There is therefore now no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus?" Because Christ said "It is finished," we stand uncondemned and fully justified before the tribunal of God. What precious words! What a precious Savior! What a glorious salvation! May we humble ourselves at His feet, confess our unworthiness and consecrate our lives to His service. Sing Psalter 263:1, 2.

April 13 Read Luke 23:44-46

Today is Good Friday, the day we commemorate the death of the Son of God. We meditate today on the last of the seven words which Jesus spoke from the cross. Shortly after He exclaimed "It is finished," He said "Father into thy hands I commend my spirit." Having said this He laid down His life and died. Many strange and fearful things happened after that. The earth quaked, rocks were rent, the veil of the temple was rent, and many saints came out of open graves and went into the holy city. These events struck terror into the hearts of the world, but were comforting signs for believers. Outwardly it seemed that this was the end of Jesus and His cause. Satan and the nominal church succeeded in their devilish plans to silence Him once and for all. But nothing could be farther from the truth. Psalm 2 tells us prophetically that the kings of the earth rise up against the Lord and His Anointed. But God laughs and holds them in derision. Our Savior must die. Shall we weep at His death? No, let us sing psalms of joy and thanksgiving. Is it any wonder then why this day is called GOOD FRIDAY? Sing Psalter 3:1, 2.

April 14 Read Luke 23:47-53

There were many spectators on Calvary's hill at the time of Jesus' crucifixion. There was the multitude who clamored for His execution, preferring Barabbas to Christ. There was a small group of Jesus' followers who loved Him. And of course the Roman soldiers who nailed Him to the cross were there along with their leader, the centurion. These people were confronted with the Christ! And always this has an effect. One either bows the knee in contrition, or he shakes his fist in unbelief. Jesus said in Matthew 12:30, "He that is not with me is against me." The cross proclaims judgment and condemnation for the world. The multitude beat their breasts, not in Godly sorrow, but in cowardly fear, and fled away. But then we read something different of the Roman centurion. It appears that the Spirit convicted his heart, causing him to glorify God and exclaim, "Truly this was the Son of God." These are not the words of unbelief, but give evidence of the power of the cross as the first fruit of the harvest of the world. Is this your confession too, dear reader? May God give you grace to be a true soldier of the cross. Sing Psalter 71:1, 2, 5.

April 15 Read John 20:1-8

Today is Easter Sunday, the day we celebrate Christ's resurrection from the dead. John and Peter having been told that Jesus' body had been stolen from the tomb immediately ran there. John arrived first, looked in and saw the linen clothes lying there. Then Peter arrived and impetuously entered, followed by John. Then we read that "he saw and believed." This is a remarkable statement and gives us an insight of his faith. We read in this same passage that they knew not the Scripture that Christ must rise again from the dead. It was evident to John that Jesus could not have risen in His earthly body and returned to this life as Lazarus did. Lazarus came forth still wearing the grave clothing. Jesus' grave clothes were lying in the same position as they were with His body inside, except for the napkin which covered His head. There was but one explanation—the greatest resurrection possible took place! His body had to be raised a spiritual body. That was John's assurance, although he would know more perfectly when the Spirit was poured out. But he believed! Because of Christ's resurrection we too shall be raised. Do you believe this? God grant us this faith. Sing Psalter 28:1, 4, 5.

April 16 Read II Samuel 9:1-11

A beautiful story of kindness and compassion is told of king David who inquired whether there were any persons left of the house of Saul to whom he could show kindness for Jonathan's sake. He is told about Mephibosheth. The name of this lame son means "He scatters shame," and he was living in Lodebar, literally meaning "Desolate land." It may not be wise to spiritualize various events, but it does suggest how spiritually crippled we are, living in shame in a desolate land. Just as Mephibosheth was found by king David and given a place at his table, so we are recipients of God's undeserved grace. He stooped down to save us, redeemed and cleansed us, and gives to us the bread and water of life. This is all His work, done in sovereign grace and mercy. Let us then be humbly thankful, walk in obedience and strive to heed the apostle's admonition, "as we have therefore opportunity, let us do good unto all men, especially unto them who are of the household of faith" (Gal. 6:10). Sing Psalter 98:1, 2.

April 17 Read II Kings 13:20-21

Elijah and Elisha were both great prophets in Israel. Their lives were closely related. One was miraculously translated to glory, the other died a natural death as our passage today relates. Their relationship was much like John the Baptist and the Christ, whose way the former came to prepare. Elijah is pictured as a prophet of wrath; Elisha, a prophet of grace and revealer of life. Sometime after Elisha's death, a corpse was hastily let down into his sepulcher due to a raid by some Moabites. When he touched the bones of Elisha, he revived and stood on his feet. Was there a certain power in those bones? No, but that Word of Elisha, that Word of the resurrection which he spoke while he was alive, continued to speak through his dead body to a people threatened with judgment. Elisha could not have a departure from this life as did Elijah. His Word must continue to be heard. We have this same Word today. It is Christ speaking to us through the preaching of the gospel "I am the resurrection and the life... whosoever liveth and believeth in me shall never die. Believest thou this?" (John 11:25, 26). Sing Psalter 249:1, 2, 6.

April 18 Read Job 1:1-5

We have a beautiful example of parental love and concern in today's passage. We read of Job, a wealthy and God-fearing man who had seven sons and three daughters. This father was so concerned about the spiritual welfare of his children that he rose up early each morning and offered burnt offerings for them all. Burnt offerings in Scripture typified atonement for sin. Job cared deeply whether or not they might have had sinful thoughts in their hearts. Fathers and mothers are you as concerned about your children as was Job? No longer are bloody sacrifices required, but do you daily pray very fervently for their spiritual welfare, firmly, but lovingly reprove them for sinful ways and point them to the cross? Children and young people are you aware of your parent's love for you, and your calling to walk in holiness and obedience for God's sake? Appropriate to yourselves this text from Psalm 119: "Wherewithal shall a young man (or woman) cleanse his way? By taking heed thereto according to thy word." Sing Psalter 322:1-4.

