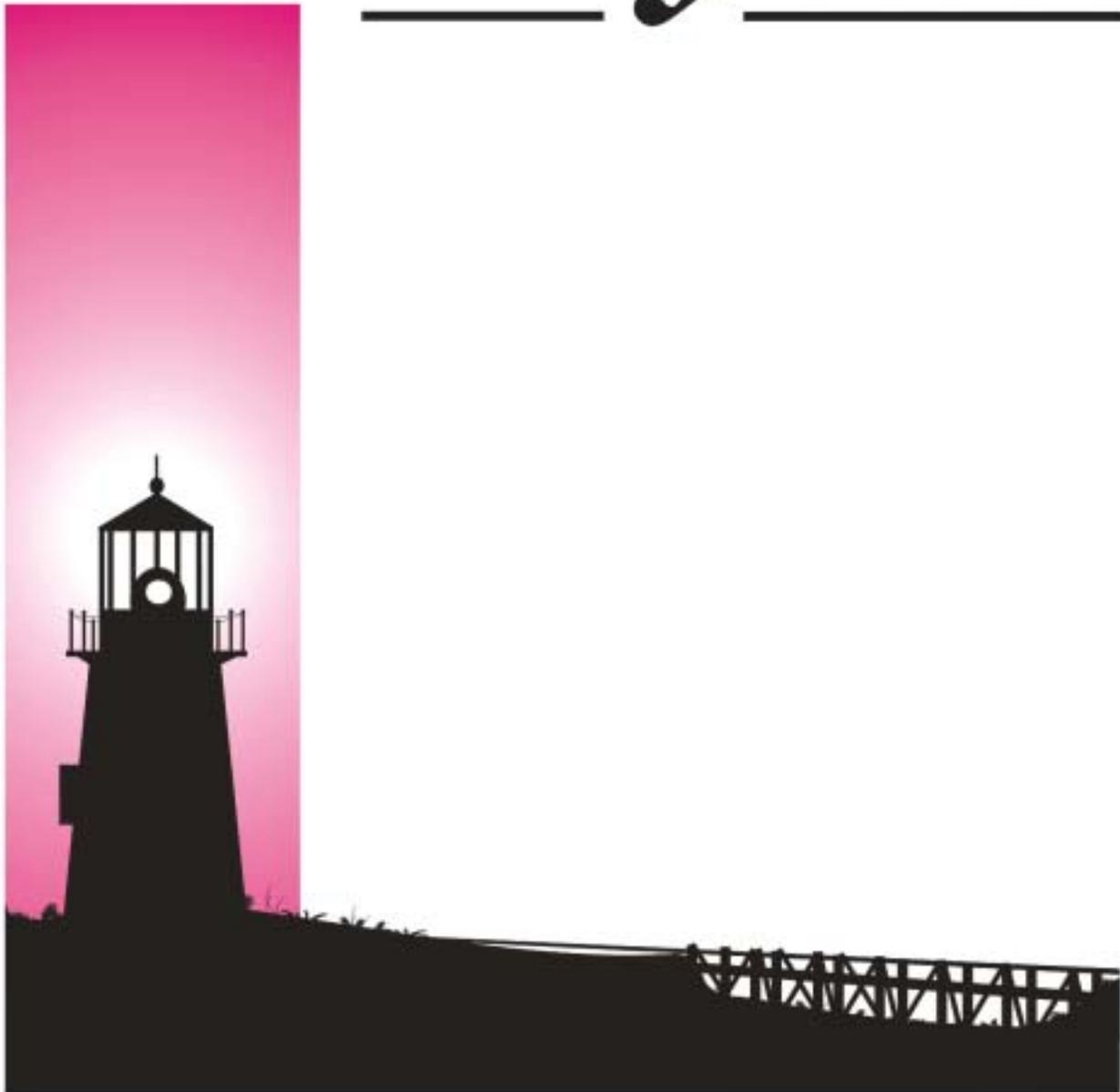


# *Beacon Lights*

July  
2001

Volume LX  
Number 7



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# Be Afflicted, and Mourn, and Weep... He Shall Lift You Up



by Randy Vaalburg

*“Cleanse your hands, ye sinners; and purify your hearts, ye double minded. Be afflicted, and mourn, and weep: let your laughter be turned to mourning, and your joy to heaviness. Humble yourselves in the sight of the Lord, and he shall lift you up.” (James 4:8-10)*

Those inspired commands came from the mouth of James, the brother of Jesus. He addressed chiefly members of the early church of the New Testament period. He referred to them as “sinners” and “double minded” because of their outwardly corrupt lives. Those addressed placed too much value on earthly pleasures and worldly friendships and were caught up in the pursuit of material things. James admonished them to put an end to their evil actions, purify their hearts, and be sincere before God. Then they could seek to please Him.

We must not think the commands have no relevance for us. Just the opposite is true. The commands go out to all of us, for we all have been born and conceived in sin and have transgressed all of God’s laws. Each child of God must confess “For the good that I would I do not: but the evil which I would not, that I do” (Rom. 7:19). This confession is not only to be made by believing adults or more mature Christians. It is true that we come to a more conscious knowledge of what sinful creatures we are as we grow older, see more things to repent of, and are more likely to repent of some things than when we were younger. Yet, the inspired commands of James apply to young adults and children, too.

The apostle’s command “Be afflicted...” is interesting. Most of us can easily remember a time when we were being afflicted somehow. The affliction, or hardship may have involved someone close to us passing away or maybe it was the pain we felt when being mocked by classmates—persecution for righteousness’ sake—perhaps when not giving in to peer pressure at school. We were going through hardship in spite of ourselves. We were not asking for it, but it came upon us. Here, however, the word affliction is used in a command, “Be afflicted...” Submit to the will of God, painful as it may sometimes be! Note that James explicitly commands “Submit yourselves to God” earlier in the text (vs. 7). Sometimes the act of submitting to God can be an affliction because doing so is contrary to the nature of our sinful flesh. However, we must “despise not the chastening of the LORD; neither be weary of his correction” (Prov. 3:11).

How is the child of God called to submit here? By mourning and weeping: “Be afflicted, and mourn, and weep...” In self pity? No, the mourning and weeping is to be over the awfulness of our sins and the rampant wickedness all around us committed against our Heavenly Father. Proof for this can be found by referring to another passage where the same word “mourn” is used. In the sermon on the mount, one of the beatitudes was “Blessed are they that mourn: for they shall be comforted” (Matt. 5:4). The word translated mourn here is the same word in the original language as the word “mourn” in our text. Literally, it means to grieve. In the beatitudes, Christ described righteous attributes that must characterize His people: poorness in spirit, meekness, hungering and thirsting after righteousness, etc. In possessing these, by the Holy Spirit’s work in and through us, we will be blessed. To mourn or grieve over our sins is a

righteous act. This kind of mourning is referred to in the beatitudes. This is also what our text in James speaks of. Grieving over sins is a virtue of all of God's people, even as it was in the parable of the publican who beat upon his breast because of sorrow for his sins (Luke 18:13).

In contrast to submitting to the will of God, the "double minded" scorners experienced empty "joy" and indulged in sensual pleasures. Their laughter showed how they deceived themselves, savored their sins, and denied God's judgment. They were living their lives the exact opposite of those who put on sackcloth and ashes. Jesus Himself tells what just judgment will come upon those that laugh and live in impenitence. To the self-righteous Pharisees He proclaimed "...Woe unto you that laugh now! For ye shall mourn and weep" (Luke 6:25). Undoubtedly, these scorners laughed not only about their evil ways, but about the wickedness all around them. All of us, at one time or another, have gone along with the crowd by either laughing at a cruel joke or rebellious attitude, or by not speaking out against sin as we should have. What spiritual joy we have when our Faithful God shows us our sin! He brings us to repentance that we put off unrighteousness and delight in His righteousness. Thirsting after righteousness will bring us to speak in love against sin to a brother or sister that is walking in sin.

All the sins of God's elect have been paid for by the effectual work of Jesus Christ on the cross once for all. "Why plead forgiveness then? Our sins are all gone," one might say. Not so, "O wretched man that I am! who shall deliver me from the body of this death?" (Rom. 7:24). As sheep, we regularly go astray, all of us going our own way. We would not want our lives to become like that of King David when he lived in unrepentant sin for a time. His painful spiritual, emotional, and physical condition was the result of sin upon sin that he had committed and was able to hide from himself by self-deceit for a time, but was unable to hide from our all-knowing God. Finally, David was ready to "halt" or literally fall down on account of sins not repented of that had piled up and now were "continually before" him (Ps. 38:17)! Instead of allowing sins to "pile up," daily confession of them before the Most High will allow us to more and more hate our sins so that we may be able to say with the psalmist "I will set no wicked thing before mine eyes: I hate the work of them that turn aside; it shall not cleave to me" (Ps. 101:3). This confession is evidence of a godly sorrow over sin. This godly sorrow will work in us much spiritual joy.

As mourners over our sins, we will be "blessed" and "comforted." How will we be blessed? And how will we be comforted? We will receive blessed comfort when the Spirit reminds us that because of Christ's perfect work, our sins have been removed infinitely far from us. "For as the heaven is high above the earth, so great is his mercy toward them that fear him. As far is the east is from the west, so far hath he removed our transgressions from us" (Ps. 103:8-12). By mourning over our sins, we humble ourselves in the sight of the Lord. He gives rest unto our souls. The Lord takes our heavy burden in exchange for His easy yoke. By humbling ourselves in His sight, He will hear us, for He hears the desire of the humble (Ps. 10:17). And, by humbling ourselves in His sight, He will lift us up! Not so that we may enjoy a state of pride. Instead, that we may praise our merciful Lord with the psalmist "Not unto us, O LORD, not unto us, but unto thy name give glory, for thy mercy, and for thy truth's sake" (Ps. 115:1). ❖

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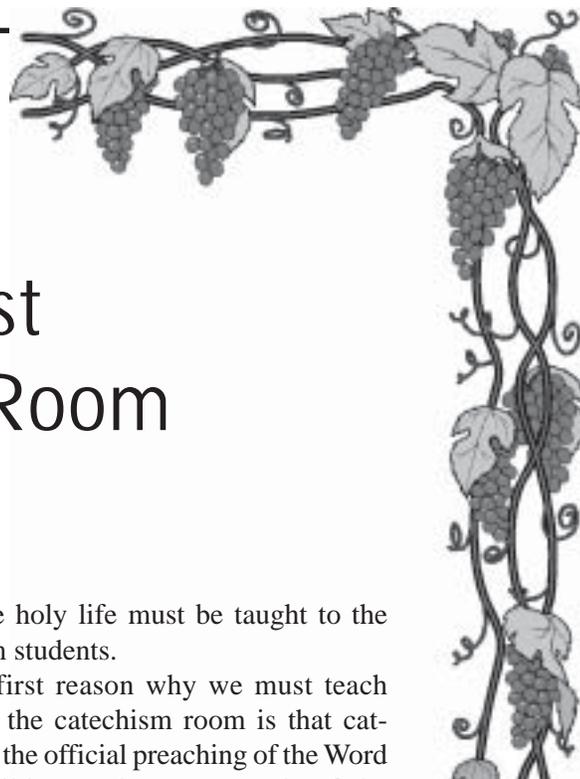
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by humbling ourselves in His sight, He will lift us up!

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# Teaching Christ in the Catechism Room

by Rodney Kleyn

## *Scholarship Essay for 2000*

Central to all catechetical instruction is the teaching and preaching of Christ and His cross. The reasons for this, the “why?” of teaching Christ in the catechism room, are two. First, Catechism is preaching, and second, covenant children are taught in catechism. The way that Christ is taught in the catechism room, the “how?” of teaching Christ in catechism, is to teach the history and truths of Scripture. All of these center around and point to Christ.

Before we look at the “why” and “how” of teaching Christ in the catechism room, we must understand what is meant by “Christ” and “teaching Christ.” By “Christ” in connection with teaching we mean especially what is said by the Apostle Paul in I Corinthians 2:2: “For I determined not to know any thing among you, save Jesus Christ, and him crucified.” Here Paul is speaking of his ministry and preaching among the Corinthians. He points out that the content of the gospel is Christ and his being crucified. This crucifixion of Christ which is the content of the gospel points out to us especially two things. The first is the sinfulness of our nature. Christ, the Son of God, had to die in order to pay the price for our sins. The second thing it points to is the great mercy and love of God in delivering us from sin and in satisfying for our sins. As Romans 5:8 says, “But God commendeth his love toward us, in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us.” When we speak of preaching and teaching the cross of Christ, these two things must be on the foreground; first, our sin and misery, and second, God’s great love in the death of Christ. One further truth must be taught in connection with preaching and teaching the cross of Christ; that is that those who are purchased to be God’s children by that cross must live as God’s chil-

dren. The holy life must be taught to the catechism students.

