

Beacon Lights

January
2002

Volume LXI
Number 1

“O that there were such an heart in them, that they would fear me, and keep all my commandments always, that it might be well with them, and with their children for ever!”

Deuteronomy 5:29

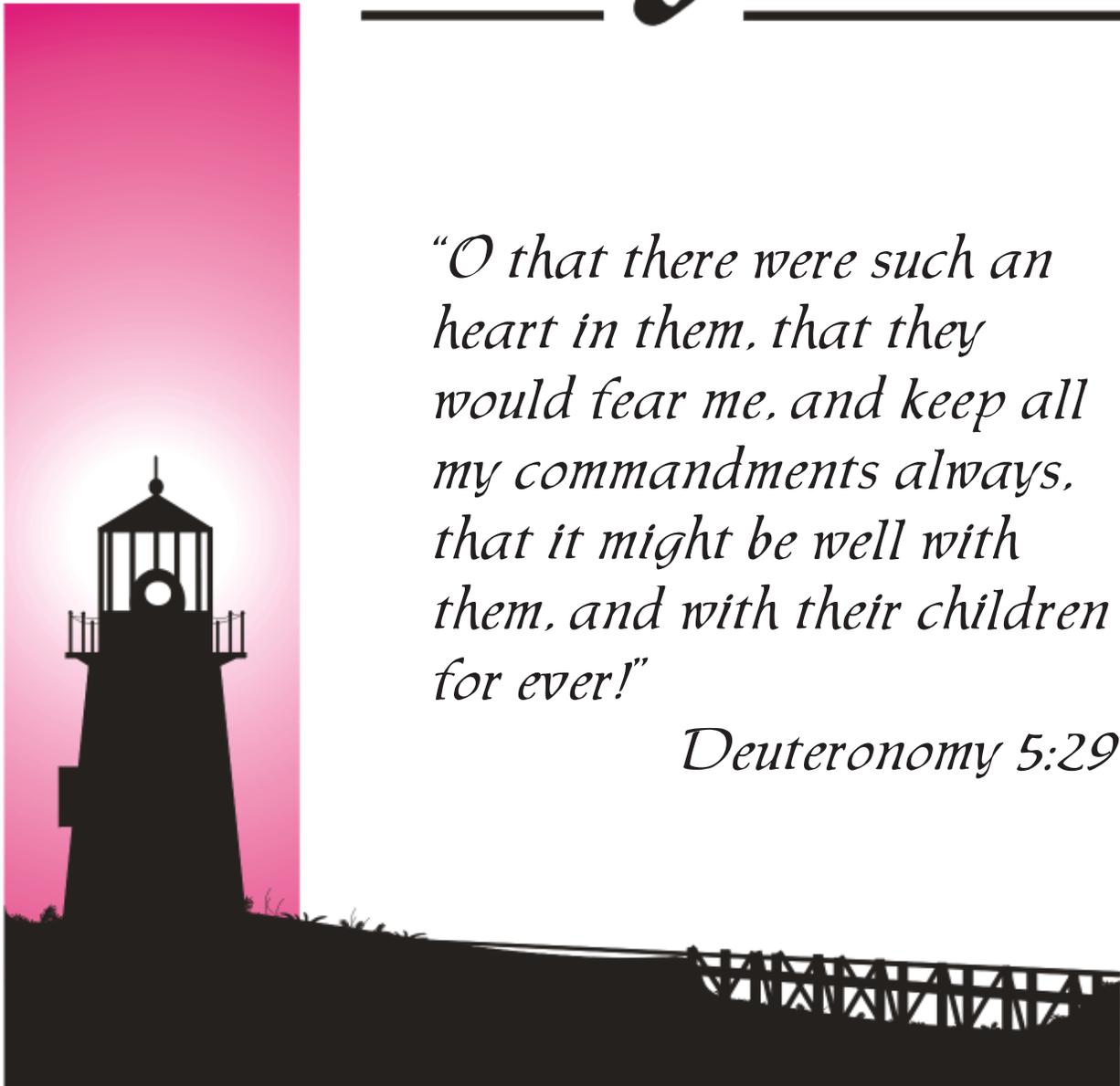


Table of Contents

	EDITORIAL
3	The Beginning of Knowledge (3)
	LETTER TO THE EDITOR
5	Deadly Poison
	STORY TIME
9	The Fourth Man (Chapter 14): The Hole in the Door
	BOOK REVIEW
12	Seven Men Who Rule the World from the Grave
	GEM OF THE MONTH
14	Perfect Peace
	DEVOTIONAL
15	Watching Daily At My Gates
	MUSIC
19	More Struggles Against Worldly Music
	CREATION THROUGH THE SPECTACLES OF SCRIPTURE
20	A Look at Oil Use Through the Spectacles of Scripture
	PASTOR PROFILES
22	Reverend Ronald Van Overloop (2)
	WHERE WE STAND
24	The Signs of Christ's Coming
	CHURCH HISTORY
25	State Reformed Church of Odoorn
	LITTLE LIGHTS
27	January 1560
	CHURCH NEWS
	Back Cover

BEACON LIGHTS

BEACON LIGHTS STAFF

Editor-in-Chief John Huizenga
 Associate Editor Aaron Cleveland
 Finance Manager Joshua Hoekstra
 Secretary Open

DEPARTMENT MANAGERS

Fruitful Branches John Huizenga
 Dating and Marriage John Huizenga
 Devotional John Huizenga, Chester Hunter,
 Cornelius Jonker
 Science John Huizenga
 Poetry John Huizenga
 Doctrine Jeff Kalsbeek
 History Open
 Little Lights Connie Meyer
 Church News Melinda Bleyenbergh

Subscription Manager Cathy Postmus (616)662-4326
 Book Sales Becky Kalsbeek (616)735-3608
 Typesetting Bob Vermeer
 Printing Jim Huizinga

EXECUTIVE FEDERATION BOARD

President Cory Terpstra
 Vice-President Trevor Kalsbeek
 Secretary Maria Bodbyl
 Treasurer Nathan Yonker
 Librarian Jeanine Boeve
 Vice-Secretary Audra Bol
 Vice-Treasurer Brad Pastoor
 Youth Coordinator Brad Duistermars
 Spiritual Advisor Rev. Doug Kuiper

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

EDITORIAL OFFICE

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

Subscription Price: \$10.00

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

EDITORIAL POLICY

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

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

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

The Beginning of Knowledge

(3)

by Randy Vaalburg



Last time we considered God's holiness and how it applies to us as Christians. Now let's take a closer look at how true obedience to God's law is an expression of our proper fear of the Lord.