April 19 Read Isaiah 49:13-16

Some of us at one time or another fall into periods of depression and despondency. This may be a result of sin or some other experience that causes much grief and sorrow. Satan often takes advantage of this weakness, causing us to lose assurance of our faith so that we cry out "my Lord hath forgotten me." The example referred to in question form is this: "Can a mother forsake her sucking child?"

That, of course, is not probable nor likely, but it could be possible. Then the Lord tells us that He could not forget His people for they are etched in the palms of His hands. They are, as it were, cut into His hands permanently by His sovereign love and electing grace. What a comfort and assurance, people of God! Cling to Him by faith and “Cast thy burden upon the Lord, and he shall sustain thee” (Psalm 55:22). Sing Psalter 240:1, 3, 5.

April 20 Read Daniel 3:13-18

Nebuchadnezzar, king of heathen Babylon and symbol of the power of this world issued an edict “Worship my golden image.” Three young Jewish lads, Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego were faced with the choice to worship this image or be cast into a fiery furnace. Did they attempt to compromise a bit or look for some way to escape this horrible dilemma? Not at all, but stated “We are not careful to answer thee in this matter.” They did not waver nor were they fatalists, but in childlike faith placed their trust in God even though it could mean physical death for them. We know that in this case God miraculously delivered them. Perhaps we will never be faced with such a severe test, but Satan is always tempting us to deny our faith. Whether these trials are small or large, we must pray for grace to be steadfast as were the three young men who stood before the king. May we, by God’s grace, pray for strength to resist the world and fight the good fight of faith. Sing Psalter 346:1, 2.

April 21 Read Habakkuk 3:14-19

We have here a wonderful confession of joy by the prophet Habakkuk at a time of impending trouble and destruction. In chapter one we read of the cruel Chaldeans whom the Lord would send against Judah because of their sins. Even though the prophet trembled at this prospect, yet he could “rest in the day of trouble.” Then he exclaimed that though the entire land should become utterly desolate, yet he would rejoice in the God of his salvation. And not only would he submit, but bear it willingly and even leap for joy. What a lesson for us. It takes faith to utter these words, not an attitude of Stoicism in which one is unmoved by joy or grief, but a living faith wrought by God, the object of our faith and author of our salvation. We may encounter bitter disappointments or suffer great loss, yet in all trials we must look at the present in the light of the future and praise God for His marvelous grace. Sing Psalter 20:1-3.

April 22 Read Malachi 3:16-18

The voice of revelation was silent for a period of four hundred years after these words of Malachi were written. At that time the exiles had returned from captivity, Jerusalem and the temple were restored, and a form of worship was restored. However, this formal worship was polluted. The priests profaned the holiness of God; the Sadducees, who denied the angel world and the resurrection, were in power as were the Pharisees, a proud, self-righteous sect who preached righteousness by the works of the law. In the midst of this was a remnant of true believers whom God reserved to Himself. These sought each other’s company and spoke to each other of the Lord Whom they loved. God heard them and remembered them in His book. Our situation is not so different today. Can those comforting words be said about us? Parents, do you love to speak about God with your fellow saints and set good examples for your children? Young people do you count it a privilege to attend societies so you may mutually edify each other? The Lord listens to those who fear Him and counts them as His jewels. Sing Psalter 309:1-4.

April 23 Read Matthew 6:24-34

The central thought in this passage is an exhortation to seek first the kingdom of God, thereby making this a priority in our lives. We are citizens of that heavenly kingdom whose ruler is God through Christ. That means that each of us must desire to serve God, obey His laws and to seek it as the fundamental principle of our lives. We seek it, children, when we walk in obedience. We seek it, young people, when we keep ourselves pure and when we search for a Godly life mate. We seek it, adults, when we sacrifice all for it, when we love the truth and are willing to be despised for God’s sake. Can we seek this kingdom in and of ourselves? No, it is the work of God in regeneration, giving us the new life of the kingdom in our hearts. In the way of putting that kingdom first in all of our thoughts, words and deeds, God promises that our earthly needs will be supplied. Let us thank, love and serve this sovereign and providential King. Sing Psalter No. 49:1-3.

April 24 Read Mark 9:17-27

We read here about doubt and trust, unbelief and belief. The distraught father of the demon possessed son sought Jesus’ help after His disciples could not cast out the evil spirit. He said to Jesus, “If thou canst....” Jesus then answered, “If thou canst believe, all things are possible.” In effect, Jesus forces him to look into his heart and examine his faith. By grace he then exclaims through tears of repentance, “I (do) believe; help thou my unbelief.” What about your assurance of faith, dear reader? Do you sometimes doubt God’s work of grace in your heart? We are not always living on the mountain top of faith, but when you sink into the valleys, hear God’s Word telling you, “Being confident of this very thing, that he which hath begun a good work in you will perform it until the day of Jesus Christ” (Phil. 1:6). Then we can also echo this confession, “Lord, I believe, help thou mine unbelief.” Sing Psalter 185:1-3.