The first reason why we must teach Christ in the catechism room is that catechism is the official preaching of the Word to the children and young people of the church. When we say that catechism is the

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the church.

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official preaching to the children, we mean that it belongs to the official duty of the church to instruct and teach the children of the covenant. To be sure, the duty of instructing children does belong in the home. There, children must be brought up in the fear of the Lord. But, it is also the duty of the church, as institute, to officially instruct the children of the covenant. The church does this in catechism. This instruction is the official work of the church by her appointed office bearers. That this instruction belongs to the duty of the church institute is clear from Scripture. In the Old Testament the church received instruction from God to teach her children. In fact, great emphasis was placed on this aspect of the church’s duty. In Psalm 78:4-6 the church, “Israel,” is given a “law.” That law is that they should make known the works and words of God to their children. This responsibility was laid on the church in the Old Testament. This same responsibility rests on the church in the New Testament. Jesus commissions the apostles, and through

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them the New Testament church, to feed his lambs (John 21:15-17). The duty of the church is to give official instruction to the children of the church. This official instruction which the church gives is nothing other than preaching, and thus, the content of this instruction is always Christ and him crucified. The children of the church must be shown their sinfulness, the great love of God for repentant sinners, and the way that the people of God should live.

The second reason why Christ must be taught in the catechism room is that the children being taught are covenant children. The children who are taught in the catechism room are sons and daughters of confessing members of the church. They are baptized children, and thus, organically considered, are members of the church and of Christ. Our *Heidelberg Catechism* is explicit on this point. In Q&A 74 we read that children, “as well as the adult, are included in the covenant and church of God, and..., redemption from sin by the blood of Christ and by the Holy Ghost, the author of faith, is promised to them no less than to the adult...” This same clear language concerning the membership of children in the church is used by Jesus when he says, “Suffer the little children to come unto me, and forbid them not, *for of such is the kingdom of God*” (Mark 10:14). Because these children are covenant children, and thus members of the church, Christ must be taught to them as their Savior. The children must be taught that the cross of Christ, his death and suffering, was for them. They must be shown their sins, their salvation in Christ, and the way of a life of holy obedience and thankfulness as forgiven children.

The best way to answer the question of “how?” Christ is to be taught in the catechism room is to look at the material that is taught to covenant children, and to see where Christ and his cross are in that material. The catechism materials used in the Protestant Reformed Churches are a great aid to the catechete in teaching and preaching Christ to the children. Up until the eighth grade, Protestant Reformed children are taught Bible history, both from the Old and New Testaments. In all this Bible history, Christ and his cross are central.

In the material that is used to teach the children the Old Testament, Christ is always in view. The catechism book used to teach Old Testament history to sixth and seventh graders is titled, *The Unfolding of God’s Covenant Promise*. In lesson 2, after describing the fall of Adam and Eve, the Catechism book gives the covenant promise as it is found in Genesis 3:15, and then asks, “What is so important about this Bible text?” The Cat-

echism answers, “It is the first announcement of the promise of the gospel.” The catechism book then takes this promise as the theme and central idea of all its instruction on Old Testament history, and shows how this promise is unfolded throughout the Old Testament in the preservation of the line of the woman all the way to the coming of Christ. The catechism also shows how the many deliverances of the Israelites in the Old Testament point ahead to the salvation that is ours in the cross of Christ. The Catechism asks questions like this, “Of what were David’s victories over all his enemies a type?”, and then answers, “Of Jesus victory for His people over sin, the devil, and the wicked world.” The New Testament history also centers on Christ and his cross in all its instruction. These good catechism materials give the instructor in the catechism room great opportunity and help in teaching Christ to the children in Catechism. They demonstrate that the “how?” of teaching Christ in the catechism room is to teach the history of the Bible as a history that always centers in Christ and his cross.

In the eighth grade and beyond, Protestant Reformed children are taught the truths and doctrines of Scripture in a more systematic form. This is done first of all and primarily from the *Heidelberg Catechism*. This catechism is a great tool in the “how?” of teaching Christ in the catechism room. This is clear from the general outline of the catechism as that is given in Q&A 2. The question is, “How many things are necessary for thee to know, that thou, enjoying this comfort, mayest live and die happily?” The answer, “Three, the first, how great my sins and miseries are; the second, how I may be delivered from all my sins and miseries; the third, how I shall express my gratitude to God for such deliverance.” The largest part of the catechism—27 of the 52 Lord’s Days—is devoted to “how I may be delivered from all my sins and miseries.” This is the cross of Christ. The other two sections are linked to this section. The first, “Of The Misery of Man,” shows the necessity of deliverance through the cross of Christ. It brings the children of the covenant to confess, “I am prone by nature to hate God and my neighbor.” In this, the covenant children are brought to a knowledge of the necessity of Christ and his cross. Then, when they are asked, “Who the is that mediator...?” they answer, “Our Lord Jesus Christ.” The third section of the catechism also centers on the cross of Christ, for in it the covenant child is taught how to express his gratitude to God “for such deliverance.”

In the *Heidelberg Catechism*, all the doctrines of Scripture are presented as they relate to the cross of

Christ. This is the “how?” of teaching Christ in the doctrinal catechism lessons. All the doctrines of Scripture must be presented in their relation to Christ. When we teach creation, we must show that Christ, the Word, was the creator, and also that all things were created “for” him (Colossians 1:16). When we instruct covenant children in the doctrines that concern the church, ecclesiology, then we must teach that the church is the body of Christ, his purchased possession. When we teach the doctrines of the last things, eschatology, then we must show that the goal of all of history is that God “might gather together in one all things in Christ” (Eph. 1:10). In all of the doctrinal instruction given in the catechism room, Christ is and must be central.

In the catechism room, Christ is taught to covenant children. This is necessary because the children are God’s children and because catechism instruction is preaching. This can be done by teaching the truths and history of Scripture as they relate to Christ and his coming to save his people from their sins. When this is done, the covenant child will leave the catechism room with more than just a head knowledge of the history and truths of Scripture. That child will go away from catechism, conscious of his sins, conscious of his need of a savior, and assured that Christ died for him. Then, the covenant child will know in his own experience that he belongs to God, and he will live a life of consecration to God.

May Christ be taught in our catechism rooms, and may this instruction be used by God for the salvation of our covenant children. ❖

*Rodney is a member of Southwest Protestant Reformed Church in Grandville, Michigan.*

## Content In His Ways

**C**ontent in His ways? So often I’m not.  
When pain overwhelms, I oft rue my lot.  
When earthly friends fail, discontent rears its  
head;

*Why do they help others and not me instead?  
While others are wealthy, I scarcely get by;  
My labor seems futile, all things go awry.  
I’m awash with self-pity, thinking everything’s wrong  
When I should be rejoicing in glorious song.*

**F**orgive in Thy mercy, O Father above;  
I know what is given is sent in Thy love.  
The burdens that come I do not bear alone;  
My own precious Savior is still on the throne.

**G**ive me spiritual eyes that I truly may see  
How my woes and discomforts are blessings  
from Thee.

*This life merely shapes me to fit in the place  
Prepared by the Lord in His infinite grace;  
Every child of His is a building block rare—  
His church He erects as His temple so fair.  
When submitting to Thy will and silencing mine  
I have peace and contentment, O Savior Divine.*

Thelma Westra

# The Fourth Man

## A Story from the Time of the Afscheiding

by P. S. Kuiper

translated by Rev. Cornelius Hanko

### Chapter 9

#### A Breakdown on Pentecost

*(The last chapter brought us to the cattle market and gave us a picture of the importance which market day occupied in the lives of the Dutch. We also met again our old friend, Aalte Boer, the fish peddler who attempted to sell rotten fish on the market. By doing this he got himself and one of the town police into trouble. It seems as if the author has now given us sufficient background to know what life was like in the Netherlands, for in this chapter he turns to a discussion of events that took place in connection with the Secession of 1834. We are also introduced for the first time to Gijsbert Haan, a leader in the secession, and later a prominent figure in Holland, Michigan. He was instrumental, perhaps more than anyone else, in persuading the settlers in Holland to leave the Reformed Church of America to which they had joined themselves under the influence of Van Raalte. Hence, Gijsbert Haan was one of the fathers of the Christian Reformed Church.)*

The seven weeks between Easter and Pentecost were past. The days had been cloudy and toward evening of Pentecost Monday a heavy downpour began to beat upon the towns of Goes.

Only when extremely necessary did one venture out upon the streets and lanes of the village. That extreme necessity usually arose when one desired to visit the nearest tavern, which was never far away.

If that were possible, the country roads were quieter and more forsaken than usual. There was, therefore, something mysterious about the covered farm wagon that was coming from Loosdrecht and was approaching Hilversum<sup>1</sup> at this strange and late hour of the night.

Sweating heavily, the lean horse labored to drag the wagon through the thick mud, encouraged from time to time by Jan Donker, the young farmer who held the reins.

“This is no good for Pleun,”<sup>2</sup> he complained to Gijsbert Haan who sat next to him on the wagon seat.

“If he cannot make it, then we will do the work ourselves,” the other answered determinedly. The struggle of Pleun also troubled him as a farmer who had a heart for horses. “We are wearing our best clothes,” the driver cast back at him.

“Do you still have a dry stitch on you?” the other jokingly asked.

He received no answer to his rather superfluous question. The rain poured down and beat against them. The canvas that separated them from the loading space was drawn aside and the heads of two other Hilversumers made their appearance.<sup>3</sup>

“Where are we?” asked Tijmen Grootveld, whose eyes tried to penetrate the darkness. Both men on the wagon seat hesitated a moment and then admitted that they did not know exactly where they were. “Do you two want to sit in the back while we sit on the wagon seat?” offered Gerrit Meijer. But Jan Donker turned this down with the remark that Pleun would then become entirely confused.<sup>4</sup>

“Fortunately this is the last time,” he assured himself and the others.

“As far as the trips to Loosdrecht are concerned we agree,” Gijsbert Haan answered slowly, “but the real thing is just begun.” His companions nodded in all seriousness and remained silent.

Jan Donker pulled up his collar a bit higher and stared into the night. Once more, as so often before, he made all the events of the recent past to pass in review before his mind.

In 1813 the Netherlands was freed from the French tyranny.<sup>5</sup> He had experienced that when he was still a child. Many in the fatherland had eagerly hoped that the

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return to freedom would be followed by a return to God's Word. They had been bitterly disappointed. The French may have been driven out, but their wrong ideas about "liberty, equality and brotherhood" had, to a great extent, remained.<sup>6</sup> The king of the Netherlands, spurred on by his officials, had involved himself in the affairs of the old Reformed church and had established it as "The Netherlands Reformed Church" in a "workable" manner. "Freedom of doctrine" was also introduced.<sup>7</sup>

By far the greatest number of the members of the old fatherland church had put up with all this. The king had, after all, done this with the best of intentions. Yet God caused the eyes of a small portion of the Netherlands populace to remain open and to see the apostasy of the church and the king's wrong assumption of power. A number of important individuals belonged to that small part of the populace. They tried to bring the church back to its proper course, but they worked from within the denomination.<sup>8</sup> But many of the common folk saw ever more clearly that the corruption in the church had worked its way so deeply into the members that nothing but a secession was the proper solution, if they were to be obedient to God.

Finally it happened, two years later, in 1834 in Ulrum, a province of Groningen. A very ordinary minister, Hendrik de Cock, after having struggled in vain for years with the high-minded "church officers," had separated from the Netherlands Reformed Church.<sup>9</sup> Two weeks later the minister in Braband, Hendrik Peter Scholte<sup>10</sup> followed with his congregation of Doeveren and Genderen. The secession could no longer be stopped. As a purifying fire it swept over the Netherlands. No province was passed by, and at the end of 1835, there were almost eighty separate congregations organized.

Two years later they had held their first synod in Amsterdam.

For years there had been a group of believers in Hilversum whose eyes were opened to see the apostasy in the church. Since their unorthodox minister, Reverend Reinier, had come to their town from Hellendoorn out of Lexmond, they felt themselves drawn to each other even more than they had been during the ministry of Rev. Reiner's predecessor, Rev. Van de Broek.

As if it had happened yesterday, Jan Donker remembered that October day of the previous year when Gijsbert Haan came to tell him that in Loosdrecht a secession congregation had just been organized. The Secession had now suddenly come near to them.