Jehovah admonished the nation of Israel again and again by the mouth of Moses both to fear Him and keep His commandments. Why? Because keeping the Lord's commandments and fearing Him are not two detached ideas, but closely connected (Ps. 111:10). Christian young people, Godly fear enabled the Israelites then, and enables us now, to obey God's laws. Inspired Jeremiah explained that Jehovah puts fear into the hearts of His covenant people so that we will not depart from Him (Jer. 32:40). So, the fear of the Lord is a gift of His grace. It is for our good (v. 39). The great church father Augustine said, "Command what Thou wilt, and give what Thou commandest." The Lord does this when He gives us the gift of His fear that we may keep His commandments.

It is impossible to live in spiritual peace and in willing obedience to God without godly fear of Him. We see this in the church at the time of the prophet Malachi. It did not enjoy the spiritual rest that the God-fearing church did soon after Pentecost (Acts 9:31). The church was not comprised of congregations that feared God and were unified in praise of Him (Mal. 3:16; Ps. 22:25). Instead, the vast majority of the nation of Israel was neither living in the fear of God nor in true obedience to Him. Even though there was no return to the former idolatry that had existed before the captivity in Babylon, spiritual corruption in a different form than idol worship had settled in. The traditional worship that had been restored consisted of spiritual deadness and cold formalism. The people were guilty of the robbing of tithes, false accusations against God, and other evils. The priests, or spiritual leaders, were especially to blame. God demanded of them, "If then I be a father, where is mine honour? And if I be a master, where is my fear?" (Mal. 1:6). These spiritual leaders lacked fear of God. They made an outward show of godliness, going through the motions to keep God's law.

How did the priests make a show in order to seem obedient to God's law? First, they tried to appear faithful to their marriage vows by maintaining their "marriages." But, the priests had treated their first wives badly and unbiblically divorced them—something which God says He hates (Mal. 2:16). Then they replaced their real wives whom the Lord calls "thy companion, and the wife of thy covenant" with "daughters of a strange god." Re-married, they lived in continuous adultery with heathen "wives" who were not the God-given ones of their own marriage-covenant. The Lord reminded the priests of the reason why they had made the marriage vows which they had broken—that they might hope for godly children (Mal. 2:15). God said that if they did not change their ways and give glory to His name, He would corrupt their seed (Mal. 2:1-3).

Second, the spiritual leaders made a show of keeping God's law when they accepted polluted bread and lame, sick, and blemished animals for sacrifice from the people. Instead of refusing these ill gifts and reprimanding the givers, the spiritual leaders helped the people "serve God" in an outward way. God's commandments to sacrifice were kept, but the priests moved people to despise God's law by letting them partially obey it! They encouraged the people in superficial, hollow acts of worship. These insincere acts were not good works done out of true faith, according to the will of God, and for His glory (Heidleberg

Catechism Q&A 91). On the contrary, they were done for personal gain (Mal. 1:10). The people did not offer their firstfruits (best) according to His will (Ex. 23:19). Nonetheless, they thought they were doing pretty good, for they questioned God “what profit is it that we have kept his ordinance and that we have walked mournfully before the Lord of hosts?” (Mal. 3:14). God responded, with righteous anger, that their back-talk greatly offended Him (v. 13). “I have no pleasure in you,” the Lord said, “neither will I accept an offering at your hand” (Mal. 1:10). He was not glorified by their blemished, torn, and lame gifts, and the offering of them was blasphemous. Those tainted offerings were not a picture of the perfect, unblemished sacrifice of His only Son, nor were they accompanied by what the Lord considers to be true sacrifice: a “broken spirit” and a “broken and a contrite heart” (Ps. 51:17). As a result, the sacrifices were not offered out of faith. The people worshipped only in outward ritual.

God explained that His covenant of life and peace had been made with the tribe of Levi and its descendants because of Levi’s fear of the Lord (Mal. 2:5; Deut. 10:8). Nevertheless, the spiritual leaders of Malachi’s day corrupted the covenant and caused many to stumble at the law (Mal. 2:8). Christian young people, we can expect that God’s life and peace will not be with us if we do not live obediently in

**God’s life and peace will not be with us if we do not live
obediently in His fear.**

His fear. Living in loving obedience to God is the only way we obtain and experience His favor and life in Him (Lev. 18:5). When, by His grace, we are determined not to do things which He despises, the Lord takes pleasure in us (Ps. 147:11). We must not think, however, that by doing good works of obedience we could ever make ourselves worthy of eternal life. We cannot merit anything with God. No man is justified by the law in His sight (Gal. 3:2).

A life of willing obedience to God’s law is what the life of the believer ought to be all about. “If ye love Me, keep my commandments,” said Jesus. According to the summary of the Law, love for God is the motive that moves us to correctly fear and obey Him. Part of what this means is that we not be hypocritical. Outward appearance alone is not enough. God, Who searches and knows the heart, requires that obedience be from the heart. “My son, forget now my law; but let *thine heart keep* my commandments: For length of days, and long life, and peace, shall they add to thee” (Prov. 3:1-2, emphasis mine, RV). It is our hearts that must do the keeping! By whole-hearted obedience to God, we recognize that He is our sovereign Lord and lawgiver, and He receives glory, honor, and praise. We know that we will never be perfectly obedient while on this earth, but we have the beginnings of obedience by the Spirit’s work of grace in us (I Pet. 1:2). We must hate the utter depravity of our old natures, cry out to God for help, and by His strength and grace overcome our sinful weaknesses. It will be well with us when, in His fear, we keep from willful sins. Said the Lord to Moses, “I have heard the voice of the words of this people, which they have spoken unto thee: they have well said all that they have spoken. O that there were such an heart in them, that they would fear me, and keep all my commandments always, that it might be well with them, and with their children forever!” (Deut. 5:28-29).