April 25 Read John 6:58-69

After Jesus fed a great multitude with bread, He departed from them by ship across the Sea of Galilee, for this people were intent on making Him their king. They would have a king that could deliver them from their enemies and fill them with food. When they found Him on the morrow, Jesus rebuked them and proclaimed that He was the bread of life which came down from heaven. This kind of king and this kind of bread they despised and soon all left Him. Jesus turned to His disciples and said “Will ye also go away?” How true this is yet today. People want a social gospel, one that exalts man. They do not want a righteous and holy God Who loves truth and justice. They do not want to hear about sin and depravity, particular grace and judgment to come. By God’s undeserved grace we can humbly answer Jesus’ question and say, “Lord to whom shall we go? Thou hast the words of eternal life.” People of God, may we indeed count it a privilege to feed on that Word from week to week. Sing Psalter 333

April 26 Read Acts 5:17-29

There are many passages in Scripture that command us to be subject to the civil magistrates for they are powers ordained of God. As a rule, most of their laws are reasonable and the child of God has no problem to obey them. The only time we may and must refuse to obey is when we are commanded to do something contrary to God’s Word. Peter and the apostles, in obedience to Christ’s command to be His witnesses, publicly proclaimed His gospel. They were imprisoned and beaten as a result. Perhaps we may not be faced with such severe demands, but our calling is the same nevertheless. Will we refuse to work on Sunday or refuse to join a godless labor union

even if it costs us our jobs? These are two examples, but let them serve to guide us in this important principle. May we heed the words of Christ in Luke 16:10 “He that is faithful in that which is least is faithful also in much.” Sing Psalter 161:1-3.

April 27 Read Romans 8:24-28

We have a most blessed confession in verse 28: “We know that all things work together for good....” This is an amazing statement which only the child of God can possibly make. All things! Can you imagine that? Not just the things that we would call pleasant, but also the trials, the heartaches, sicknesses, loss of material possessions, and even death itself. How can that be? The answer is that it is good to those who love God. And who are those who love God? They are those whom God loves, for we read in I John 4:19, “We love Him because He first loved us.” All things that happen to us are sovereignly appointed in love for our salvation, and in that confidence we can declare, “For we *know*.” Then face today, tomorrow, and all the rest of our days which God is pleased to give us in that blessed assurance. Sing Psalter 191:1, 6, 7.

April 28 Read II Corinthians 6:14-18

God saw fit to place His church in the world surrounded by unbelievers. He created enmity between the children of God and the children of the world at the very beginning of the human race. In all events of history, God leads His church unto salvation, and uses the world of unbelief in spite of themselves to accomplish this purpose. The world is the tares among the wheat and the scaffolding in the building of His temple. As God’s children, young and old alike, we are called to live in the world but not to be a part of that world. Our passage today tells us that we must not enter into their activities or have close fellowship with them. This is especially true for you, young people. Even though higher education or job seeking puts you in contact with that world, remember your holy calling is to not compromise your principles. Especially as you seek friends and your life’s mate, pray for guidance that you may truly agree in faith, hope and doctrine. Sing Psalter 328:1, 2, 4.

April 29 Read Ephesians 6:10-17

You have many different names as members of God’s church in the world. Some examples are sheep, branches, living stones, and we could name many others. Today we fit the description of soldiers, called to put on the whole armour of God. Five parts of this armour are for defense and one for offense. The Roman soldier at the time in which this epistle was written was well equipped to repel the arrows and swords of the enemy. Today we are called to put on the girdle of truth, the breastplate of righteousness, shoes of the preparation of the gospel of peace, the shield of faith and helmet of salvation as a sure defense against the attacks of Satan. This is spiritual armour, most necessary to overcome our spiritual enemies. The weapon of offense is the sword of the Spirit, namely the Word of God. Feast on that Word today as you hear it proclaimed, and by faith put on the entire armour so that you may be a well equipped soldier in the army of God. Sing Psalter 352:1-4.

April 30 Read III John 1-4

The last verse of our passage today can be echoed with great fervor by many people, but especially pastors, elders and parents. To hear that their children walk in the truth is indeed a cause for rejoicing. What is truth? Truth is a virtue of God; it belongs to His eternal unchangeableness. Truth is revealed in Scripture and there is no truth apart from Holy Scripture. When children walk in the truth, they walk in obedience to that Word and that brings joy. When the spiritual children of the pastor and elders walk in the truth, there is harmony and growth in knowledge and faith. When parents see their children walk in truth, then love, peace, and covenant fellowship abounds. On the contrary, when children or young people do not walk in truth, but rather in rebellion and disobedience, great sorrow is the result. Pastors and elders labor then in heaviness and sorrow, and parents with grief and tears. Children and young people, pray for grace to walk in the truth and you will reap rich harvests of joy. Sing Psalter 213:1-3.

Where We Stand

The True Church

by Rev. Ronald Hanko

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What is the true church of Jesus Christ and where is it to be found? That is a difficult but important question—a question that must be asked as far as membership in the visible church is concerned, but which is very often not so easy to answer.

What makes this question the more difficult is the fact that it is possible for a church, which was once the church of Christ, to become the false church. Christ warns the church of Ephesus of this possibility in Revelation 2:5.

That the church of Ephesus was in danger of becoming the false church is evident from the fact that Christ threatens to remove its candlestick. Those candle-

sticks were pictures of the true church, burning with the oil of the Spirit (Heb. 1:9; cf. also Zech. 4:1-6), and a light in the world (Matt. 5:14). The church of Ephesus was in danger of losing both Spirit and light. That the church there was threatened with the removal of that candlestick *from its place*, meant that it would no longer be Christ's. He would no longer walk in it (Rev. 1:12, 13). In the same manner Christ threatens to spit the church of Laodicea out of His mouth (Rev. 3:16).

What is so frightening in the case of these two churches is the fact that Christ threatens them with judgment for losing their first love (Rev. 2:4) and for lukewarmness and carnal security (Rev. 3:16, 17). No doubt there are many churches today that are in danger of coming under the same judgments and for the same reasons.