During the weeks that followed there was much discussion and praying. One was more quickly "ready" for such extreme action as secession than the other. Each one knew that a secessionist must expect scorn and contempt, loss of friends, and sometimes even worse. But God's Spirit had driven them upon the way of obedience, and on the 15th of December twenty one confessing members and six baptized members had separated themselves from the church at Hilversum under the inspiring leadership of Gijsbert Haan.<sup>11</sup> Jan Donker and his wife also found themselves among the first fighters, as also Gerrit Meijer.

Some had later fallen away; others had joined them; Tijmen Grootveld was an example of the latter.

Every Sunday a small group traveled through all sorts of weather to Loosdrecht, some on foot, some by wagon. Their church attendance had become a weekly pleasure, as well for the Hilversumers as for the Loosdrechters. Until now the opposition was limited to gross name calling.

Gradually the people felt that the time had come that a congregation should be organized in Hilversum. After discussing the matter with the brethren of Loosdrecht, Gijsbert Haan and Tijmen Grootveld were chosen as elders, Gerrit Meijer and Jan Donker as deacons. Reverend Scholte, who like the other ministers of the Secession traveled throughout the entire country, had expressed his willingness to come to Hilversum on Pentecost Monday for the installation. But Gijsbert Haan and his friends feared that it would not be safe for a secession minister to come to their hostile village.

For that reason the ordination had taken place that evening in Loosdrecht.

That was the reason why these four men dressed in their best clothes were returning home on this dark Monday evening.

Before the service they had had a long discussion with Reverend Scholte in which he gave them all sorts of advice concerning the future of their church in Hilversum. "If you do not have the faith to carry on, you had better not begin," he had said. These words had made a deep impression upon them. Humbly they had answered yes. After a hearty farewell they had gone into the night. The secession had become a reality in Hilversum on this Pentecost Monday, May 23, 1836.

Jan Donker remarked that his horse gradually was progressing a bit faster.

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He knew the reason: The peat of Utrecht had changed to the heavier sandy soil of Goes. Gijsbert Haan had also noticed it.

“Now we are making some progress,” he called to the two behind him. “Get going, Pleun,” the driver urged his horse. They were cutting right across the moor, but the heavy downpour of rain reduced visibility to a minimum. Finally they came to the Narrows; the border of the town had been reached.

Vaguely the outlines of the first farms rose before them. Here and there a small speck of light flickered. Pleun had exhausted his strength, and almost blindly the exhausted horse plugged along.

Jan Donker, relieved that they had reached the outskirts of the town, lost his usual alertness for a split second. He realized too late that his wagon shifted too much to the left and he could no longer avoid a knotty tree root. For that they would have to pay dearly. The heavy burdened, worn out front wheel could no longer withstand the heavy shock and broke in two.

Jan Donker lost his balance and fell into the mud.

He immediately got up however, and calmed Pleun, which stood there on his feet trembling.

The same thing almost happened to Gijsbert Haan, but he managed with some effort to hang on to the wagon. In what was not an elegant manner, he let himself slide to the ground. He was followed by Tijmen Grootveld and Gerrit Meijer, who had both rolled across the wagon.

The next moment the four men stood together in the pouring rain, speechless from the shock. Then the voice of Jan Donker rang in the darkness, “The consistory of Hilversum presents itself.” It sounded so very dry that Grootveld and Meijer again fell against each other, but now in laughter. Gijsbert Haan shook his head in disapproval. “Donker, Donker,” he said, but then he also had to join in the laughter.

The cheerfulness lasted but a moment. Together they tried to investigate the damage, but could not see a hand before their eyes. They stood there irresolutely. Then Tijmen Grootveld suddenly discovered a ray of light. They were close to a farm. “Imagine! That I believe is the property of Ko Boelhouwer!” he cried with surprise. “How about going there to ask for help,” proposed Gerrit Meijer. The others hesitated.

“Since I separated myself from the church, Boelhouwer will hardly greet me.” Gijsbert Haan remarked slowly. He turned to Jan Donker. “You know him quite well, don’t you? Does not his daughter work for you?” “Indeed, and Klartje is a real help to me. I

know Ko as an upright Christian, even though he seems to have little interest in the secession. But I am sure that he will not refuse help to a fellow man.” Those words decided for them what to do.

“Then I suggest,” said Gijsbert Haan, as naturally taking the lead, “that Jan Donker and I go to Ko Boelhouwer while the others stay with the wagon and the horse.” They all agreed with that.

Jan Donker patted the limping Pleun in the flank and then walked determinedly with Gijsbert Haan, soaked and dripping, up the driveway along the large linden trees.

The loud barking of a dog sounded a greeting.

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<sup>1</sup> The town in which the events of the past chapters took place.

<sup>2</sup> The name of the horse.

<sup>3</sup> The wagon had a canvas divider between the place where the driver sat and the rear of the wagon which was used for carrying loads. Jan Donker and Gijsbert Haan were sitting on the driver’s seat and Tijmen Grootveld and Gerrit Meijer where sitting where the load was normally carried.

<sup>4</sup> He apparently meant that the already weary horse would become more confused by a strange man holding the reins.

<sup>5</sup> This was the French tyranny under Napoleon who had conquered the Netherlands.

<sup>6</sup> “Liberty, equality and brotherhood” had been the cry and motto of the French Revolution.

<sup>7</sup> While up to the time that Napoleon had ruled in the Netherlands, the Netherlands Reformed Church was the church officially supported by the government, and while this remained true to a certain extent after the overthrow of Napoleon, still the government now changed its policy and allowed for diversity in doctrines which were different from and contrary to the official teachings of the Netherlands Reformed Church.

<sup>8</sup> The men referred to here belonged to a movement commonly called *De Reveil*, or, *The Revival*. They insisted on reforming the church from within and so refused to go along with the Seceders.

<sup>9</sup> Actually, the decision to separate had been made by the entire consistory of the church in Ulrum, including the elders, deacons and the minister. They had done this by adopting an “Act of Secession,” the text of which can be found in my book, “For Thy Truth’s Sake.”

<sup>10</sup> This was the minister who, a few years later, led a band of Secessionists to America and settled in Pella, Iowa.

<sup>11</sup> Here Gijsbert Haan is introduced. He is the man who later moved to the Dutch colony in Holland and was influential in leading the settlers out of the Reformed Church in America. ❖

# Rev. Jason Korterling

edited by Kris Moelker

**R**ev. Jason Korterling was born in Holland, Michigan on January 15, 1936. His parents were Justin and Edith Korterling. Justin Korterling was a buttermaker who worked at the Artic Ice Cream Company.

As a boy, Rev. Korterling enjoyed building models. Now he enjoys photography as a hobby.

Rev. Korterling attended the christian grade school and high school in Holland, Michigan. After high school, he attended Calvin College and the Protestant Reformed Seminary.

As a teenager, Rev. Korterling didn't have to deal with peer pressure because he was busy working and studying.

After they married in 1919, Rev Korterling's parents left the Reformed Church in Overisel, Michigan to travel to California. His father wanted to use his trade as a buttermaker to make money and see the world. Over a ten year period, his parents moved from one city to another city neglecting to attend church. Through his mother's persistence, they finally moved to Holland, Michigan.

One of Mr. Korterling's coworkers was so impressed when she read a copy of the *Standard Bearer*, that she gave it to him to read. The Lord used this to lead Mr. Korterling to start reading the *Standard Bearer* and all the Reformed literature he could obtain. Soon the Korterlings became members of the First Protestant Reformed Church of Holland.

Having led Mr. Korterling to the Reformed faith, the Lord instilled in him a desire to see his son called to the ministry. It seemed that this was not meant to be when his firstborn son suffered permanent brain damage from spinal meningitis. But four years later, Rev. Korterling was born. Even as a young boy, Rev. Korterling was encouraged to desire the ministry. He had to speak loudly



at the Sunday School Christmas program and sing loudly like a minister would. He even had to play the piano like a minister would. Through all this, he felt the call of the Lord to pursue the ministry.

Rev. Korterling was 17 years old when the split of 1953 took place. He had made confession of faith only few months before. His father was in the consistory at the time a motion was made to suspend the pastor because he was not abiding by the decisions of Classis East. Rev. Korterling remembers vividly how the people who witnessed the court case in Grand Rapids were ruthless

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and hateful of each other. It made him resolve never to put a church through a court case no matter what the cost.

Rev. Kortering was the only student in the seminary during his three years of study. At the end of his first year of study, Rev. Ophoff suffered a stroke which made it impossible for him to continue teaching. Seminarian Kortering would visit him occasionally and also pick him up for Rev. Herman Hoeksema's Dogmatics class. Rev. Ophoff and other ministers would sit in on this class and make it more interesting especially since Seminarian Kortering was the only student. During Seminarian Kortering's second year, Rev. Hoeksema and Rev. Ophoff would constantly argue over their differences concerning the inspiration of the Bible. One day it got so bad that Rev. Hoeksema told Rev. Ophoff that he would no longer be allowed to sit in on Dogmatics class, and if he didn't stop arguing, he couldn't come to school anymore. Seminarian Kortering had to take Rev. Ophoff home. Two giants differing with each other made a BIG impression on Seminarian Kortering because they both would not give up. He agreed with Rev. Ophoff then, and still does, but of course he never told Rev. Hoeksema.

While he was a seminarian, Rev. Kortering married Jeanette Faber who was a member of First Protestant Reformed Church in Grand Rapids, Michigan. They were married on June 11, 1957. The Lord blessed their home with five daughters, all of whom are married, and have given them 24 grandchildren. Rev. and Mrs. Kortering "have grown in love for each other, a love which has stood the test of raising a family and also meeting each other's needs in a foreign culture for ten years."

In September, 1960, Rev. Kortering became an ordained minister of the Word in the Protestant Reformed Churches. His first charge was in the congregation of Hull, Iowa where he labored until 1966 when the Lord called him to Hope Church in Grand Rapids, Michigan. In 1970, he was called to return to our church in Hull, Iowa where he labored until 1976 when he was called to go to Redlands, California. He served as pastor of Hope Church in Redlands until he was called to Loveland, Colorado in 1979. The Lord called him to labor in Loveland until 1984 when he was called to serve the new congregation in Grandville, Michigan. In 1992, the Lord called him to become Associate Pastor of Hope, Grand Rapids to serve as Minister on Loan to the Evangelical Reformed Churches of Singapore.

One of Rev. Kortering's most memorable experiences in teaching catechism occurred on a Saturday af-

ternoon in Hull, Iowa. Some of the children were waiting between classes and rang the doorbell. They were all excited because they had found a rabbit in the bushes. Rev. Kortering decided to check out the situation and noticed that it was a pregnant female rabbit. When one of the children poked her, she jumped out of the bushes and began to drop newborn bunnies along the edge of the lawn. That took care of rest of class period.

Rev. Kortering's first graveside funeral was on an unbearably cold January day in Hull, Iowa. Funeral services were usually done outside and consisted of a graveside service and a committal. Since it was so cold, they had the service in the farm house. At the end of the service, the funeral director suggested that they also do the committal inside the house. Rev. Kortering had no idea what a committal was, and had to ask the man what he meant. All the funeral director could remember was that the minister would say something about dust to dust. He hadn't received any seminary training about funerals, and he was so embarrassed.

Some of the congregations in which Rev. Kortering labored were hurting because of the split of 1953 or other difficulties. Rev. Kortering's greatest joy was to see how quickly these issues were resolved and how God restored peace and vitality to the congregations.

Rev. Kortering remembers other controversies that our churches have faced such as hymn singing, divorce and remarriage, and other issues which synod has had to deal with. None of them have been as major as the split of 1953.

Rev. Kortering's advice to young men considering the ministry is to search your hearts to be sure that God has called you to this work. You will be able to endure all difficulties. God has promised that He will enable you to do whatever work He gives you to do. Those who desire the ministry for the wrong reasons will not make it.

Rev. Kortering has not been around our young people much in the past ten years. From what he has seen, he says "they appear very normal, but they may take too much for granted the many privileges they have of Christian homes, schools, and churches. They are a VERY privileged youth." ❖

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

# Watching Daily At My Gates

by Cornelius Jonker

## July 1 Read Genesis 20:1-7

After the destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah, Abraham went south to a city called Gerar in the land of the Philistines. Once again this hero of faith fell into the same sin to which he succumbed in the land of Egypt by introducing his wife as his sister. As a result of this half-truth, Sarah was taken into the king's harem. We may ask, how can this be? How could Abraham participate in this subterfuge that would surely lead to terrible consequences? He was to be blamed of course, but look at our own lives and actions. How often do we falter in our walk of life, fearing that we might be reproached for our faith? God shows us that even the most holy and righteous saints fall into sin, and although we may not excuse Abraham's unbelief, yet it is a comfort to know that God in His electing grace shows mercy to us as he did to Abraham. May the preaching of the gospel today cause us to fall at the foot of the cross pleading only the merits of our Savior as the ground of our redemption. Sing Psalter 280:1-3.