In conclusion, the proper fear of the Lord is our trust and hope and fountain of life (Prov. 14:27; Job 4:6). God promises the following glorious blessings to us who fear His name:

And they shall be mine ... in that day when I make up my jewels; and I will spare them, as a man spareth his own son that serveth him. Then shall ye return, and discern between the righteous and the wicked, between him that serveth God and him that serveth him not.

But unto you that fear my name shall the Sun of righteousness arise with healing in his wings; and ye shall go forth, and grow up as calves in the stall (Mal. 3:17-18; 4:2). ❖

Deadly Poison

by Mrs. Dilys Watson

November 15, 2001

Dear *Beacon Lights* Editor,

I was sent a set of tapes from a series of lectures given by Rev. David Silversides in 1999. The tapes I received in mid 2000. They were sent to me by a young Christian friend whom I know through the mutual friendship of Mr. Paul Hayden, first Secretary of the original British Reformed Fellowship.

The whole set of speeches, as I mention in my letter to Kathy were apparently so soundly doctrinally Scriptural, that I was delighted by them—that is, until I came to speech number eight. The very title made me unwilling to listen any further, and I laid the set aside for a long time. But then realized that if I refused to listen to it, I would be unable to talk with Kathy about it, and so took the plunge and listened. For a time he said things with which I agreed. But then he brought in so many

an admixture of truth and lie
to produce deadly spiritual
poison which, as Paul says in
Galatians 1, is accursed of
God.

dreadful lies, all mingled with the truth, that I was disgusted.

I now am sending a redraft of the letter to Kathy, in hopes that maybe you will find it of use in the *Beacon Lights* magazine, which we as family have read and enjoyed for many years.

It may be used of the Lord, through you, to show our Protestant Reformed Young People just how such

folks make the truth an admixture of truth and lie to produce deadly spiritual poison which, as Paul says in Galatians 1, is accursed of God.

And it is my prayer that the Lord will use you in your ongoing work for our Young People, to provide them with sound, Biblical encouragement in our lifelong battle for the faith once delivered to the saints.

Yours in Christ's service, by His amazing grace,

Mrs. Dilys Watson

By the grace of God a founder member of the PRC in New Zealand, and now one of the Protestant Reformed Fellowship in Wellington.

Dear Kathy,

Many thanks for the set of tapes you sent for me from the lectures of Rev. Silversides when he visited Australia in 1999 and spoke at the Bible Presbyterian Church in Adelaide.

I have listened to seven of the tapes with great appreciation and interest, and had begun to wonder if he knew Rev. Ron Hanco, since he also labors and resides in Northern Ireland. However, when I came to speech number eight and read the title, "Christ's Kingly Offer of Mercy" (A Defense of the Free Offer of the Gospel), I felt some immediate misgivings, and postponed listening for a week or so. Then I realized that if I didn't listen, I wouldn't know what he had said!

So, the other morning, while I did the ironing, I put it on. For a while all seemed well. What he said the "offer is not" I could agree with. However, when he came to telling his audience what the "offer is," I am afraid

that he went right away from his previous well-presented and carefully Scriptural exegesis. What he said became shocking to me, and especially when he declared that we must love our enemies, (Correct! for we do not know who are the reprobate and elect) but he finishes with the blasphemous statement “God doesn’t know either.” I exclaimed aloud on hearing that and hurried to rewind the tape to ascertain whether I had heard aright.

Rev. Silversides was actually telling his hearers that there is something that God doesn’t know! This is a horrendous and preposterous thing. If there is one small thing which the Almighty does not know, then He is not God. The whole Bible is full of evidence of His omniscience. E.g. “Known unto God are all His works from the beginning of the world” (Acts 18:15). And this, simply because He has ordained as well as created all things, and upholds and governs all things by His own omnipotence, omniscience and wisdom. For, “God is not a man, that He should lie; neither the son of man, that He should repent: hath He said, and shall He not do it?, or hath He spoken, and shall He not make it good?” (Numbers 23:19).

Consider also John 17:9: “I pray for them: I pray not for the world, but for them which Thou hast given Me; for they are Thine.” (Notice this is Jesus the Sinless One, Loving, Obedient Servant of Jehovah. Neither He nor the Father had even any “lifetime” love for the reprobate, and Jesus certainly never prayed for the reprobate).

Love not the world, neither the things that are in the world. If any man love the world, the love of the Father is not in him (I John 2:15).

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

Rev. Silversides quotes Matthew 5:43-48, in a manner which many others have done, who misunderstand and confuse God’s grace with His providence. Thus, he makes rain and sunshine blessings, whereas this is a false notion. If rain and sunshine are blessings upon all who receive them, then is a crop and home destroying flood “too much blessing”? Are we to believe that when people die in floods that this is “too much blessing”? What then, of the global flood of Noah’s day (Gen. 6)?

Again and again, Rev. Silversides destroys his earlier clear and Biblical exegesis in this speech and I am filled with dismay and alarm—more so since I heard on the tape not one suspicion of an inward drawn breath from his audience, but simply silence.

Further, he thus reveals a fundamental lack of understanding of the covenant of God, and goes on to make false charges against the Protestant Reformed Churches, Rev. Hoeksema, and the British Reformed Fellowship in sweeping statements which remain quite arbitrary, concerning another false declaration that the Protestant Reformed Churches “have no compatibility with the Westminster Catechism of Faith, whatsoever.” From here he continues merely to uphold a sort of stand for the Westminster Catechism of Faith while condemning the teachings and faith of the above brethren, completely without grounds, and while omitting to give any Scripture proof whatsoever.

But any Christian also knows that all of the confessions, although penned and wrought by Godly men in the past, are but human writings and not on the level of inspired Scripture. Where these confessions deviate from the Bible then we may and should declare it.

But the gravest concern I had was that he so overtly changed his position from an apparently firm biblical one to one of a blustering and faultily confused speech. And all of his hearers at the end of that must surely have been as confused as I was by what he had said.

He contradicted himself, (from sentence to sentence), and the Bible, and who and what our God is. In the same breath, he told us that (a) God knows all things, that (b) God never commands us to do what He cannot do, that (c) God never frustrates His own purpose and will (all of which we agree with, because they are biblical pronouncements). But then he goes on to state that (d) God wills to damn the reprobate in hell, but He loves them in time, so blesses them. (But wait, what about “I am the LORD: I change not; therefore ye sons of Jacob are not consumed” (Mal. 3:6)?