The true church of Christ, therefore, is that church which keeps its first love (2:4), does what Christ commands (Rev. 2:5), is faithful (2:10), repents of its sins (2:16), holds fast what it has (2:25), is watchful (3:3), whose members do not defile their garments (3:4), keeps Christ's Word and does not deny His Name (3:8). There are not many such today.

It is evident, however, from these passages that not all churches are equally pure. The churches which Christ addresses in Revelation 2 and 3 range from those against

which He has no complaint, to those which are threatened with destruction. Nevertheless, they are all still addressed as churches, as is also the church of Corinth with all its problems in Paul's two Epistles to that church.

This is important. It means that in searching for the true church we are not searching for a *perfect* church. As long as there is sin in the world and also in God's people, such a church cannot be found, and we must not turn the search for a true church into a search for a perfect church, as many do. Then we will be members of no church.

This is important also, because it means that no church or denomination can claim (as Rome does and as some Protestant churches also do) to be the *only* true church of Christ. There is a wide range of churches, more or less pure and true, that represent at least to some degree the church of Christ.

Nevertheless, Christ's words to the churches in Revelation 2 and 3 make it clear that both in seeking church membership and in fulfilling the responsibilities of church membership, we must seek purity, truth and faithfulness for His sake. ❖

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Church Family

Obedience or Submission?

by Kevin Gritters

Every day we are faced with this question: Do we simply obey those in authority, or must we submit to them? Whether this be with respect to parents or the government, there is a clear distinction between obedience and submission. The world does not often see this difference, but we, as Christians, should be able to recognize it. There is much more to our calling to our superiors than simple obedience.

To obey is to perform that which those in authority have commanded. The act of obedience does not neces-

sarily include respect. Thomas Jonathan (Stonewall) Jackson said, "My duty is to obey orders." He recognized that no matter what his opinion, he had no choice but to carry out the command. The generals who gave the mandates were in control, and although he did not always agree with or respect them, Jackson could only consent.

Submission is to willingly place oneself under those in authority with an attitude of honor and respect. It is to recognize that God created every relationship between

those in authority and those under it. Romans 13:2 plainly states that, “Whosoever therefore resisteth the power, resisteth the ordinance of God.” The *power* referred to here is the authority that God established at the beginning of time. We must be motivated to pay tribute and respect to that authority because they are “God’s ministers” (Romans 13:6). God’s purpose in creating government was to provide order and protection for His people.

Submission is not simply an act of obedience. Even if someone followed every law crafted by the authorities, he would not necessarily be submitting to it. In order for there to be submission, an attitude of love, honor, and respect must accompany obedience.

Even if someone followed every law crafted by the authorities, he would not necessarily be submitting to it.

We can clearly recognize the emphasis on submission over obedience by examining our relationships to our parents and the government.

The relationship between parents and children is fundamental to our understanding of submission. God commanded us to not only obey our parents, but also to honor and love them. Deuteronomy 5:16 says, “Honor thy father and thy mother, as the Lord thy God hath commanded thee.” The command to obey parents is implied in the Fifth Commandment. If we really honor and love our parents, we will strive to obey and submit to them.

The necessity of order in the home is imperative. Without order, chaos would reign and almost nothing could be accomplished as planned. For there to be order, there must be obedience, love, and honor between both parents and children.

Children must obey their parents willingly. Those who obey their parents but really don’t want to are not submitting. It is simple to obey, but difficult to submit. When a parent tells a child to go to his room because he was naughty, the child would obey if he went to his room. However, he would not submit if he slammed the door so hard that picture frames rattled off the walls. This is not the attitude of love and honor that is required of children. The child *would* submit if he calmly descended the stairs, quietly closed the door, and reverently evaluated his actions before God.

It is simple to obey, but difficult to submit.

Order within the state is also imperative. To have order in the state, the citizens must willingly consent to the laws of the government and respect it in everything it does. This obedience and respect represents our submission to the government. However, we must not submit to the authority only because we are afraid of the consequences if we fail to submit. Again Romans 13 explains, this time in verse six: “Wherefore ye must needs be subject, not only for wrath, but also for conscience sake.” We must submit to the government because our conscience, created by God, tells us to be submissive to its authority.

Our compliance to the government is characterized by our willingness to pay taxes regardless of the cause for which the money is being collected. “Render therefore to all their dues: tribute to whom tribute is due, custom to whom custom” (Romans 13:7). Paul tells us here to give to the government because it is due them. Nothing we possess is ours, and we need to support the authority that God placed over us.

The solitary reason that can justify our disobedience to authority is if it commands and requires us to do something contrary to Scripture. Then, even though we must disobey, we must do so with respect and honor because God ordained the authority. When Peter and the other apostles were directly commanded not to preach in Christ’s name, they replied, “We ought to obey God rather than men” (Acts 5:29). The apostles disobeyed the authority, but still submitted to it by going to prison willingly and by not instigating rebellion.

Next time we ponder the question of obedience or submission, we should know the answer immediately. God requires submission of us, and He will give us the strength to carry out that calling. Submission is not simply an outward act; it is a matter of the heart. We must submit not only in obedience, but also in love, honor, and respect to our parents and the government. ❖

Kevin is a member of Hudsonville Protestant Reformed Church in Hudsonville, Michigan. He wrote this essay for Senior Writing at Covenant Christian High School.