## July 2 Read Genesis 20:8-18

It is always a sad thing when the world has occasion to reprove the child of God for some sinful word or deed. Sarah and Abraham both received and deserved this reproof from Abimelech. Instead of relying on God to protect and care for them as He so often demonstrated in the past, Abraham succumbed to a lack of faith in God by betraying his wife. We must not place Abimelech on a pedestal as if he was blameless in this event. Abimelech had a wife, and although he was a king, had no right to seek more for his carnal desires. We must learn from this to avoid all manner of deceit, lies, and half-truths. Complicity in evil always has consequences. It brings shame to the Church and the cause of the Lord. God turned away this sin and He also forgives our sins in the way of repentance and forsaking them. It is all of grace, undeserved grace, for the sake of Christ. Cling to Him in faith and strive to walk in godliness. Sing Psalter 362.

## July 3 Read Genesis 21:1-8

A great and joyous event is revealed to us in this passage. A son is born to Sarah and Abraham. It is a wonder of grace, a miracle child to be sure, as we read in Hebrews 11 that Sarah "was delivered of a child when she was past age, because she judged him faithful who had promised." God always keeps His word. His promises never fail. It is so comforting to the church to know that although man's efforts are vain, God's ways are sure and He sovereignly maintains His covenant. Isaac is a type of the spiritual children of Abraham (Gal. 4:28). He is a child of the promise, a fruit of faith, and points to the greatest Wonder Child of all—our Lord Jesus Himself, born to a virgin. Parents, do you realize what a blessing it is to bring forth seed of the covenant? Young people, do you realize what a privilege is yours to be born in a covenant home? Are you

ever sullen or angry when parents or elders admonish you for a rebellious attitude or behavior at times? Listen to them, pray for the grace of obedience and thank God for your place in the church. Sing Psalter 213:1-3.

## July 4 Read Genesis 21:9-13

We read here of the pending removal of Ishmael and his mother from the home of Abraham. The occasion was the mocking of Isaac by Ishmael which Sarah herself observed. We are not told in what form this mocking took place, but it obviously consisted of ridicule and jeers of disrespect directed at Isaac. Sarah insists that Abraham send them away and although Abraham was greatly troubled at this, God approved it and confirmed it to Abraham. In Galatians 4 this event is allegorized to show the contrast between natural and spiritual Israel. Some commentators maintain that Ishmael was a reprobate because of the contrast, while others hold that according to Gen. 17:20 he was elect, although the covenant line continued in Isaac. But God in His wisdom determined that Isaac was to be reared in an environment of spiritual peace and harmony. This is also what we must strive for in our homes that an atmosphere of peace and brotherly kindness may prevail. Sing Psalter 360.

## July 5 Read Genesis 21:14-21

In obedience to God's command, Abraham sends Hagar and her son Ishmael away and they wandered in the wilderness. On the surface this may appear cruel, but they were not driven out as fugitives. The desert can be an inhospitable place to live, but Hagar and Ishmael had Egyptian blood flowing in their veins and were no strangers to this environment. However, the water, which Abraham had furnished, ran out and Hagar in desperation placed Ishmael in a shady spot and gave him up to die. Didn't she remember God's promise to her that He would make of Ishmael a great nation? It appears not. But God's promises never fail. His angel appeared to her saying, "fear not," and miraculously provided water; and God was with the lad so he could grow and develop in that land. We may expect broken promises from men. The Lord's promise that He will be a God to us and to our seed forever, will not, and cannot be broken. Trust in Him alone and by faith cling to that promise. Sing Psalter 416:4, 5.

## July 6 Read Genesis 21:22-34

We read that Abimelech proposed a covenant of peace with Abraham. By experience he knew that God was with him. Abimelech had earlier seen the visitation from God when he took Sarah. He knew that Abraham was empowered to beget a son in his old age and also that he possessed over three hundred servants who were experienced in battle. Abraham agrees to this covenant of friendship, and in the process reproves Abimelech for violently stealing a well of water. In the providence of God, we too live in an ungodly world and daily we deal with its citizens. We may never compro-

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mise our principles, but as Romans 12:18 instructs us: "If it be possible, as much as lieth in you, live peaceably with all men." Then we read that Abraham called on the name of the Lord, the everlasting God. This name denotes the eternity of God. It is difficult for us mortals to comprehend eternity. This is just one of the awesome attributes of our great God. He is also our Father for Christ's sake and loves us in Him. Because of that love, we are enabled to love Him and our neighbor. Cherish that love, people of God, and strive to cultivate it. Sing Psalter 252.

### July 7 Read Genesis 22:1-8

We have seen instances when Abraham's faith was very weak, especially when on two occasions he introduced Sarah as his sister instead of his wife. Our passage today shows Abraham at the pinnacle of his faith. God directed him to sacrifice his son Isaac for a burnt offering at a distant mountain and he immediately complied by rising early and setting out on this journey. Just think for a moment of the implications of obeying this command. Isaac was a miracle child born to his parents in their old age. He was the child of the promise through whom the line of the covenant would continue until it culminated in the promised seed, Christ Himself. How could the Messiah come if Isaac was sacrificed? Abraham had to wrestle with these problems for three days, yet he put his trust in Jehovah, believing that God was able to raise Isaac from the dead. A most severe test of his faith, but it was God's work from beginning to end. Abraham's faith was purified and is an example for us to walk always in obedience to God's commands, not counting the cost, knowing that He will sustain us. Sing Psalter 356:1, 2.

### July 8 Read Genesis 22:9-14

Not only was Abraham completely reconciled to God's command to offer up Isaac, but Isaac himself was submissive and obedient, even though physically he could have resisted and overpowered his father. This is evidence of a believer's obedience and speaks well of godly covenant training. As the knife in Abraham's hand was poised to slay Isaac, God counters His command and said "Lay not thine hand upon the lad...for now I know that thou fearest God." Did God not know before this that Abraham's faith would hold firm? O yes, because it was God's work, but Abraham must experience this test personally. Abraham also knew that Isaac could not be a burnt offering for sin, and so in faith he had said, "God will provide a lamb." God did just that. The ram provided on the mountain was a type of the perfect sacrificial Lamb Who bore our sins on His cross. As you hear that blessed gospel proclaimed today, thank God for this vicarious atonement and marvel at God's great love for us. Sing Psalter 109.

### July 9 Read Genesis 22:15-24

Did you realize that you are mentioned in this passage of Scripture and that wonderful promises are given to you? No, you are not mentioned by your name, but as covenant children, young people, and adults incorporated into the covenant of grace, you are the spiritual seed of Abraham. The angel of the Lord renewed the covenant with Abraham after the test of faith on Mt. Moriah. He promised rich blessings, which included innumerable descendants, incorporation of believers from all nations into the covenant and that his seed would possess the gate of his enemies. This is an interesting and picturesque figure of speech. The gate of a city had to be extremely strong and well protected, and so it became a figure of the whole city itself. If the gate gave way, the city would fall. God will protect His people and give them the spiritual victory over their enemies. The chapter closes with some family history of Nahor,

Abraham's brother, who begat twelve sons. One of them, Bethuel, was the father of Rebekah. Our covenant heritage is rich and precious. Let us appreciate it, promote it, and thank our covenant God for His faithfulness. Sing Psalter 338:1, 4.

### July 10 Read Genesis 23:1-2

A sad event is recorded for us in these two verses. It is the death of Sarah. How many of you know that she is the only woman whose age is mentioned in Scripture? It's quite possible that Scripture pays this tribute to her because she held an important place in the history of the church. She accompanied Abraham from the time they left Ur of the Chaldees and intimately shared his wanderings and hardships for nearly a hundred years. She rejoiced in the promise of God and is set forth in the New Testament as an example of all God-fearing wives (I Peter 3:6). Is it any wonder that we read that Abraham wept and mourned for her? Marriage is the closest bond in life and only those who have experienced the loss of a mate can know the heartache and loss it brings. We don't read of Isaac's grief here, but we see later that he was comforted after his mother's death upon his marriage to Rebekah. They didn't mourn without hope, to be sure, and neither do we, but, dear readers, cherish your mates, your parents and all your loved ones and appreciate them as wonderful gifts from God. Sing Psalter 281:1-4.

### July 11 Read Genesis 23:3-16

Abraham must make preparations for the burial of Sarah. We read that he stood up from before his dead and spoke to the sons of Heth in order to acquire a place to bury Sarah. Although Abraham had lived in the land of Canaan for over fifty years, he did not as yet own so much as a square foot of ground in it. The sons of Heth were descendants of Canaan, the son of Ham, and therefore members of a cursed race. Abraham lived apart from these Canaanites although they knew of him. He did not seek their friendship, nevertheless he was courteous to them and they obviously respected him. They offered to Abraham a burial spot of his choice as a gift, but he would have none of it since he was determined not to be obligated to them. The alternative was to pay full price for the land, and this he insisted upon and recorded the transaction publicly. Abraham maintained the antithesis that God ordained from almost the very beginning of history. We must learn from this. Although we are in the world and must conduct our business with them, yet we must not cultivate their friendship, must not mingle with them socially, but rather seek the company of God's people. Sing Psalter 323:1-4.

### July 12 Read Genesis 23:17-20

We saw yesterday that Abraham purchased land from the Canaanites for a family burial plot. The piece of land that he chose was carefully selected, namely the cave of Machpelah which lay at the very end of Ephron's land. The name Machpelah means "the double" and could refer to a cave with two chambers. However, it more accurately refers to the field in which the cave was located and then it could possibly mean "the separated place." It was a spot as isolated as possible from the Canaanites and Abraham in choosing a final resting place for himself and his family was determined to remain a separate people in death as in life. One more evidence of Abraham's faith was his choice of the land of Canaan for his grave. The earthly Canaan which was promised to Abraham's seed was a type of the heavenly Canaan, the glorious eternal home of all God's saints. Note too that he buried his dead. We must do that too. We do not cremate our dead in rejection of the hope of the Christian. Burial is biblical and comforting. We are sown a natural body

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and raised a spiritual body. What a glorious work of God upon which to rest our hope. Sing Psalter 28:1, 3, 4.

### July 13 Read Genesis 24:1-9

Isaac was forty years old and still single. This is not such an uncommon situation and quite understandable as it pertained to Isaac. First of all, being a pious and God-fearing man, he did not try to seek a wife from the idolatrous Canaanites; secondly, he still deeply mourned the death of his mother; and thirdly, he bowed to the custom of parents who would make every effort to secure a proper mate for their children. Abraham was determined to seek a wife for Isaac from his own godly kindred that the covenant line could be perpetuated. His most trusted servant was summoned to fulfill this task, and made to swear an oath that he would not deviate from Abraham's instructions. The servant at first was apprehensive foreseeing the possibility that a young woman might not agree to come back with him. Abraham, with great faith, responds that God would prosper his journey. Young people, who desire to marry, this is not the custom today, but it has much to be said for it. Is your primary motive in seeking a mate a pretty face and figure or a handsome profile? Seek your parent's guidance, ask the Lord to direct you, for if you go to Him, His gifts are always good and your marriage will be blest. Sing Psalter 100:1, 2.

### July 14 Read Genesis 24:10-21

Abraham's servant begins his journey to Nahor where Abraham's kindred lived and, true to his oath, did not turn aside to the residents of Canaan. His entourage included ten camels, men servants and costly gifts of jewels and raiment. Upon arriving at the edge of the city, he stopped by a well of water and prayed to the Lord to prosper his journey and show mercy to his master Abraham. What an example for us to follow every day! Prayer is necessary for every Christian because we confess in L.D. 45 of our Heidelberg Catechism that "it is the chief part of thankfulness which God requires of us: and also because God will give his grace and Holy Spirit to those only, who with sincere desires continually ask them of him, and are thankful for them." Abraham's servant stood there in wonder as his prayer was being answered before his very eyes when God sent Rebekah in conformance to his specific request. God doesn't always give us what we feel we desire, but He always gives us what He knows is good for us. God had sovereignly determined Rebekah to be Isaac's wife and in His inscrutable wisdom also used the godly prayer of Abraham's servant to accomplish this. Sing Psalter 339:1-3.