One other point I would add here. The LORD never commands us to love HIS enemies. OUR enemies, yes, but not HIS. This is explicitly commanded in Matthew 5 which Rev. Silversides has so skillfully used (?) to “prove” that God loves His own enemies! But a further look at the verse shows that in this passage, God is only referring to our enemies.

Romans 12:20 is another proof of this meaning. “Therefore, if thine enemy hunger, feed him; if he thirst, give him drink: for in so doing thou shalt heap coals of fire on his head.” (NOT because God loves him in this life.) We do not and cannot know the heart of men, but it may be that we will be used of the Lord to draw an enemy of ours to Christ by our God-honoring actions. And if not, then the enemy is hardened in his ongoing sins.

But he is responsible before God for his lifestyle and persistent sins.

If, in due time, an enemy of ours becomes a spiritual brother or sister, then of course the enmity is removed. But if they continue in unrepentant sin, we can only say that at least at present, they manifest themselves as enemies of God. But we may not and cannot make a final judgment on the state of their soul. Only the LORD can do and has done this in eternity. And since God knows all His own from before the foundation of the worlds, how could it possibly be that there is anyone in history whom the Lord did not know would come to Him or not? How could it have been that Christ died for His own, if He didn't know who they were? John 10:1-18 shows so clearly that Jesus knew His own sheep. In verse 14 He says, "I am the good shepherd, and know my sheep, and am known of mine." And "All that the Father giveth me shall come to me" (John 6:37a). Also "No man can come unto me except the Father which hath sent me draw him" (John 6:44). This is exactly why Silversides makes another sad mistake. For in seeking to "show" that God loves all, he also makes the salvation of Ishmael null and void. (Here I digress to defend Ishmael's salvation.) The Lord blessed him, and nowhere in Scripture do we read of the Lord blessing a reprobate. And here, most strangely, Rev. Silversides gives a reference to Romans 9, where, he declares that Ishmael was a reprobate. In fact, that passage from Romans 9 speaks of Jacob and Esau, the one chosen of God and the other rejected. No mention of Ishmael at all! Nevertheless when God told Abraham that He had blessed Ishmael, although he was not of the covenant line, this reveals that God blessed the person Ishmael, though not his descendents. Then again, the rich young ruler who came to Jesus. That Jesus "beholding him, loved him..." is enough for us to see that that young man, although he went away sorrowing, did indeed come to Christ. Even though the Bible does not explicitly state this. It certainly does not "prove" that he was a reprobate.

Rev. Silversides makes yet another huge blunder where he tries to "prove" the idea of conditional promises. The Lord does indeed say in many places and ways. ("For he is our God; and we are the people of his pasture, and the sheep of his hand. Today if ye will hear his voice, harden not your heart, as in the provocation..." [Psalm 95:7, 8]. This referring to the unbelieving Israelites who all perished in the wilderness for their unbelief.) This is a wholly and wholeheartedly accepted fact. But what Rev. Silversides is forgetting is that the Lord

also tells us that we cannot come to Him unless the Father draws us. No contradiction here, but simply a basic fact being stated by the God of truth. Those who do hear and obey show that they are the ones called of God and from eternity saved. Think of Lydia, "whose heart the Lord opened, that she attended unto the things which were spoken of Paul" (Acts 16:14). Those who hear and do not repent show themselves reprobate. Why? Because God does not will that they do repent! This is clearly shown in Matthew 13:11-15, where Jesus is quoting from Isaiah 6:10, and proving that those who all their lives refuse to obey and believe are not His elect. "And He said, Go and tell this people, Hear ye indeed, but understand not; and see ye indeed, but perceive not. Make the heart of this people fat, and make their ears heavy, and shut their eyes; lest they see with their eyes, and hear with their ears, and understand with their heart and convert, and be healed" (Isa. 6:9, 10). So, if Rev. Silversides makes so bold as to declare that God does not know who will believe, what is he doing with the Scripture of God, but wresting it? And this amounts to nothing less than the sin of preaching "another gospel" which Paul declares in Galatians 1:6-9 is accursed of God.

Jesus makes abundantly clear that those who do not believe are reprobated of God, that they cannot believe (John 8:21-47, 10:22-30, 17:9-17, etc.). And the whole of the Bible is full of this. "The curse of the Lord is in the house of the wicked: but He blesseth the habitation of the just" (Proverbs 3:33). No hint of love there, for the wicked reprobate, either in eternity or in history.

In Psalm 73 the psalmist finds that the wicked seem to have every earthly possession in abundance, whereas he and the godly are not so "rich" and have much to suffer. Why? He finds (v.17 ff), "Until I went into the sanctuary of God; then understood I their end. Surely Thou didst set them in slippery places: Thou castedst them down into destruction. How are they brought into desolation, as in a moment! they are utterly consumed with terrors." I could write a whole lot more, Kathy, to show that the Lord does not, never has, and never will love the wicked reprobate. Why does God give good gifts to wicked unbelievers? Not in a sort of "love," but to cast them into eternal damnation, for their unrepentance and hatred against Him Who gave them all that they have, in order to show that He is just, and they vilely unjust and unworthy of everything they had in this life.

The word "offer" as Calvin and all of his contemporaries knew it, means "a presentation, or setting forth" of something. Sadly the same word today has come to

mean something quite different—as in a “special offer” of some product or other. Nothing wrong in refusing to “take advantage” of such an offer, say, on a packet of soap powder, when it isn’t the one you like to use anyway! But salvation through Christ is never an offer as such. Yes, it is a presentation of the truth that all who hear and come will be received by the Lord, but not in the sense of “give it a try and see if you like it.”