The Fourth Man

A Story from the Time of the Afscheiding

by P. S. Kuiper

translated by Rev. Cornelius Hanko

Chapter 6

At the Edge of the “Duivelshoek” (Devil’s Corner)

(Editor’s Note: In these chapters the author gives us pictures of different aspects of life in the Netherlands in the early 1800s. He has given us a glimpse of school life, of home life, of life in the weaving mills, and of the differences between rich and poor. In each case the author introduced the religious and doctrinal differences between people. The reader will remember, for example, the description of the modernistic moralism taught in the schools, and the dissatisfaction with this teaching on the part of some parents. In the last chapter we were introduced to the bitter struggle the poor had to earn their daily bread, and the callous cruelty of the wealthy, even though they belonged to the same church. At the same time the author suggested the different moral standards that existed between the two segments of society. In this chapter that latter theme is developed a bit more. Our forebears, for the most part, were from the poor and oppressed in the land.)

“Nothing doing, woman. You stay lying where you are for the first few hours.”

“Yes, but...”

“No yes-buts. You do what I say.”

Gerritje Jansen, the old midwife, knew what she was talking about and with a sigh the pale woman laid herself down again on her bed of moss.

The midwife straightened her pillow, which was filled with oat husks, and tucked her in with a piece of carpet that had to serve as a blanket. “There. Now we are going to take care of your son.”

Gerritje lifted up the newly born baby and examined it with an expert glance.

“A beautiful fellow, Evert!” she called to his father, who stood by with a strange look on his face. “He is much stronger than your former child who always stayed scrubby.”

“Fortunately, Krijntje survived. But this one does look like a beauty, Gerritje. We should be very thankful to God.”

“Oh, you belong to the church, eh. Well, of course, that is where almost all of you belong, even if it is only to give the deaconate something to do!” The midwife laughed in a cackling voice.

“Until now we have had no need for support, midwife,” said Evert Splint somewhat sharply. “Well, that will not last very long, man, with a coop full of boys. But let me take care of your youngest!”

“To start things off, give me some lamp oil.” Evert pattered about the one room house and gave the midwife that which she requested. “That’s good. Can you now let one of the children fetch some warm water for a little broth?”

Splint nodded, took a pan and opened the door. “Antje, come here a moment.” A wisp of a girl, who was ten years of age, ran to him. “Father, may I see my little brother?” “After a while, child, but go first to the water and fuel shop. Gerritje needs hot water. Here is a half cent.” Antje ran away with her empty pan.

“At the same time you can give me some wine, Evert,” the midwife added in a bossy tone. Now it was Splint’s turn to draw up his eyebrows.

“We don’t have wine here in our house, Gerritje.”

“Mr., you can fool yourself, but not me,” giggled the midwife, who thought that Splint was kidding her.

“I repeat, that in this house you find no wine, midwife. We have seen too much misery around here because of drink.”

Gerritje Jansen had had much experience in her rounds, but never yet a weaver who did not have wine in his house. For a moment she stood speechless, which did not happen very often.

“Man, I don’t like that, I must certainly rub the baby in wine. Nothing sterilizes better. I have done that for forty years. Hurry and send your second child for a bottle!”

Splint stood for a moment struggling in his own mind. He disliked any strong drink, and he distrusted the “professional knowledge” of the old midwife.

“I’ll go myself a minute, Gerritje,” he said. “So long.” He stepped outside, crossed the street and disappeared into the Lane. For no money in the world did he want his children in this neighborhood, which for a good reason was called the “Duivelshoek” (The Devil’s Corner).

Which tavern would he go to? He had plenty of choice. There were fifteen close together. Finally he walked into the tavern called “De Jonghe Graaf van Buure.”

“Refined Evert,” as he was jestingly called in the taverns, was welcomed with a mocking roar.



Just when her father walked out of the door Antje came back with a pan of warm water and eagerly went inside. She set the pan down in front of the midwife, first gave her mother a kiss and then bent down near the little Berend.

“O, how wonderful, mother. Midwife, may I help you?”

“Yes, go make me a bit of green soap. Hurry up or the water will get cold.” She was already busy rubbing the baby in with lamp oil. After the oil it got a washing with the soap sop Antje had made. It was quickly and deftly done. The little girl’s face shone with pride because of the small compliment she received from the midwife. Mother lay helplessly watching the activity from her bed. Antje would have gladly washed the baby herself, but Gerritje would not allow that. She would not let the foot part of the stocking, that served as wash-cloth, out of her hand.

Suddenly there was a noise at the door.

“That will be your father with the wine,” the midwife guessed. However, when Antje opened the door there stood three weavers at the threshold, all neighbors from that street.

“Hello, big girl, is your father at home? We are come to take a look at the little one.”

That meant in the language of the weavers: “We are come to have a drink.” “No, he has just gone to get some wine,” Antje answered somewhat helplessly.

A thunderous laugh was the answer. “Do you hear that, boys? Refined Evert has gone to get a drink. Now he’s going in the right direction for a change. We are glad to wait a little while. Good girl.”

“O Gerritje, please send them away,” whispered mother when she saw that the neighbors were making attempts to come in.

Well, the midwife was very capable of that. She got up, walked to the door, pulled Antje aside, placed her hands on her sides and told the men in plain Hilversum¹ language that it would not do at all to have a drink if the baby was not yet cared for.”

The weavers grinned in agreement. Deep down they actually liked the bossy midwife, and the language she used especially appealed to them. You could say about Gerritje Jansen whatever you wanted, but she had a pleasant way of speaking.

“Else go first to Norbert Majoor I was also midwife there this morning.” The men considered that a reasonable suggestion and with a grin they left, considering the midwife’s suggestion an invitation to return later.

Koen looked very surprised when he saw his father coming out of the Lane with a bottle of wine. But he could see on his father’s face that it was for a good purpose.

“Father, they said at Elbert Peet² that you had already left at four o’clock,” he stammered. “Did something happen this afternoon?”