### July 15 Read Genesis 24:22-32

Yesterday we read that Abraham's servant stood in silent awe when God sent Rebekah in answer to his prayer. He now presents her with golden earrings and bracelets and questions her further to determine just whose daughter she is. She identified herself as the daughter of Bethuel, who was Abraham's nephew, and her mother's name was Milcah, the proper wife of Bethuel. She further invites him to her parent's home, assuring him of ample room and provender, and then ran to tell her family what had transpired. Laban, her brother, when he saw her costly jewelry was the first to return to the well. This perhaps reveals something of his covetous nature that we read about in later chapters, but he accompanies Abraham's servant and his company to their house. We want to consider for a moment the reaction of Abraham's servant at the well when Rebekah told him who she was. He bowed his head and worshipped the Lord and spoke these beautiful words "Blessed be the Lord God of my master Abraham." He too was a believer and couldn't help but praise

and worship his God. Many of you also will take these words upon your lips in divine worship today: "Now blessed be Jehovah God, the God of Israel, Who only doeth wondrous works in glory that excel." May these words echo in your heart in constant praise to Him. Sing Psalter 197:1, 2.

### July 16 Read Genesis 24:33-49

Before Abraham's servant would partake of the meal that had been set before him in the home of Bethuel, he said that he would not eat until he told them the reason for his coming. His errand there was the Lord's business and his priorities were in the proper order. First I will state my errand, he says and then I will enjoy earthly blessings. How about your priorities, dear reader? Children, do you wait until the day of catechism to study and learn your lesson? Young people, do you put off writing that article or assignment or study your society lesson because pleasure interferes? And do you conduct your personal devotions when you are so tired that they are not meaningful to you? We hope and trust that this is not the case. It certainly wasn't with Abraham's servant. He told them his business and all that transpired on his journey, stressing how he pleaded with God to prosper his way. He declared to them that the Lord Himself led him to Rebekah and how could they possibly not recognize His hand in this and refuse his request. He concluded by asking them to consider this with truth and kindness, and if not he would turn in another direction. We will read of their reply tomorrow, the Lord willing. Sing Psalter 112:1, 2.

### July 17 Read Genesis 24:50-53

As soon as Abraham's servant finished stating the reason for his coming there, and how providentially he was led to Rebekah, both Laban and Bethuel immediately answered "The thing proceedeth from the Lord: we cannot speak unto thee bad or good." The Lord had spoken in clear unmistakable speech, and they give their consent for Rebekah to become Isaac's wife. Again we see how Abraham's servant responded in faith by worshipping God, even bowing himself to the earth. He then proceeds to give costly gifts to Rebekah, to her mother, and to her brother to confirm the engagement. Only after this did he eat and drink and have fellowship with them. Young people, we cannot stress strongly enough to follow the Lord's guidance in seeking your life's mate. I have often pondered why young persons must make perhaps the most important decision of their lives, namely acquiring a mate, when they are, as a rule, relatively young and sometimes immature. Yet the Lord is pleased to do just that. Follow your parent's and pastor's wise advice and counsel in this matter, young people, make it a matter of prayer, and you will reap a harvest of blessing. Sing Psalter 185: 1, 3.

### July 18 Read Genesis 24:54-60

The very next morning after receiving permission from Rebekah's parents for her to become Isaac's bride, Abraham's servant is determined to return to Canaan with her. Her brother and mother requested a delay of at least ten days before they could depart, but Abraham's servant would not agree to that, so Rebekah is consulted to see if she was willing to leave at once. We read that she simply said, "I will go." This certainly takes place according to the counsel of God. He had eternally determined this woman for that man. We don't know Rebekah's age, but tradition claims that she was fourteen years old. We believe this was an act of faith on her part. She had to leave all that was dear to her, go to live in strange surroundings, and marry a man she had never met. Convinced that this was the Lord's will, she said, "I will go." Young people can you answer

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in like manner when you feel God is placing upon your heart a special calling? And particularly, you, young men, if you have the qualifications and calling to enter the ministry, consider it most prayerfully and then answer, "I will go." Sing Psalter 109.

### July 19 Read Genesis 24:61-67

This passage records the happy culmination of all the events relating to the seeking and finding the God ordained bride for Isaac. God in His providence directed every detail in this process so that now the bridegroom and bride are ready to meet each other. Isaac went out to meditate in the field at eventide. We are not told his thoughts, but can surmise that he reviewed his life thus far, including his miraculous birth, his place in the covenant line of redemption, the memory of his dear mother, and now his waiting for a bride. He saw God's gracious dealings and thankfully communed with Him. The caravan approaches and when Rebekah sees Isaac at a distance, she respectfully dismounts from her camel, covering herself with a veil. After the servant told Isaac all the details of his journey, Isaac takes Rebekah into his mother's tent and she became his wife. We read that he loved her and was comforted after his mother's death. When we wait for God's leading in our lives and walk in submission and obedience to His will, we are blessed and comforted and possess true peace. Sing Psalter 101:1, 4, 5.

### July 20 Read Genesis 25:1-6

Abraham was one hundred forty years old at the time of Isaac's marriage and now we see that he takes to himself a wife by the name of Keturah. Commentators disagree as to whether this happened during Sarah's lifetime yet, or after her death. We prefer the latter view for this would appear more consistent with Scripture's testimony of his faith. He fathered six sons with Keturah and when they were of age, he gave them gifts and sent them away from Isaac to the east country in northern Arabia. They were not of the covenant line, although God had His people in some of the later generations, for we read of Midian, Ephah, and Sheba in Isaiah as true believers. And so we see that the line of election and reprobation cuts through families and congregations. There is nothing more heartrending than to see in our families or churches one who shows no evidence of the work of grace in his or her heart, even though they were brought up in the sphere of the covenant. We know that God as the Sovereign Potter has the right and the power to make some vessels of honor and others to dishonor, and then we leave it in His hands, praying always for submission to His will. Sing Psalter 139:1, 5, 6.

### July 21 Read Genesis 25:7-11

This passage tells about the death and burial of Abraham, one of the greatest patriarchs of the Old Testament, and fitly called the father of believers. He died at the age of 175 years, an old man, as Scripture says, and full of years. God made his years to be full of everything that life had to offer. Isaac and Ishmael, his sons, buried him in the cave of Machpelah by Sarah his wife. We also read this statement, that he "was gathered to his people." Who were his people to whom he was gathered, we might ask? God spoke long before of two peoples and He divided the entire human race that ever was, and will be, into two groups. The line of the antithesis divides all people according to eternal predestination into elect or reprobate. Abraham, in the mercy of God, was a believer and therefore his soul was gathered into the company of all the elect in glory. Who are your people, dear reader, and with whom do you expect to be gathered when you pass from this earthly life? Thanks be to God who beholds us in Christ Jesus, our Savior and Redeemer. Let us

ever echo the words of the songwriter: "Nothing in my hands I bring, simply to Thy cross I cling." Sing Psalter 377:1, 2, 6.

### July 22 Read Genesis 25:12-18

The genealogy and death of Ishmael is recorded in this passage and true to God's word, Ishmael was the father of great nations. God promised both Hagar before he was born, and Abraham after he was born, that Ishmael's seed would be multiplied exceedingly and that he would beget twelve princes. These are the nations of Arabia and not in the covenant line. However, we read in Isaiah 60:7 that certain of his posterity, namely Kedar and Nebaioth, were gathered into the true church. Ishmael died at the age of 137 and we read of him as we did of Abraham that he "was gathered to his people." God's promises will not, and cannot fail. He establishes His covenant with believers and their seed and is pleased to incorporate into this covenant the Rahabs, the Ruths and the Gentiles, one organic unity, the Church which He loves from all eternity. For this church Christ died. As a living member of that church, humbly thank God and strive to walk in obedience to Him. Sing Psalter 207:1, 3, 4.

### July 23 Read Genesis 25:19-23

Isaac and Rebekah were married for twenty years and as yet had no children, although God had promised to his father Abraham that his seed would be as the stars in multitude and that in Isaac the covenant line would develop. Isaac properly resorted to the Lord in prayer, and the Lord was intreated of him so that Rebekah became pregnant. Because of an unusual and intensive struggle of the unborn children in her womb, Rebekah asked the Lord what was the meaning of it. We all know that the Lord revealed not only that she conceived twins, but that contrary to human logic, the elder would serve the younger, and that two nations, one elect and the other reprobate, would be born from her. Thus we see divine predestination of all men, determined by a just and sovereign God from all eternity. This is a fearful doctrine to the unbeliever, but gives unspeakable comfort to the believer and makes him "willing and ready henceforth to live unto Him." (Heid. Cat. L.D. 1) Sing Psalter 86:1-3.

### July 24 Read Genesis 25:24-28

This passage covers the period during which the twins, Esau and Jacob, were born and how they developed in opposite directions as they reached manhood. Even at their birth, Jacob grasped the heel of Esau who was born first. Neither of the boys was similar in appearance, occupation, or spirituality as God had foretold. Esau was a man of the field, a rugged and cunning hunter, caring only for the things of the flesh, while Jacob was a plain quiet man who feared God. Isaac loved Esau. Rebekah loved Jacob. Favoritism in families is deplorable even though Rebekah's motive was good and Isaac's not. We read that Isaac loved Esau because he could eat of his venison, and he was quite possibly a jovial outgoing person as well, but a God-fearing saint should not be devoted to another for purely earthly reasons. Let us be more like Rebekah seeking out those who demonstrate a quiet spirit and a godly attitude. Sing Psalter 27:1, 2.

### July 25 Read Genesis 25:29-34

Have you ever been so hungry that you were ready to faint? There were times I'm sure that you were ravenously hungry, but hardly to the point of fainting. Scripture tells us that Esau returned from the field and was famished with hunger when he encountered Jacob his brother cooking a delicious smelling stew. Jacob took advantage of Esau's intense hunger and insisted that Esau sell to him his birth-

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right in exchange for food, even demanding an oath to confirm it. This of course is not to Jacob's credit even though to him the birthright meant most importantly the bestowal of the covenantal blessings of Jehovah. Esau readily agreed, so he ate and went his way and showed how little he cared for his birthright. Young people, God has given you a great birthright. Most of you were born into covenant homes. Cherish this blessing and ask God to keep you faithful in this blessed heritage. Sing Psalter 337:1-3.

### July 26 Read Genesis 26:1-5

Isaac was dwelling at this time near to the Philistines at Gerar, when the Lord in His providence sent a famine in the land. Following the example of his father Abraham, Isaac resolved to go down into Egypt but was forbidden to do so by the Lord, Who told him to remain in the land where he was. The Lord then graciously repeated the covenant promise made to his father Abraham that He would bless him in this land and multiply his seed and that his seed would possess this very land. Isaac was a man who generally was meek, patient and trusting, although he certainly displayed some grave errors and sinful acts. But who of us can really point an accusing finger at him when we look at our own sins and weaknesses? In obedience to the Lord, he stayed in the land of Canaan, trusting Him to supply his needs. We too are not immune to the attractions and offers of a better job and higher standard of living that would take us away from our church and fellow saints. Let us listen to the words of our Savior in Matthew 16:26 "For what is a man profited, if he shall gain the whole world, and lose his own soul?" Sing Psalter 321:1-4.

### July 27 Read Genesis 26:6-11

By dwelling near to the Philistines in Gerar instead of sojourning in the land apart from its wicked inhabitants, Isaac exposes his family to the dangers that accompany such a move. Just as Abraham lapsed in his faith by fearing for his life in the midst of a worldly city, so did Isaac. Once again the cause was a beautiful wife whom Isaac introduced as his sister, thereby presenting her as an unattached person. However, in spite of this deception, the Lord saw to it that nothing happened to her until one day the king observed that their relationship was not that of brother and sister, but of husband and wife. Finding out this was true, the king reprimanded Isaac and charged his people not to touch Isaac or his wife. Isaac was a man respected and feared by the Philistines as we see later in this chapter, but what a humiliating experience, and justly so, to be admonished by a worldly king, exposing lies and cowardice on Isaac's part. We must love the truth, speak the truth, and "avoid all sorts of lies and deceit, as the proper works of the devil." (Heid. Cat. L.D. 112). Sing Psalter 335:1 & 2.

### July 28 Read Genesis 26:12-22

After the shameful episode with the king of the Philistines, Isaac was restored by the Lord and entered a period of prosperity. We read that Isaac sowed seed and experienced a bountiful harvest of one hundredfold. God blessed Isaac with great possessions of flocks, herds and servants, so when we add all this to the riches his father left him, he was a force to be reckoned with, and the Philistines now envied him. As a result of this evil jealousy, they filled up the wells that rightly belonged to Isaac and strove for others that Isaac's servants had dug in an attempt to evict him from their country. Water was a precious commodity then as now, and necessary to sustain life. Isaac most likely could have reclaimed the wells by physical force, but chose not to do so. So he moved again and dug another well until the inhabitants of the land ceased to bother him, and he

thankfully praises God for His gracious provision. Isaac sought water for his physical sustenance, to be sure, but we believe that by faith he saw it as a picture of the Water of Life that he desired and for which we too must seek. Prepare yourself today so that on the morrow you may properly drink of that Living Water. Sing Psalter 114:1, 7, 10.