Here, I am sad to see that instead of quoting Calvin on this word, he prefers to use more modern men, who obviously had not much better understanding of the word “offer” than he has himself. Quite interestingly, however, he chooses to quote Calvin when it suits him, in an effort to “prove” that he is in “good company” when it comes to doubting the salvation of the Rich Young Ruler, previously mentioned. However, he should be consistent and not use men of old merely to serve his own purpose in seeking to prove a mistaken point. And come to think of it, why did he make no mention whatsoever of Arthur W. Pink, who was a man used mightily of God in the 20th century to study and bring to clarification many of the truths of Scripture to a degree not possible in Calvin’s day? The truth is there in the Bible for us to study and we “grow up” in the faith, over a period of time. So in history, as one truth after another, of the Scriptures was attacked by Satan and his cohorts, the true church and her believing members were forced to make careful and earnest study of each truth attacked. Not every truth came to complete understanding at once.

All who hear the gospel are told the same amazing truth. (If those proclaiming it are faithful, true servants of God.) Of course, there is only one gospel! And there are many false gospels, as was already true in Paul’s day. See Galatians 1:6-9, where even then there were many false prophets and teachers, upon whom Paul calls God’s curse, for teaching the lie (as mentioned above). But truth is that all who hear THE Gospel do not come. Those who do, evidence the fact of their regeneration by the power of the Holy Spirit in response to the gospel. Those who go away and despise the gospel show their reprobate minds and are driven away by the same Spirit, Who knows who are His. (See I Cor. 1:18-31. and II Cor. 2:14-16. How in the world, then, can we say both that the Lord knows who are His, and that He doesn’t know?)

For this reason the ministers of the gospel, who faithfully fulfill their calling to proclaim (that is, set forth, present!) the gospel, must preach to all who are in the audience. Not, (as the hyper-Calvinist notion) refuse to

preach to those outside of the church. After all, we don’t know who are the lost sheep, do we? But the Lord does. So He commands we preach the gospel in every place. Then, how could the consistent hyper-Calvinist preach to anyone, since we don’t know either who are the hypocrites within the fold of God. I am so glad I am not a hyper-Calvinist. What a miserable dilemma to be in!

One thing I do know, from delightful, amazing and gracious experience, is that the Lord loves all those whom He has chosen, from all eternity, and therefore draws us unto Himself in love. (Jer. 31:3). And because of this, I long to share with you the truth of His glorious grace to all His beloved ones. As you are a dear young sister in Christ, I long to impart to you something of the wonder of what He has done for me, (one of the nobodies of the world), and Who has brought us into contact with one another in such a unique way—which was, if you remember, all due to Paul Hayden’s having sent us a blank

Never think of “things” as blessings. The blessing is only in the heart of the Giver.

tape once, by mistake! Wonderful are the ways of God Who brings all things to pass!

One more comment, dear Kathy, before I must close. Never think of “things” as blessings. The blessing is only in the heart of the Giver. God gives good gifts to all men. Yes. But He only gives His blessings to His own. Therefore we can and do say with Paul, that “all things work together for good, to them that love God, to them who are the called according to His purpose.” (Rom. 8:28). Yes, even our illnesses, our disappointments, our sorrows and griefs of heart, are sent with His blessing, for our good. This can never be said of the wicked, as I hope I have shown you.

In His great love I greet you,

Dilys Watson



The Fourth Man

A Story from the Time of the Afscheiding

by P. S. Kuiper
translated by Rev. Cornelius Hanko

Chapter 14

The Hole in the Door

(The following chapter is mainly about Evert Splint. The readers will recall that he was the father of a poor family, and God had recently put into the family a new baby. Evert worked in the weaver's mill of Elbert Peet, but did not earn enough to support his family with the arrival of the new baby. He had asked for some help from the deacons of the church of which he was a member. This was the apostate State Church, called in the Netherlands, De Hervormde Kerk. The deacon who had come to see him, had cruelly refused help. In despair Evert was at the brink of returning to his old ways of drinking in the taverns, but was providentially kept from doing this by Manus Rebel, an unbelieving and rather blasphemous old army man, who engaged Evert in conversation and, inadvertently prevented him from entering nearby taverns. Manus had suggested the Secessionists to Evert when he rather off-handedly remarked, after hearing Evert's story, that if he went to church at all, it would be with the Secessionists. The following Lord's Day, Evert and his family had worshipped with the Secessionists.)

Monday had dawned. Shortly before six o'clock the early morning light hung heavily over the town. But the feet of many workers already shuffled to the weaving mill.

Evert Splint was the first one to enter the workshop of Elbert Peet and was soon at work at his loom. The others soon followed, most of them carrying a bottle of liquor. Peet himself was not to be found. His laborers

were not in the least surprised at that, for, as many other weavers' bosses, he "kept Monday", which meant that he spent the first hours of the day at the tavern. The weavers did not object, for "when the cat's away, the mice will play." They could take it easy and occasionally take an extra drink.

They all were quite amazed, therefore, when exactly at seven o'clock the boss suddenly appeared at the door. "Stop!" he cried loudly, and immediately the deafening clatter of the looms died away and gave way to a strange, ominous silence.

Slowly, almost sneaking along, the feared weavers' boss entered the mill and put himself in front of Evert Splint. "Where is your little boy?"

"My wife and I wanted to wait a little while with sending Krijntje to the work shop, boss."

"Oh, how touching; and the church likely has to put up with that?"

It took Elbert Peet an exasperatingly long time to light a cigar and to pinch his eyes into small slits. "What business did you have to go to narrow-minded hypocrites?"

Splint looked at his boss without fear. "Yesterday I heard the pure preaching of the Word at the Secessionists."

"Are you going to join them?"

"I still have to think about that, boss."

"Think? Your kind need not think, we take care of the thinking. I want to hear your answer right now!"

In the breathless silence that followed it became evident to Splint that not his boss but God was placing him before this choice. That caused his last hesitancy to fade away.

“Yes, boss, I am separating myself from the Hervormde Kerk, because God no longer wills that I stay there.”

With a malicious sneer, Peet turned himself to the others. “Can you still work with such a driveling fool?”

“No, boss,” rang forth the cringing reply from all sides.

“You heard it, Splint, and you are fired. There is the hole of the door! Disappear!”

Pale and silent, Evert Splint stepped to the door. “Starve as far as I am concerned!” mocked the voice of the weavers’ boss.

Evert turned around. “The Lord will provide, boss,” he said. A rough curse came as an answer.

Soon the looms droned on once more. But the feeling among the men at the looms was more bitter than ever. Even Lammert Vlaanderen, usually Splint’s worst teaser, gnashed his teeth in helpless rage, and Geert de Gooier reached out that morning for the first time for the bottle.