“Come on along inside, boy. This afternoon you received a brother and everything is fine. His name is Berend.”

A little later they sat watching the “treatment” of the new member of the family. Gerritje rubbed Berend in with wine³ and put on a little shirt, a skirt and a diaper. The youngest member of the Splint family took all this quietly. But when the midwife also wrapped him tightly in a blanket, which took at least forty pins, he broke the silence and set up a howl that rattled the windows. But Gerritje knew what to do in a case like that. She took from the cupboard a small piece of bread, chewed it a moment and sewed it with some sugar in a small cloth, although she never stopped talking for a single moment. In the meantime she put the pacifier in

Berend's mouth. He immediately began to suck it, and peace returned. She stood watching with satisfaction.

"My task is finished here. In the meantime you know what to do. Tonight you give him some weak coffee with sugar, and after tomorrow broth. Then after fourteen days he can eat out of the family pot. Don't wash him too much, you hear. That is unhealthy for such a little lamb. On Sunday give him a good washing, and three times a week a clean diaper. And as far as you are concerned, Sijtje, do not do any weaving for a long time. Farewell to you." After this advice from the "expert" the old midwife hastily trudged to the door. "Thank you, Gerritje,"

Splint said, letting her out. "I don't want thanks. I would rather have a few drops," she spat back venomously at him.

Shaking his head, Splint closed the door behind her broad shoulders.

¹The name of the town which is the setting for this book. She spoke in the crude dialect and slang of that region.

²The name of the weaver where Mr. Splint worked.

³The alcohol served as an antiseptic. ❖

Church News

Church News

BAPTISMS

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

Mark 16:16

The sacrament of Holy Baptism was administered to:

Taylor Mae, daughter of Mr. & Mrs. Dave Doezema—Faith, MI

Alex Christian, son of Mr. & Mrs. Scott VanUffelen—Faith, MI

Stephanie Marie, daughter of Mr. & Mrs. Greg Holstege—Faith, MI

Luke Austin, son of Mr. & Mrs. Matt Stoel—Grace, MI

Hannah Grace, daughter of Mr. & Mrs. Erin Windemuller—Grace, MI

Alexander Jon, son of Mr. & Mrs. Chris Groenhof—Georgetown, MI

Jacob Nelson, son of Mr. & Mrs. David Overweg—Hudsonville, MI

Jason David, son of Mr. & Mrs. David Overweg—Hudsonville, MI

Samuel Ryan, son of Mr. & Mrs. Mark Hoekstra—Hull, IA

Lydia Hope, daughter of Mr. & Mrs. John Huizenga—Randolph, WI

Dylan Henry, son of Mr. & Mrs. Paul Kamps—Southeast, MI

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:

Nathan Aardema—Doon, IA

Aaron Knott—Grace, MI

Rebecca DeVries—Hope, MI

Melinda Barnhill—Hudsonville, MI

Dustin Boven—Hudsonville, MI

Mike Cnossen—Hudsonville, MI

Carrie Dykstra—Hudsonville, MI

Nate Dykstra—Hudsonville, MI

Sara Ensink—Hudsonville, MI

Derek Haveman—Hudsonville, MI

James Jansma—Hudsonville, MI

Jonathan Kamps—Hudsonville, MI

Lynnae Lubbers—Hudsonville, MI

Tim Wigger—Hudsonville, MI

Katie Kuiper—Hudsonville, MI

Hib Kuiper—Hudsonville, MI

Nathan Lanning—Hudsonville, MI

Sara DeBoer—Hudsonville, MI

Kyle Kamps—Hudsonville, MI

Richard Poortinga—Peace, IL

Dwight Kuiper—Southeast, MI

Jordan Pipe—Southeast, MI

Marc Velthouse—Southeast, MI

Lois Kuiper—Southeast, MI

Ben Zandstra—Southwest, MI

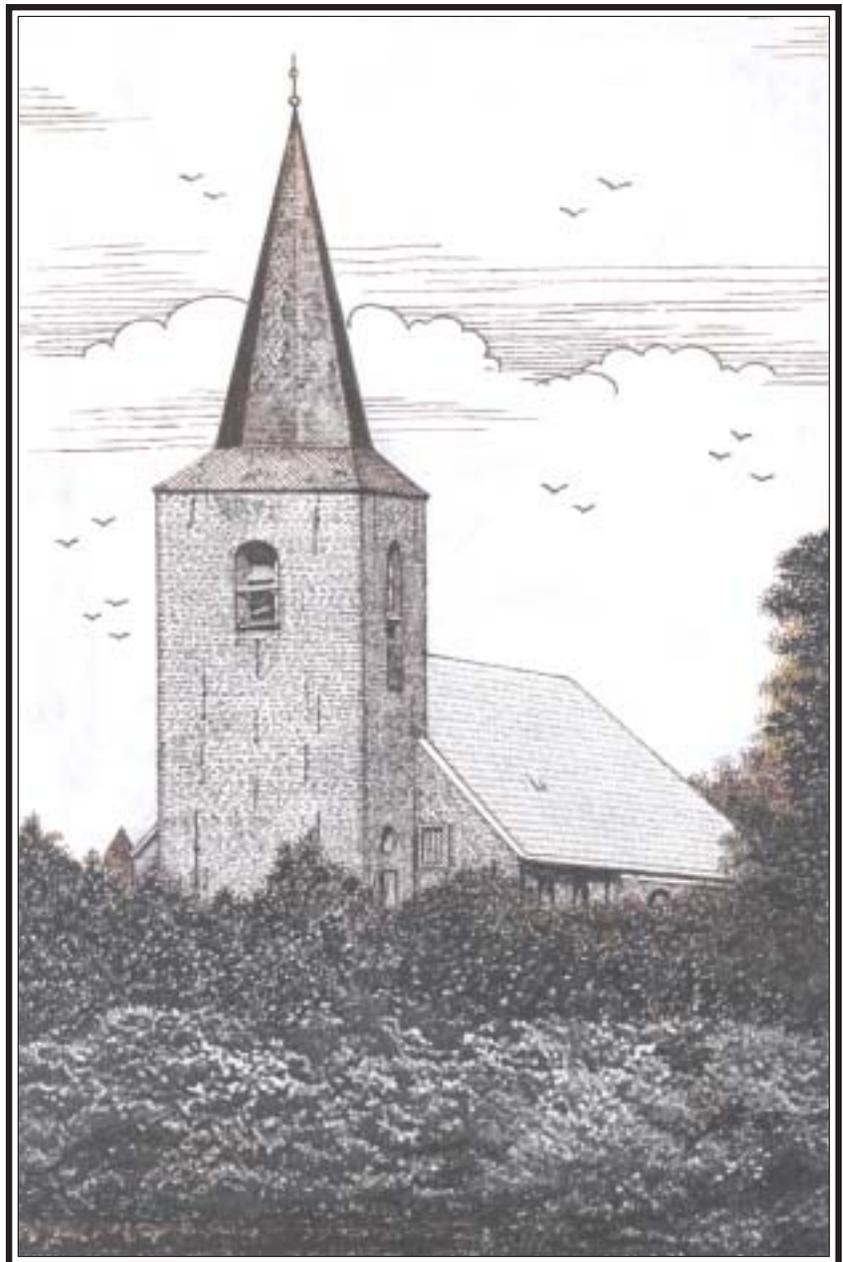
Leshia Kuiper—Southwest, MI

The State Reformed Church of Eenum

By J.P. de Klerk

This Church was built in 1190, but since that year it has been destroyed, altered, enlarged or made smaller, partly closed off, rebuilt, and restored numerous times using different kinds of bricks, and nobody seems to know what the original looked like. However, it is a fact that the people who decided to build it, made first a hill, because they had to protect it against the yearly floods, since there were not yet dykes in those days. This is the center of the village of Eenum, which is part of the municipality 't Zandt, in the North-Eastern part of the Dutch province of Groningen. Everything has been kept very simple, without any decorations. Excavations have shown that the first inhabitants must have been there about 450 years after Christ. They were probably people who were dislodged by the Huns of Attila. ❖

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



Mark Your Calendars!

for May 21-24

Discipleship: *Our Calling*

Rev. Gritters- Cost of Discipleship

Rev. Spriensma- Rewards of Discipleship

Plan to visit:

New Jersey and Covenant Protestant
Reformed Church for fellowship and
fun at Long Beach Island.

Covenant Protestant Reformed
Young People's Society

"LITTLE LIGHTS"

Triple Layer Leap (1)

... let it shine!

by Connie Meyer

Karen dropped her school bag onto the ground and plopped down next to it. It had seemed like a long day. A few minutes by herself on the edge of Oakleaf Pond was all she wanted. But she studied the ripples on the water for only a few seconds before she heard the swish of footsteps in the grass behind her.

"Hi, Karen! I saw you leaving school and hurried to catch up. My homework is finished and I have some time before I have to be home, so I thought maybe we could do somethin' together." Laurie sat down next to Karen on the bank of the pond. Several mighty oaks encircled the pond with their lush green branches curving over the water. It looked like a peaceful setting for friends to laugh and chatter, but Karen was in one of her less-than-pleasant moods. She greeted her friend Laurie unenthusiastically.

"So," continued Laurie, "what would you like to do?"

Karen pursed her lips. An idea flashed into her mind.

"Why don't we see who can run and leap from the bank, to that rock, and then jump up onto the branch of that tree over the water." Karen watched to see the reaction of her friend. She knew Laurie wasn't very athletic, while she herself loved to run and jump.

"Well, um, I don't know..." Laurie hesitated.

"Oh, c'mon. I'll do it first. See." Karen backed up several paces and took the leap. She nearly slipped, yet she landed successfully on the bough of the oak. "See," she repeated, "It was easy. You can do it."

Laurie didn't want to disappoint her friend. Nor did she want to look cowardly and foolish. She backed up and ran towards the bank with all her might.