### July 29 Read Genesis 26:23-25

Isaac moved once again to Beersheba, the former residence of Abraham. This was quite a distance from Gerar, but still in the land of the Philistines. The Lord there appeared to Isaac and spoke words, which were wonderful to hear. He exclaimed, "I am the God of Abraham thy father," implying that He is also Isaac's God, and that Abraham is not dead, but living. He again confirms the covenant promise that He will bless Isaac and multiply his seed and that he has no cause to fear. In response, Isaac built an altar and called upon the name of the Lord. He reconsecrated himself and his household to the Lord's service and worshiped Him. Shall we not do the same today in divine worship and call on the name of the Lord in prayer? We no longer sacrifice at altars because Christ Himself was the perfect and final sacrifice for sin. But surely as priests, we consecrate our lives and present ourselves as living sacrifices of thanksgiving to Him. May you truly be blessed today under the preaching of that glorious gospel of salvation. Sing Psalter 374:1, 2, 5.

### July 30 Read Genesis 26:26-33

Isaac received a visit from Abimelech, the Philistine king, accompanied by a friend and the chief captain of his army. Isaac was not impressed and said "Why do you come to me since you hate me and sent me away?" They state the purpose of their visit, namely, a joint peace treaty, and answered that they had sent him away in peace, did not touch him and did nothing but good to him. This latter was not true of course because they filled up and stole the wells of Isaac and strove with his herdsmen. They preface all this by stating, "We saw certainly that the Lord was with thee." In spite of themselves they could see that Jehovah was with Isaac, and therefore friendly relations with him would be to their advantage. Isaac, in response made them a feast, and after they jointly swore oaths of peace, the Philistines departed. How does the world view your conduct, people of God? Do they see in you, as Abimelech did in Isaac, that you are a child of God? Give no occasion for them to blaspheme the name of the Lord by your behavior, but let them see a walk consistent with your holy calling. Sing Psalter 98:1, 3, 4.

### July 31 Read Genesis 26:34-35

This chapter closes with the sad history of Esau's bigamous marriage with Judith, the daughter of Beeri the Hittite and Bashemath the daughter of Elon the Hittite. Then we read the pathos filled words "which were a grief of mind to Isaac and Rebekah." Another translation reads "they made life bitter for Isaac and Rebekah." This was undoubtedly intensified when he married a third wife who was the daughter of Ishmael. Esau, we know, despised his birthright and had no use for God and His word. To marry in the Lord for the sake of His covenant held no interest for him. We understand of course that this was the way eternally determined for him. Despite the fact that he was brought up in a godly home, he willingly and purposely disregarded God's commandments. Young people, you are your parent's greatest joy when you walk and marry in the Lord. You can also be their greatest grief when you marry outside of the church or walk in sin. Pray daily for guidance and grace to live a holy life and in that way you will experience the blessings of God. Sing Psalter 278:1, 4, 5.

# Historians View Concerning the Beginning of Music

by Melissa Van Baren

**N**ow that we've covered what we know and believe to be true concerning the history of music. I would like to take the time to note what the world is busy philosophizing concerning their beliefs on the origin of music. What they are saying tends to be quite comical and even maybe that they're unbelief is unbelievable! Still, I think, it's important to note.

Most ungodly people, if they believe in anything at all, believe in the horrific theory of Evolution. Because of this belief, they are not able to pin point when man came into existence—let alone the development of man, who supposedly came from the beasts hanging from the trees. So, they make “theories” to try to define when music was started. The worldly musicians and historians don't have much recorded for the beginnings of music. There isn't much to base things on when they don't take into account the Bible. (They do in some cases but it is very rare.) However, most seem to believe, that music was started first vocally (which is probably safe to assume, but their reasoning is false). Some say that because “instruments were not highly developed” the singing was first. (*Music through the Centuries*, pg. 4) Others say “that prehistoric men made noises, much as a child does and finding them pleasing or curious...may have relayed them for the criticism of his fellows...they may have joined him in singing and a relationship between the tones may have developed.” (*Music Through the Ages*, pg. 44) So, men learned music through grunting and cueing. Oh! how we behold so much more extensive knowledge when we embrace the truth! It's amazing that just because they don't believe God created all things and things just evolved into being—that so many questions are left unanswered.

Historians can, however, trace musical instruments back quite a way. They recognized that instruments were “a supplement to and in support of vocal music.” (*A Concise History of Church Music*, pg 11) The historians all seem to trace the “earliest” beginnings (believe it or not) to the Israelites/Jews. The Bible is where they notice all the many references to instruments and singing. The Bible indeed contains the most information on the ancient history of music! Even so, they ignore the part about Jubal—being the father off all instruments—and only use the rest of the Bible for history accounts.

Part of the reason they state that instruments were in support and a supplement to singing was because of the many accounts in the Bible about singing in partner with musical instruments. I came across one reference that stated that of all the accounts in the Old Testament on music only two mention instruments without singing. Many historians also notice that all the early music was mostly used only in worship. You would think that they would make the connection between worship, singing, God, and the beginning of time. Yet they continue in their ignorance. Since the historians pick up where the tribe of Israel begins, that too, is what I would like to consider in my next article. Its amazing to note the rich heritage of music that the Israelites had in their possession. How greatly God has blessed the tribe of Israel in the gifts of music. Yet, how much more greatly God has blessed us with music to glorify, praise and worship Him!



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

# The Christian and Genetic Engineering

## Discussion Group Outline for the 2001 Young People's Convention

by Gary Lanning

### I. Biology background

#### A. DNA

1. Each organism (worm, mushroom, bacteria, dandelion, human, etc) is what it is due to the set of instructions each was born, hatched, or germinated with. These instructions or recipes are called DNA
2. DNA can be thought of as a pearl necklace containing about 3 billion pearls. Each pearl is either white, black, pink, or yellow.
3. The sequence of colors determines whether the organism will be a bacteria or a human or ...
4. In reality the pearls are called nucleotides and are not really different colors but are distinguished one from the other by one of four nitrogen containing bases: Adenine, Guanine, Cytosine, or Thymine.
5. So then the reason you are different from the person next to you is due to each of you having different sequences of bases somewhere in your string of 3 billion nucleotides. For example you might have a sequence somewhere of CCGATTAC and the person next to you might have a sequence of GGCATTAC.
6. This entire sequence of 3 billion bases is called the genetic code.

7. Each cell in your body with the exception of blood cells has a complete copy of this genetic code.
8. Thus a skin cell has the recipe for making an eye, heart, etc. but only uses those recipes needed by the skin. Each recipe is called a gene. Just like one recipe is the directions for a cake and another is the directions for pudding and yet another is the directions for beef stew, so also each gene is the recipe for one product called a protein (new research has shown that one gene can actually be the recipe for many proteins but let's not make this any more complex than we need to). We then are a compilation of hundreds of proteins, each one made by our cells as a result of following the recipes with which we were born.
9. We have between 30,000 and 60,000 of these genes (recipes) in each cell.
10. This complete set of recipes makes up the human genome.

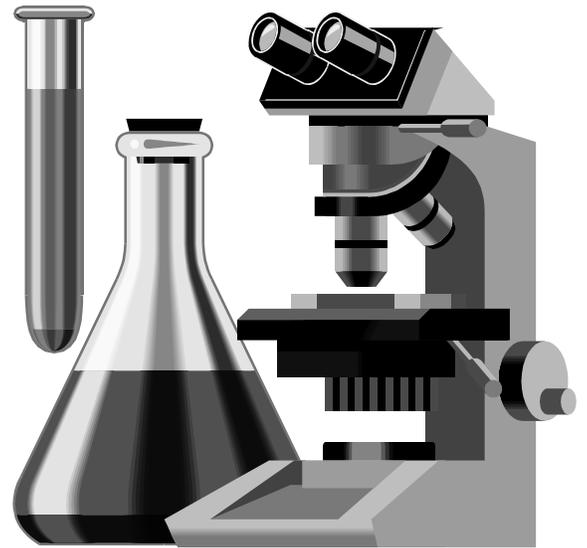
#### B. Proteins

1. Proteins are the cakes, pies, stew, etc. that were made from the recipes; That is, our genes are the recipes for the proteins that make us what we are physically.

2. Proteins give us our physical characteristics such as eye, hair, and skin color, height, etc.
3. Proteins also give us many inner, unseen characteristics such as the ability to digest sugar, or the ability to maintain proper blood pH, or the ability to fight infection.
4. Like DNA, proteins can also be envisioned as a pearl necklace.
5. This time, however, the individual pearls are not nucleotides but rather amino acids. And this time there are not just 4 kinds but rather 20 different amino acids.
6. Again, like DNA, the sequence is of utmost importance. In order for a protein to function properly the amino acids must be in the correct sequence. This sequence is determined by the sequence of nucleotides (bases) in the DNA with which you were born.
7. Just as a mistake in the recipe for a cake could have disastrous results (e.g. adding a cup of salt instead of a cup of flour) so also a mistake in a gene can have enormous consequences in the protein for which it codes.
8. Thus if you were born with the DNA sequence ACCCGATA you would have the amino acid sequence Tryptophan-Glycine-Tyrosine.
9. If however you were born with the DNA sequence ACACCGATA you would have the amino acid sequence Cysteine-Glycine-Tyrosine.
10. This one amino acid change in a protein that is several hundred amino acids long is enough to cause such genetic disorders as cystic fibrosis, Tay-Sachs, hemophilia, etc.

### C. Genetic Engineering

1. The goal is to “fix” the incorrect recipe by removing it from the chromosome where it resides and inserting a corrected version of the gene.
2. This process is not widely available yet for many genetic disorders.
3. Cells from an embryo can be examined to determine whether or not the embryo has a genetic defect. This is called genetic screening. This screening is available for some but not all genetic disorders.
4. Screening can determine if a defective gene is present but no cure is yet available for most genetic disorders. In most cases the only “cure” offered is an abortion.



## II. Questions

1. Does an embryo have a soul?
2. Should a Christian couple have a genetic screen done on an embryo in order to check for genetic abnormalities?
3. Should we tamper with the genetic code we were conceived with in order to “fix” problems with the genes? What if we could prevent a child from being born with Tay-Sachs, hemophilia, cystic fibrosis, or perhaps Down’s Syndrome? Should we tamper with the genetic code this person was conceived with in order to “fix” these “mistakes” in the embryo’s genes? (This technology is not actually available yet but may become available in the near future.)
4. Should we tamper with the genetic code to produce a designer baby with the characteristics we want such as height, hair color, etc.?
5. Should researchers insert human genes into animals in order to get human proteins from animals such as human insulin from bacteria and human milk proteins from cows? (This technology is available and is being used at this time.)
6. Should humans have animal genes inserted into them in order to cure some diseases? (To the best of my knowledge this has not been done but the technology is available to do it.) ❖

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# The Christian and Politics

## Discussion Group Outline for the 2001 Young People's Convention

by Rev. Charles J. Terpstra

### I. Introduction

- A. An area of Christian living and relationships we seldom discuss at length is that of the Christian and politics.
  - 1. Perhaps because the subject is often so controversial, that we think it best to avoid it. Or because we judge politics to be necessarily “dirty,” and therefore believe we must avoid it.
  - 2. And maybe too, because we think this area of life is not all that relevant to us as young people. When we get older perhaps, but not at this point in our lives.
- B. Yet we ought to face and discuss this area of our Christian walk in this world.
  - 1. We ought to because there is much confusion and controversy relating to this subject. There are wrong views concerning the Christian's relation to government and politics.
  - 2. We ought to because God's Word speaks to it.
    - a. God tells us that our relation to government and political matters is important.
    - b. God guides us into a right understanding of our calling. If He speaks to it, we must listen and obey.
  - 3. We ought to because it is relevant to our lives as young people.
    - a. We confront political issues in the news.
    - b. We confront political issues in high school and college, as well as in everyday life.
    - c. This becomes more so the older we become. It is good to lay a good foundation of understanding and action early, so that we may learn to live properly in this area of our lives.