A few hours later Splint stepped on the property of Gijsbert Haan. Marretje Pos, Haan’s wife, was to be found on that Monday morning bleaching her wash in the back shed. She was very surprised to have a visitor at this unusual hour.

“Has your husband already returned from milking, Mrs. Haan?”

“Yes, he is back by the chickens. He is very busy.”

“I wish that I could also say that! Shall I just go to him?”

Marretje took a good look at the weaver and only then did she realize that yesterday he was with his family at their meetings.

Splint walked to the back of the farmyard and stood in front of the leader of the Hilversum Secessionists, who immediately recognized Splint.

“Do you want to talk to me?” he asked in a friendly tone.

“Gladly, if that is possible,” answered Splint, taking off his cap.

Both men went into the house and sat down with a cup of coffee which Marretje had poured out.

“How did it happen that you came to our meetings yesterday?” the farmer asked, opening the discussion. Evert Splint began to speak. He told a bit about his life at the edge of “Devil’s Corner” and gave a thorough account of the visit of Jacob Bollebakker.¹

Meanwhile Gijsbert Haan silently took a swallow of coffee and lit his pipe. When the weaver had had his say, Haan looked him squarely in the eye.

“Then you decided to try it with the Secessionists, hoping that you might get support from us?”

It sounded razor sharp. However, Splint realized at once that he was being put to the test. “I am separating myself because that is the way of the Lord, as I see it. However, you need no longer speak of support, for this morning I was suddenly fired.”

Now Haan jumped up. “What? Did Elbert Peet set you out on the street, because you want to join us?” The farmer sank down again in dismay. In deep thought he lit his pipe. Then, having fully made up his mind, he laid his hand on the knee of the weaver who had been fired.

“Splint, tonight the consistory meets. I can tell you now that we will gladly receive you and your family as members. Moreover we will do all that we can for you, although right now I do not see how. I will take care of it at once. Be strong and keep looking up.”

Gijsbert Haan bid farewell to his guest and went immediately to the farm of Jan Donker, with whom he thoroughly discussed the matter. Donker promised to discuss the matter that afternoon with his fellow-deacon Gerrit Meijer.

Both men made a plan and decided not to wait a moment in executing it.

For years the weaving mill of the Ham family had stood at the Doodweg. The business had a remarkable history. Just before the French Revolution,² Reverend Fredrik Ham had preached his inaugural sermon in the town. He had never concealed his love for the House of Orange,³ not even from the pulpit.

Hostile patriots had, therefore, made work of it that his salary was withheld, even before the arrival of the French. As a result Reverend Ham and his ten children were without an income.

Not knowing where to turn the preacher set up his own weaver mill, with the financial support of some well-to-do families of princes. Thus he could provide for the support of his family. The “preacher-weaver” did not live to see the Secession. After his death in 1810 his sons carried on the business.

One of them, Gerard Ham, had just left the weaving mill that afternoon when both the Secessionist deacons approached him.

“Gerard is here,” Jan Donker murmured happily. “We could not have struck it better.”

Gerrit Meijer did the talking. “Do you have a moment for us, Ham?” he asked in a loud voice, because he knew that Ham was slightly deaf.

“A bachelor always has time,” laughed the merchant. “Walk along with me to my house.” The men gladly accepted the invitation. The walls sometimes have ears.

A little later Gerrit calmly explained the difficulties in which the Splint family had been placed.

“I know all about Elbert Peet,” Ham scolded; “but what are you asking of me?”

“We are come to ask whether you will give Splint a job.” Now that they had asked they waited with bated breath for his answer.

He had stood up and was walking back and forth through the room with wrinkled brow. “Our business is fully staffed, I do not need a weaver.”

“But Evert Splint and his family have need of you,” Gerrit Meijer struck back.

“Why me? I don’t see it.”

“Because you have a warm heart for the Secession. That is why we came to you.”

“Don’t you realize how murderous the competition is?” the manufacturer responded, defending himself without responding to Meijer’s last words. Jan Donker stood up and placed himself directly in front of Gerard Ham.

“I understand completely. You are afraid of Elbert Peet and his crowd. Therefore you dare not hire a fired Secessionist. But I remind you of your father, who, when it involved the truth, stepped aside for no one, and he was not put to shame.”

The merchant stared outside for a little while, as if something interesting was happening out there. Then with a jerk he turned himself around.

“Splint can start Monday!” Four hands eagerly reached out for his.

“No foolishness, please! I will have to pay him a guilder less than Peet.”

“We shall try to find a solution for that.”

At the door the men left the merchant with a hearty farewell.

“When are you going to join us?” Gerrit Meijer risked asking, but Gerard Ham seemed once more to have a problem with his hearing.

He watched the men go until they disappeared in the direction of the Moleneind.

“Blessed is the church that has such deacons,” Ham mumbled to himself as he slowly closed the door.

A few hours later great happiness reigned in the small house at the Langeind. “Monday back at the loom.”

“The guilder that you earn less will be supplied by us,” remarked Gerrit Meijer.

“How is that possible?” asked Splint in amazement, for he knew that the majority of the congregation consisted of the poor folk.

“That is our affair,” smiled the other. “And our honor,” Jan Donker added.

“Moreover Ko Boelhouwer is offering you a parcel of land on which you can do some gardening. You need pay nothing for that, if you will not spread the information around.”

Humbled in thankfulness Evert Splint and his wife pressed the hands of the deacons. “Let us give thanks to God,” said Jan Donker simply.

Gerrit Meijer led in a powerful prayer.

For a little while a great silence reigned. Then Jan Donker laughed quietly. “Actually you are not even recorded as members in our records as yet, but we are going immediately to the consistory meeting; otherwise we will be late.”

That evening Splint went to smoke a pipe on the farm of Ko Boelhouwer. Upon his return he happened to meet Tijmen Grootveld, who came to inform him that the consistory had gladly accepted him and his family as members

In many homes God was thanked that night for His unexpected blessings. ❖

¹ The deacon who had come to see Evert and had refused him help.

² The reference is to the revolution during which Napoleon came to power. He ruled also in the Netherlands, and under his rule, De Hervormde Kerk was reorganized.