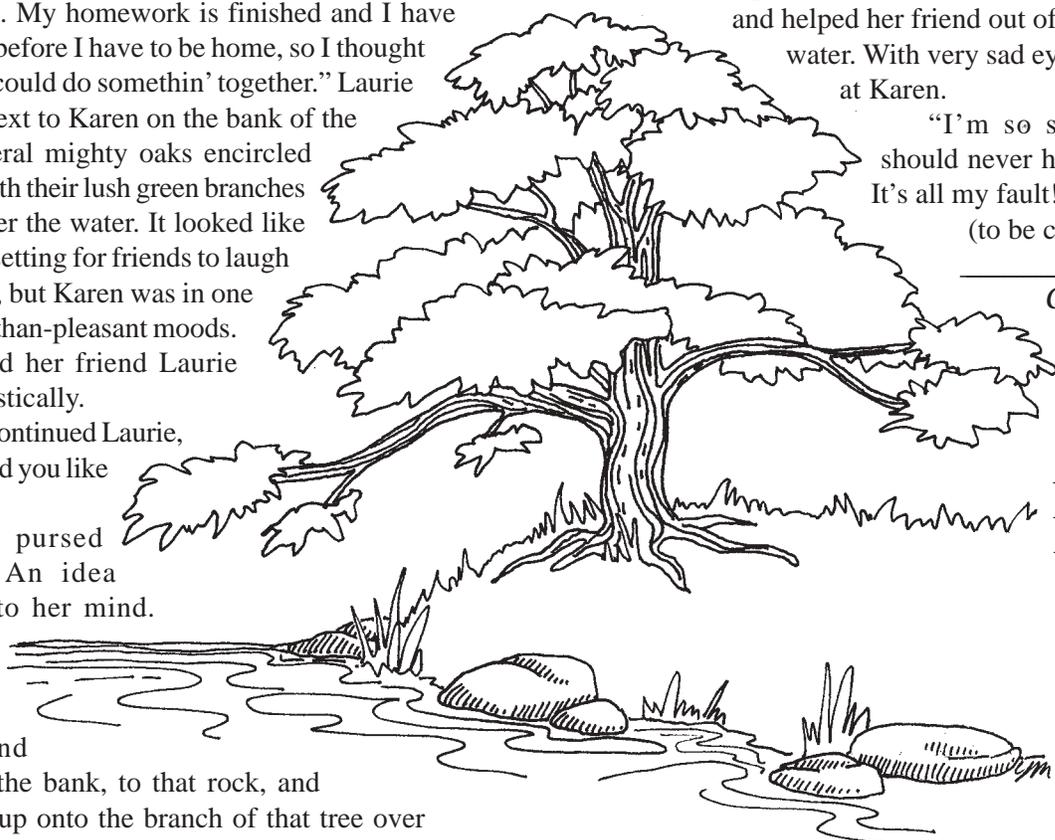
"Laurie, stop! I was just kid—"

But the stab of remorse that inflicted Karen's heart was too late. Before Karen could think of the words, "love thy neighbor as thyself," Laurie promptly slipped into the pond. Karen scrambled out of the oak tree and helped her friend out of the cold, muddy water. With very sad eyes Laurie looked at Karen.

"I'm so sorry, Laurie. I should never have suggested it. It's all my fault!"

(to be continued) ❖

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



Unscramble these words from Romans 3:20:

"REETHREFO by the SDEDE of the WLA there shall

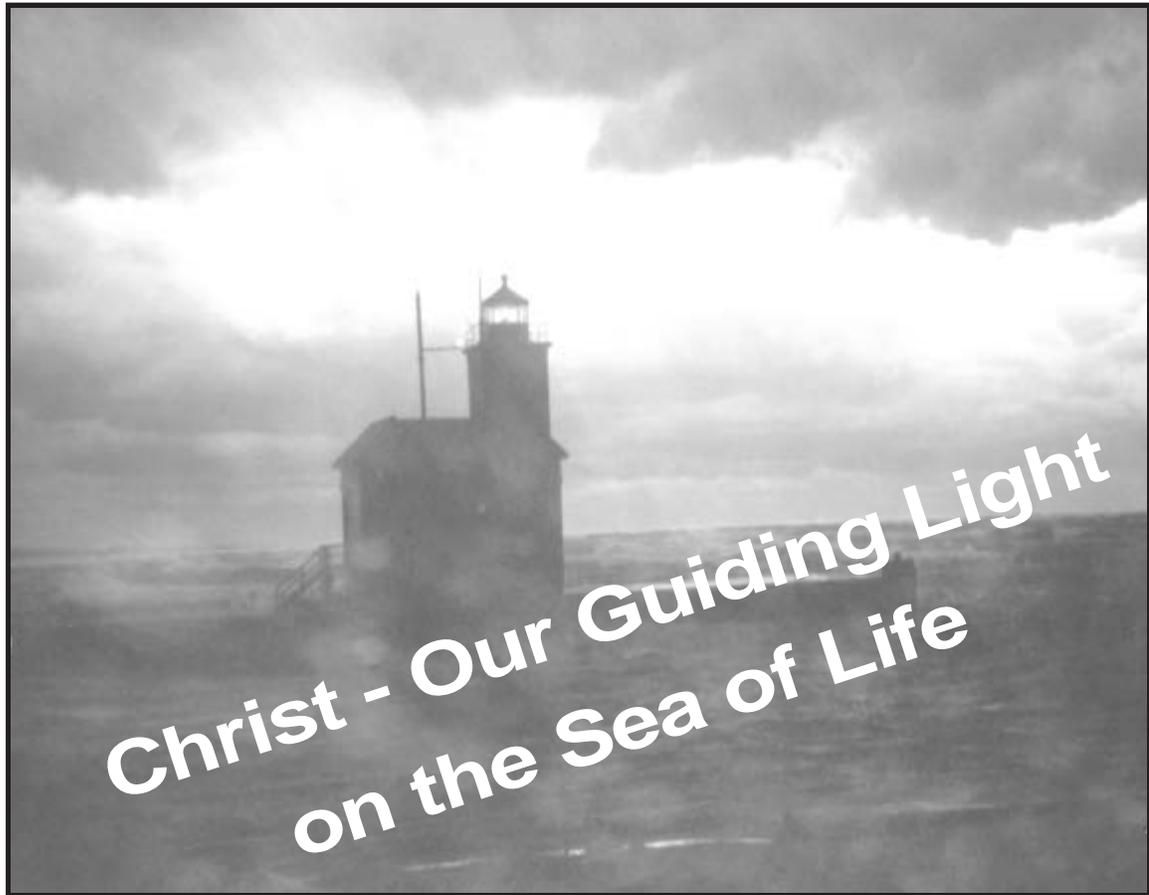
no SLEFH be TUIDSIJEF in His STHIG: for by the AWL

is the WELKOGEDN of INS."

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of Holland, Michigan Young People's Society

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Check out the 2001 Convention link on our website for pictures & more details: www.hollandprc.org.