### II. The Role of Government and the Calling of the Christian In General Toward Political Institutions and People

- A. We believe that government is ordained of God and is His authority.
  - 1. Prov. 8:15,16; Daniel 2:20, 21, 37; Matthew 22:17-21; 28:18; John 19:10, 11; Rom. 13:1-7; Titus 3:1; I Peter 2:13-17; Heid. Cat., Lord's Day 39, Q&A 104; Belgic Confession, Art. 36
    - a. What is authority? What basic Reformed doctrine is implied in it? What serious implication does this have for us?
    - b. In what area(s) does government have authority? Or, what powers does God give to government? Federal level? State? Local?
    - c. What does it mean that the government has the sword-power? Does this necessarily include capital punishment?
    - d. What is the basic purpose or role of government?
  - 2. In the light of this truth we must understand our calling.
    - a. What does God require of us as we live under government? Use the texts above.
    - b. Are there any exceptions to this calling? I.e., may the Christian ever refuse to do what the government requires? Cf. Daniel 2; Acts 4:18-20; 5:29
    - c. May the Christian protest government policies and laws? If so, in what way? Letter-writing? Picketing? Lobbyists? Withholding tax money?
    - d. Do Christians ever have the right to rebel against their political leaders? May we seek to overthrow a government? Again, use the list of texts above.

3. There is yet another calling we have toward government—to pray for our leaders: I Timothy 2:1-4.
    - a. How should we do this? What should we pray for with regard to them?
    - b. May we pray for their salvation?
    - c. May we pray for the wicked to be overthrown? Find examples in Scripture of the church praying for vengeance on her political enemies. cf. Acts 4:24-30.
- B. We ought to return to the role of government and consider some specific questions.
1. Specifically, the government’s relation to the church and the Christian faith.
    - a. Should our government uphold the 2nd table of the law? In what way?
    - b. Now, should our government uphold the 1<sup>st</sup> table of the law? In what way? Consider the implications. Read the 36<sup>th</sup> article of the Belgic Confession again. What did the Reformers believe about this?
    - c. Now read the footnote to Art. 36. Do you agree with this? I.e., do you believe the separation of church and state? Wouldn’t we want a Christian government? Do we really want our government to tolerate all religions?
  2. Consider also the role of government in other areas.
    - a. What do you think of the government promoting vouchers for people to send their children to private schools, such as our own PR schools? Why or why not? Does the government have any role in the education of its citizens?
    - b. What is your judgment of Pres. G. Bush’s “faith-based initiatives” program? Should our diaconates accept money to help the poor, etc. among us? Why or why not?
- III. The Christian’s Involvement in Politics**
- A. We need to face the matter of the Reformed believer’s participation in the political arena.
1. We need to discuss whether or not a Christian may serve in government.
    - a. Is it God’s will that His people hold public office and serve Him and society in this way? Are there examples in the Bible of believers who served in government positions? Do these examples encourage us to be involved or show that it ought not be done? What about the fact that government is usually an instrument of satan and the kingdom of darkness?
    - b. Why don’t more of our members seek a political office? Are there spiritual dangers in running for and holding public office? Are these so great that it would lead us to say we should not pursue any office? Do you know of any Christians currently in office whose service is commendable?
    - c. Are there other ways a believer can serve in government? Name some ways.
  2. We also need to discuss the Christian’s involvement in the political process.
    - a. Is it proper for a believer to work for the election of certain candidates for public office? If so, to what degree? And how (i.e., what means are proper)?
    - b. Is it proper for a Christian to work for a PAC (Political Action Committee) or a lobbyist group? Why or why not?
    - c. Is it proper to work for other conservative political groups, such as those who work to defend constitutional rights, tax reform, etc.?
- B. Finally, we should discuss the matter of voting.
1. In our constitutional republic we citizens are given the privilege of being involved in the political process in this way.
    - a. Is it our duty to vote, or is it merely a matter of personal preference? Why or why not?
    - b. Should we only vote for Christian candidates? Why or why not?
    - c. What current issues are a “litmus test” for you in determining whom you would vote for?
  2. What important truths must we keep in mind while we are involved any area of politics?
    - a. Psalm 118:9, 10; 146:3-5.
    - b. II Thess. 2:1-12 & Rev. 13 with Rev. 19:11ff.
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- Rev. Terpstra is pastor of First Protestant Reformed Church in Holland, Michigan.*

When I In Awesome Wonder...  
The Golden Coast Of Michigan  
The Preying Lion

by Deane Wassink

Lying in wait among the dunegrass along the shore of Lake Michigan the hunter has set his trap for his victims. Unaware of the danger his hard working prey avoids the trap that has been set the first few times she passes by. She gets closer and closer as she goes back and forth across the face of the dunes looking for food among the plants. Suddenly, she gets too close and her feet begin to slip down into the trap. Frantically, she struggles to get away, yet, the sand breaks loose under her feet and she slides downward into the vortex like center of the pit. Then, Wham! With a vicious hold the hunter grabs her leg and drags her beneath the surface where she cannot break free because of the weight of the sand pressing down upon her.

As a young boy, I often dropped “victims,” you know them as “ants,” into the traps set for them by the ant lions in the sand. It seemed it took large traps from large ant lions to catch the larger ants. If the trap was too small, the intended victim would climb out easily. If we quickly scooped the trap into our hands we could, at times, catch the vicious predator I have been talking about. We called these ant lions “doodle bugs,” because they only seemed to be able to crawl in reverse. In fact, the big ones would tickle our cupped hands in the center as they would back into it trying to get away from the “predator” that had captured them.

The ant lion is actually the larvae of a dragonfly. It has been given the instinct by our Creator to dig a funnel shaped pit in the dry sand by backing in ever narrowing circles and throwing the sand out with its large jaws until it is nearly one inch deep. Then they hide under the sand in the center. When the ants are busy in the heat of the day the dry sand breaks away under their feet so that they cannot climb out of the pit. The moving sand alerts

the ant lion which pulls them to their death under the sand. Its vicious pinchers make up nearly a third of its total length of one fourth of an inch long. If you have ever tried to climb straight up a loose pile of sand you know how the ant must feel like when it cannot escape.

The futility of the ants’ struggle against an enemy which has physics on his side seems to me a vivid picture of the attacks of the devil upon God’s people. At times they flirt with danger by seeing how close they can come to sin and temptation without being pulled in and becoming a victim. At times, sadly, they end up in the slippery slope of sin and like the poor ant, slide into the abyss to be devoured by the devil. Oh, we must be warned again and again. Sin is not a joke; it is serious and dangerous. Whether the sins are in the area of sex, alcohol, deception, or rebellion, unless we repent of them, we will be victims. The traps of the devil are littered with the bones of those who thought they could get away with a sin just once.

*Lord, keep us from temptation’s call,  
Lest on its slippery slope we fall.*

*Downward into the pit to slide,  
Where the “Roaring Lion” hides.*

*Lest we from Thy truth be led,  
To deny the Christ, Whose blood was shed.*

*So, humble and careful let us be,  
That we may find our rest in Thee. ❖*

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

## Preaching (2)

by Rev. Ronald Hanko

*Reprinted from the mission newsletter circulated in the UK by Covenant PRC.*

**T**he most important thing that the Bible says about preaching is that it is the way in which God's people hear the voice of Christ Himself. Jesus tells us that we do hear His voice and must hear it in John 10:27.

That we hear His voice in the *preaching*, is clear from other passages (Rom. 1:16, 17; 10:13, 14; I Cor. 1:18, 23, 24; Eph. 2:17). Notice, for example, in Ephesians 2:17, that it is *Christ* who comes and preaches peace both to Jews and Gentiles. Even in the Old Testament it was the *Spirit of Christ* who spoke through the prophets (I Pet. 1:10, 11).

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**If Christ does not speak  
through the preaching, no  
one will ever be saved by the  
preaching of the gospel.**

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This is of the utmost importance. If Christ does not speak through the preaching, no one will ever be saved by the preaching of the gospel. No man's voice can convict sinners and lead them to repentance. Only Christ's voice can do that. No one has power to convert sinners and bring them to God. Only Christ can (Jn. 10:27).

Because Christ speaks through the preaching and causes His voice to be heard, the gospel is "the power of God unto salvation" (Rom. 1:16). Indeed, the gospel is "Christ the power of God and the wisdom of God" (I Cor. 1:23, 24).

That Christ speaks through the gospel also explains the fact that the gospel always has a two-part effect. It not only saves, but it also hardens. It is not only a savor

of life, but also of death (II Cor. 2:14-16). No one can come so near to Christ as to hear His voice and be neutral! He will either by the grace of God love that voice and desire to hear it always, or he will hate its very sound and shut his ears and heart to it (Isa. 6:9, 10).

When people stumble through unbelief, they stumble over Christ! *He* is the stone of stumbling and rock of offence—not the preacher, at least not if the gospel is preached and preached properly.

In order for Christ to be heard through gospel preaching, however, several things must be true. In the first place, only the Scriptures must be preached. They, and they alone, are Christ's Word to His people. Anecdotes, jokes, entertainment, and the preacher's own thoughts, however valuable they may be, are of no value in preaching. The Word alone must be preached!

Second, the preaching must be *expository*. Really that is just another way of saying that it is the Word which must be preached, but it needs emphasis, because so much preaching is only hung on a text of Scripture and Scripture itself is never explained, nor the text preached. There is a great lack of true expository preaching today.

Third, as we noticed in the last issue, the preacher must be sent (Rom. 10:15), that is, authorized and ordained by Christ's church (Acts 13:1-4—notice that the sending by the church is equated with the sending of the Holy Spirit in verse 4). If the preacher is not sent neither he nor his audience have any guarantee that Christ will use him and speak through him, and what use is preaching in that case?

May God grant that Christ's voice be heard once again in the churches! ❖

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*Rev. Hanko was missionary/pastor of Covenant Protestant Reformed Church in Northern Ireland.*

# Abraham Kuyper

by Heather VanOverloop

**A**braham Kuyper was a person that influenced many. Through his preaching, teachings, and writings many were moved and converted. Also, many started to question whether other teachings of the Roman Catholic Church were true.

Abraham was born in the city of Maasiuis, Netherlands, on October 29, 1837. His father was a minister in the Reformed church. The Reformed churches were hard to find at his time in his country. He was brought up in the orthodox religion. After being home-schooled by his parents he became a student at Leyden. Kuyper did not like it there so he rebelled and turned to Modern theology. In this religion he became a young preacher in the city of Beesd.

At the time of his birth two movements swept throughout the Netherlands and were more prevalent here than in any other country. The first was *De Afscheiding* or The Separation. The second was *De Reveil* or the Renewal. The government had persecuted this group for their beliefs. This was the movement in which Kuyper was born. Kuyper was not moved by either of these movements. Kuyper would later preach on why each of these movements were wrong.

When Kuyper was young his parents home schooled him. He was very smart and was able to learn well the subjects that were taught to him. When he was older, he went to the University of Leiden. After he graduated he went to school to become a preacher. In these schools Kuyper was influenced badly by his teachers. The schools had turned Kuyper and twisted his beliefs and he became a Modernist.

Abraham was an influential preacher who moved many people. His preaching lead to many people's conversion. During his studies Kuyper found things that made him believe that God was providential. He moved slowly and steadily toward the Reformed doctrine.

Kuyper influenced many people with his powerful sermons. The Netherlands did not have preaching like Kuyper's. Kuyper was then called to be a minister in the biggest church in the Netherlands. In 1870, Kuyper became one of twenty-eight preachers in a church which

had 140,000 members. This church was the most influential church of that time.

Kuyper was considered a great politician in his time. He wanted to return the Netherlands to the past traditions of the Reformed doctrine. The church had fallen away at the time of the Separation and the Renewal movements. People understood him because he was of the common people. Kuyper was from the Anti-revolutionary Party in 1869. In 1874, he ran for the Parliament. Kuyper had lost twice for the position in the Parliament. After running many times for the position he was elected in the city of Gouda, in the year of 1874.

At this time, Kuyper resigned from the ministry. Since he had been elected to the Parliament, he had to stop preaching to fulfill this position.

While Kuyper was in the parliament he wrote many pieces that influenced many people. Kuyper lead a very busy and disciplined life in order for him to accomplish all that he did. He wrote uninterrupted in the morning and at night he corrected the things he had written in the morning. Only an hour was given to spend time with his family. He became an editor for a weekly paper, in 1869. In 1872, Kuyper became the editor of his second paper.

Kuyper wrote lectures, meditations, and many other articles. Also, he wrote on many different topics in his writings, such as why the Separation and Renewal movements were wrong. Kuyper, in many cases, included illustrations to better explain what he was talking about.

The most important thing the Anti-revolutionary party was allowing Christian schools to have equal standing with the government's schools. They wanted this because they believed that a good Christian education was important. Kuyper joined with the Roman Catholic party to gain more strength and support. There were those people that did not think that politics was Kuyper best place of work.