³ When Napoleon took over the rule of the Netherlands, the House of Orange, the ruling house in the Netherlands since the time of the Reformation, was deposed. Many wanted the return of this royal house.

Seven Men Who Rule the World from the Grave

reviewed by Jeff Kalsbeek

Seven Men Who Rule the World from the Grave

By Dave Breese

Paperback 235 pages

Moody Press, 1990

As this book's preface "The God's of the Mind" indicates, the seven men singled out in the book are men who, in the author's judgment, have the unique accomplishment of controlling the minds of people with their philosophies, and thus influencing the thinking of society still today. For this reason there are no mighty kings or war generals written about, but men whose ideas have, in the author's words, "penetrated culture, altering the thinking of society."

The seven men are Charles Darwin, Karl Marx, Julius Wellhausen, Sigmund Freud, John Dewey, John Maynard Keynes, and Soren Kierkegaard. Needless to say, these are men who, in Breese's estimation, have influenced society for the worse. Because of this categorization, an eighth man given space in this book, Albert Einstein, is not listed with the other seven. Breese contends that Einstein did not deliberately attempt to influence society adversely, but others misconstrued his theories.

For each of these men, Breese devotes at least a chapter as he first familiarizes the reader with the man, and then attempts to explain the man's philosophies. Before critically examining each one, Breese demonstrates how society today continues to be influenced by his theories.

The book commences with Charles Darwin and his theory of evolution. There is good reason for this. Darwin's evolutionary theory has had enormous impact upon seemingly every area of life and study. For the young person who has been instructed from his or her youth concerning the foolishness of such a teaching that

"man evolved from apes," Darwin's impact upon society might not seem so large. But Breese correctly points out that entrenched in today's society is the idea that the creation, and every area of life is evolving, or developing, to a higher level. In fact, the evolutionary theory, with the possible exception of Kierkegaard, has probably impacted all the other men whose ideas now "rule the world." The "process" theology of Wellhausen and the "progressive" education of Dewey are two examples.

Whether Karl Marx was influenced at all by Darwin, who was nine years his senior, is debatable. Yet, Marx's philosophy of overthrowing the old (democracy) in favor of the new (Marxism) has the same flavor. Marx's goal of a society set up where "there is no God" is coming to fruition as we speak. One needs only to look at the present movement to remove God and all religion from every area of life, which movement works under the guise of a fabricated, twisted definition of the constitutional separation of Church and State.

As the author indicates, another tenant of Marxism is a centralized government. Interestingly, the citizens of the U.S. and many other nations are willingly giving more and more of their rights to a centralized government. Increasingly this is being done for fear of the lawless, as recent events in our country have shown, but also this is happening due to love of pleasure and a desire to escape responsibility.

When Breese presents the "higher criticism" of Julius Wellhausen, man's presumptuous pride is unveiled. Human reason is now elevated above the scriptures. Breese points out that Wellhausen learned Darwin well, as the notion of "progressive theology" shows. Wellhausen has given countless theologians in the church-world an excuse to forsake the Truth of God without having to give an account before ecclesiastical assemblies. After all,

when man's conception of God is "evolving," there is little point in demanding that the church leaders "build upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets". They are free to openly contradict the beliefs of the past precisely because they are hundreds of years old.

The chapter on Sigmund Freud attempts to carefully explain his experiments and theories, but they are difficult to grasp even with the author's diagrams. To put it simply, Freud maintained that man is a collection of psychological forces. This is a denial that man has an immaterial soul, which the populace embraced swiftly because it frees a man of responsibility for his sin. Freud's theory is behind much in the field of genetics today, as corrupt men imagine they can influence human behavior by tinkering with material genes.

The chapter on John Dewey will be very interesting for any young person going on to college after having been in our own schools for 13 years.

The chapter on John Dewey will be very interesting for any young person going on to college after having been in our own schools for 13 years. The effects of Dewey's assertions are evident in "Christian" as well as secular schools, from the elementary level to the university. Breese's characterization of Dewey's teachings is that he wanted no absolutes. According to Dewey there is no such thing as unchangeable truth. His philosophy of education has succeeded in radically changing public education in America. Schools are moving away from emphasizing subjects such as literacy and mathematics, which encourage intellectual development, in order to "progress" towards experience based education and the stressing of social change.

The chapter on John Maynard Keynes begins with a very interesting picture of the euphoric optimism that held sway at the turn of the 20th century in America, which has even been called the Age of Confidence. The author quotes the boastful words of then U.S. Senator Albert Beveridge, which are still heard today.

God has marked the American people as His chosen nation to finally lead in the regeneration of the world.

This is the divine mission of America, and it holds for us all the profit, all the glory, all the happiness possible to man. We are trustees of the world's progress, guardians of its righteous peace.

When the Great Depression dampened the spirits of the nation, it was Keynes, according to the author, who theorized that governmental intervention into the economy would keep such a thing from happening again. As any farmer will tell you, the government now controls the American economy. What is inevitable is that increasingly the government controls the citizen's food supply, which will sway many to take on the mark of the beast in the powerful anti-christian kingdom now being established.

Breese finally introduces the reader to Soren Kierkegaard whose writings influenced the world well after his death when they were translated into English. Kierkegaard, known as the father of Existentialism, renounced clear and distinct thinking. While repudiating any body of beliefs or morality, he called for people to "live for the moment." After Breese notes that other men's insidious philosophies are at least held together by some logic, he states

Existentialism is different. It is not simply another point of view but rather is a denial of all points of view. Far from redefining truth, Existentialism announces that there is no truth. There is neither final truth nor intermediate truth. There is only this one moment, without causes and without consequences.

This is greatly attractive to our depraved natures. This in part answers the question regarding the teachings of all these men. Why did society so eagerly adopt such theories? That depraved men are attracted to sin and seek ways in which they can excuse themselves for it, is reason in large part. But also, behind each of these men's theories, is the alluring notion of a world without God, man being his own god, deciding for himself what is good and what is evil.