Through Kuyper's life he attacked the evils that were in the church. As Kuyper was converted he saw why modernism was wrong. Kuyper battled with the errors of modernism and liberalism.

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After Kuyper resigned, he became an elder in the church, and soon he became the head of the consistory. While an elder, he worked on the doctrine of marriage and whether young people should and could become full members of the church.

Kuyper wanted to establish a Christian university because he did not like the way the schools he went to had twisted his beliefs. After much work Kuyper established the Free University, in 1880. The school continued to grow as more people supported the university. In the Free University Kuyper talked about the dogmatics he had preached on earlier. Soon, Kuyper was asked to speak at other schools such as Princeton University, where he spoke the Stone Lectures he had written. The Stone Lectures were speeches Kuyper had written,

against the errors of Modernism and Liberalism. They were then put under the title *Calvanism* (Hanko).

Kuyper had done many things to influence people. Through his teaching, preaching, and writing, many people saw the error of their ways. Also, while he was in politics, Christian schools were able to have a stand in what to say. Abraham Kuyper was a great man who influenced many people. Kuyper influenced many of today's teachings. Some of these teachings we live by as Protestants. ❖

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*Heather is a member of Hudsonville Protestant Reformed Church in Hudsonville, Michigan. She wrote this paper for Mr. VanUffelen's Church History class at Covenant Christian High School.*

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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:**

Alex Jay, son of Mr. & Mrs. Mike Landheer – Byron Center, MI  
Cassidy Hope, daughter of Mr. & Mrs. Kevin Eppinga – Doon, IA  
Ian Scott, son of Mr. & Mrs. Ryan Mowery – Holland, MI  
Daren Lee, son of Mr. & Mrs. Scott Moelker – Hope, MI  
Jayden Kate, daughter of Mr. & Mrs. Craig Hoksbergen – Hull, IA  
Jordan Lee, son of Mr. & Mrs. Brian Gritters – Hull, IA  
Norah Gabrielle, daughter of Mr. & Mrs. Ed Heeter – Peace, IL  
Conner Joel, son of Mr. & Mrs. Joel Houck – Peace, IL  
Faith Nicole, daughter of Mr. & Mrs. Ed Hoksbergen – Randolph, WI  
Grant Alvin, son of Mr. & Mrs. James Kooiker – Randolph, WI  
Julia Grace, daughter of Mr. & Mrs. Mike Holleman – South Holland, IL  
Kole Phillip, son of Mr. & Mrs. Jeremy Ward – South Holland, IL

### 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:**

Karisa Hassevoort – Byron Center, MI  
Jason Elzinga – Byron Center, MI  
Pamela Buys – Hull, IA  
Glenda Westra – Hull, IA  
Terry VanMaanen – Hull, IA  
Valerie Westra – Hull, IA  
Julie Hoksbergen – Hull, IA  
Derek Tolsma – Lacombe, Canada  
Charlene Wierenga – Lacombe, Canada  
Virginia Boer – South Holland, IL  
Joel Zandstra – South Holland, IL

### MARRIAGES

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

*Matthew 19:5*

**United in the bond of Holy Matrimony were:**

Mr. Jan Zeldenrust and Miss Lisa Tolsma – Edmonton, Canada  
Mr. Colin Buchanan and Miss Beth De Vries – Grace, MI  
Mr. Terry VanMaanen and Miss Becky Pollema – Hull, IA  
Mr. Joel Zandstra and Miss Nicole Eriks – South Holland, IL

# "LITTLE LIGHTS"

## He Waters the Hills

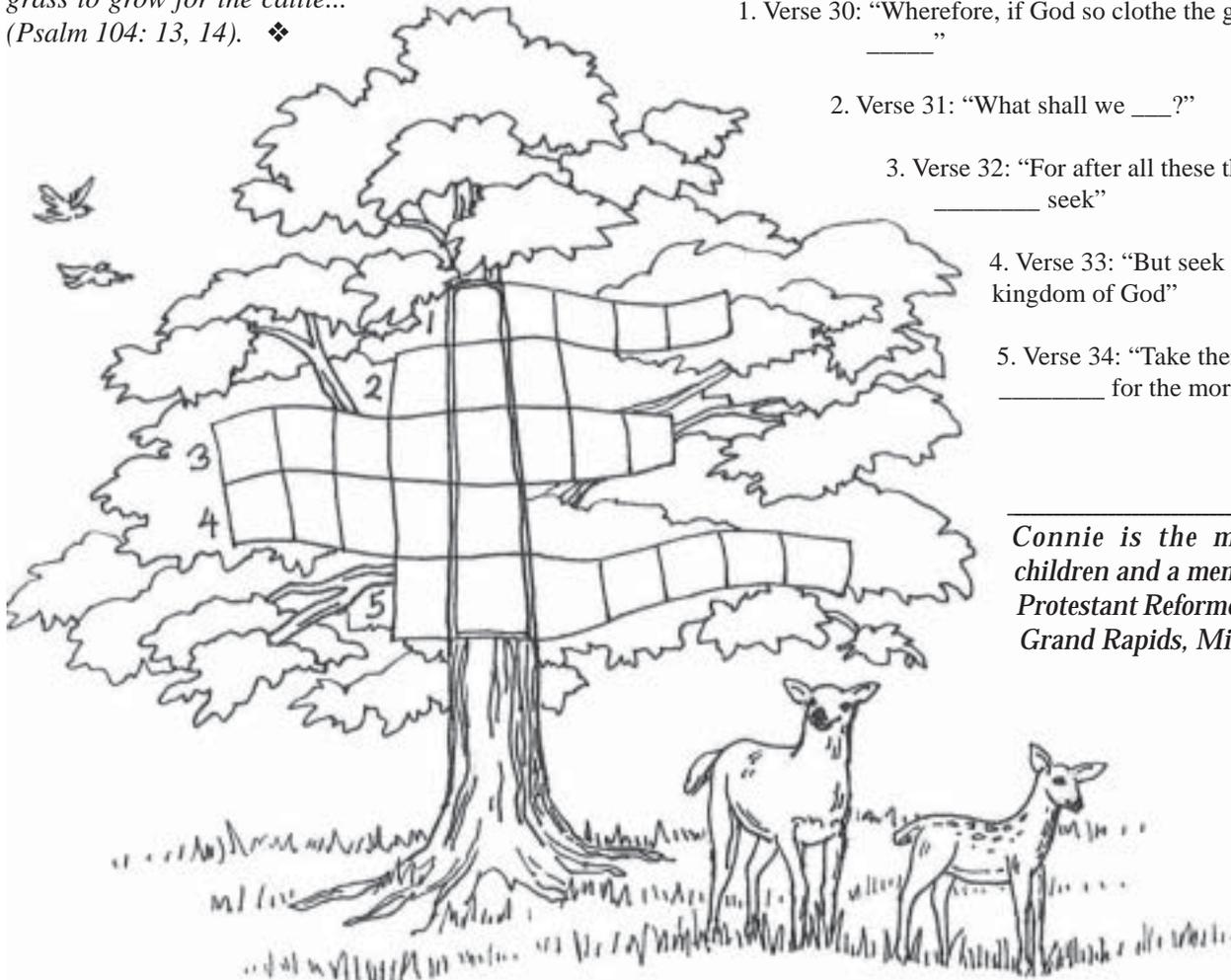
*... let it shine!*

by Connie Meyer

Thunder shuddered through the distant hills and clouds darkened, heavy with rain. The air was still and hot. The dry ground was expectant. The whole forest waited for the refreshing showers that were sure to come.

First one drop. Then another. A sparrow flitted into the protection of a tall and mighty oak. A rabbit skittered under the nearest leafy bush. And a young fawn skipped about in wonder and surprise as water dropped from the sky and splashed upon its silky smooth, spotted coat. His mother twitched her tail and ears and watched with satisfaction. From the wet earth arose the smell of fresh grasses and wild blooms—a fragrance pleasant with promise.

*"He watereth the hills from his chambers: the earth is satisfied with the fruit of thy works. He causeth the grass to grow for the cattle..."*  
(Psalm 104: 13, 14). ❖



Did this seem like a very simple—maybe even unimportant—story to you? But have you ever worried about what food you would eat or what clothes you would wear? When we're worried about things, what we're worried about seems very important to us! But it is then that we should remember a simple story such as this. This story tells us something that is very important.

Read Matthew 6:30-34 to find the answers to the puzzle. We need food and clothes, but what else do we really need?

1. Verse 30: "Wherefore, if God so clothe the grass of the \_\_\_\_\_"
2. Verse 31: "What shall we \_\_\_\_?"
3. Verse 32: "For after all these things do the \_\_\_\_\_ seek"
4. Verse 33: "But seek ye \_\_\_\_\_ the kingdom of God"
5. Verse 34: "Take therefore no \_\_\_\_\_ for the morrow"

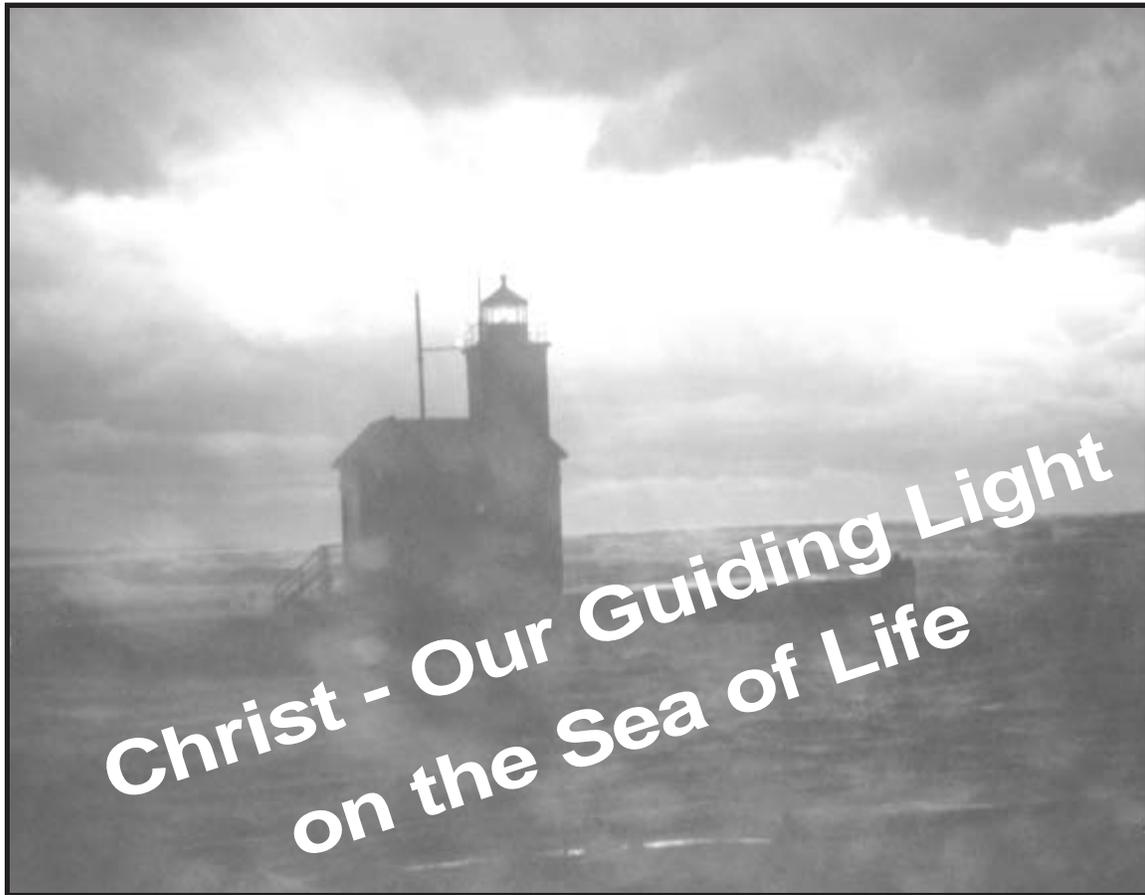
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*Connie is the mother of 5 children and a member of Hope Protestant Reformed Church in Grand Rapids, Michigan.*

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LAKE ANN BAPTIST CAMP  
NEAR TRAVERSE CITY, MI

Hosted by First Protestant Reformed Church  
of Holland, Michigan Young People's Society

**SPEAKERS:** Revs. Bekkering, Eriks, & Van Overloop

*Still interesting in registering? Call Pat Pols @ 616-662-2072 for availability.*

*Check out the **2001 Convention** link on our church website for  
a printable registration form, pictures, & more details: [www.hollandprc.org](http://www.hollandprc.org)*