Throughout the book, but especially in the last chapter, Breese calls Christians to action. It is lamented that things didn't have to turn out this way, but if the church was more committed, things could be different. The "vulnerable" masses of people in the world could, says Breese, be influenced for the good instead of the evil with the church's diligent labor. This is how an Arminian always brings reproach upon God's name. The truth is that God does not depend upon man, not even His elect, to accomplish His will. God rules. God rules powerfully, sovereignly over reprobated men so that they destroy

themselves in the way of their own sinful theories and philosophies. God rules sovereignly, graciously in His elect so that they WILLINGLY obey His will. Just as true is the fact that believers are not to be compelled into God's service out of a sense of "needing to work harder." They are impelled out of the experience of justification. The Arminian god is an idol. Believers do not worship the same God as a true Arminian.

For a man to write a book such as this, and then call the church world to strive against these philosophies implies urgency. However, with some contemplation, one comes to the realization that this is not the enemy at the front lines of the battle. Those in apostate churches often find the enemy "out there" to fight. There is no question that such pernicious philosophies are the church's enemies. Still, the reformed believer perceives at once that the enemy that threatens to destroy him and his family's faith is not first of all the proponent of NO GOD, but the attacker of the true God of sovereign, particular grace. Most of the men in this book want no God, but the bloodiest, most treacherous men are those who claim to serve God, yet set Him forth as a helpless, dependant god who loves all men and who will even except less than perfection from man, all this, while insisting that such is the true God of heaven and earth whom believers should be worshipping.

This being said regarding the premise of the book, a reformed young person with any astuteness would have little difficulty deciphering such errors. The great value of the book is that it enables one to understand the philosophies that are at the heart of the different movements in education, government, and society at large. For this reason it is a terrific book for those moving on to the secular or "Christian" colleges which all promote and teach these ideas, as well as all who desire to be alert to deception.

The book is available from:

Reformed Book Outlet
3505 Kelly Street
Hudsonville, MI 49426
Phone 616-669-6730



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

(This poem is actually a song. It was published before in the May 1962 issue of Beacon Lights after the author, James Jonker, was killed in an automobile accident at 22 years of age. His brother and sister-in-law recorded the song with James accompanying on the organ, and the recording was played on the Reformed Witness Hour on the Sunday after his death. The music is beautiful and available to anyone who requests it. Many have sung these comforting words and it is our hope that many more will sing them.

Perfect Peace

*When I am bowed with grief,
When troubles round me throng,
When there seems no relief,
When I can find no song,
He sends His perfect peace
From sorrow gives release,
Through all my journey here,
Peace, perfect peace*

*When I have doubts within,
When faith is far from strong,
When I behold my Sin
And for His grace I long,
His cross He shows to me;
In love He gives to me,
Now and eternally,
Peace, perfect peace.*

*When all my life is done,
I near death's swelling tide,
Faith's battle fought and won,
God's armor laid aside,
Peace, perfect peace He'll give;
Through death with Him I'll live
Through all eternity;
Peace, perfect peace.*

Watching Daily At My Gates

by Chester Hunter

January 1 Read Exodus 19:1-6

As we come to the beginning of a new year, we come to that portion of Scripture in which Israel comes to Mount Sinai. We, too, need to come to Mount Sinai and see what God has to say to us here. The laws that Israel received have meaning for us as well. In those moral, ceremonial, and civil laws, Christ is found. We can also find ways of giving gratitude to God for His gift of our Saviour. God delivered Israel out of Egypt on eagles' wings. God will deliver us from the Egypt of this world on those same eagles' wings. He does this because we are the people that He has called from eternity to be His peculiar treasure. Let us go to Sinai and seek to live as a kingdom of priests as the holy nation of God. Sing Psalter 238.

January 2 Read Exodus 19:7-13

God gave to Israel various commands in order for them to be prepared to meet Him at Sinai. The basic thrust of these commands was holiness. Israel had to sanctify themselves in order to meet the holy God. Moses had been told many years before that this was holy ground. Israel was being told the same thing. When we approach God whether it be in devotions, in prayer, or in public worship, we approach God on holy ground. We must sanctify ourselves. We must put away all things which hinder us from the path of holiness. This may not be so easy to do in this evil world in which we live. This takes the constant battle of faith. Let us pray that we strive to be holy even as our Father in heaven is holy. Sing Psalter 141.

January 3 Read Exodus 19:14-18

We see in these verses the reason that the people had to prepare themselves to meet their God. God is a God of judgment. This can be seen in the earthquakes, smoke, fire, thundering, lightning, and the thick cloud which compassed around the mountain. As the people looked at Mount Sinai, they were vividly reminded that God would judge them for their sins. They know that his judgments were just and they trembled before them. This also must be our knowledge as we approach the most holy God. This is not the fear of being afraid. This is the fear of awe that we must have as we enter into Jehovah's holy courts. Let us ready ourselves daily to enter God's courts and presence. Let us do this in prayer,

with devotions, and especially as we go to His house to worship Him. Sing Psalter 392:1, 3, 5.

January 4 Read Exodus 19:19-25

Sometimes we look at God's commands and say we are ready to listen to Him. This was obviously the attitude of Israel at Sinai. Some, if not many, of the people said "we are ready to approach God." They were taking His commands too lightly. God saw this and sent Moses to warn them so that they would not be destroyed by Him. Are we taking God's Word and commandments lightly? As we examine Exodus 20 and the Ten Commandments, let us examine ourselves and see what our attitude is toward the commandments. How do we keep them? Even worldly men lament the fact that the Ten Commandments are not taken seriously. How much more should we, the people of the covenant, take God's commands seriously. Sing Psalter 331.

January 5 Read Deuteronomy 5:1-6, Exodus 20:1-2

In these two passages of Scripture we find the moral law of God which he gave to Israel at Mount Sinai and also to the church of all ages. That this moral law of God is for us as well as Israel is found in Jesus' words towards the law as found in many places in the Gospel as well as in Paul's epistles to the churches of the New Testament. This law according to the Heidelberg Catechism helps us to see our misery. According to Paul it is the schoolmaster which brings us to Christ. There is much that we can find in its two tables. As we examine each commandment, let us seek to look in its mirror and see what we must do to live a holy life before God. Sing Psalter 40.

January 6 Read Matthew 4:1-10; Exodus 20:3.

Today we begin our examination of the first table of the law which deals with our love for God. It is fitting that we begin our study on the Sabbath as the first commandment deals with God. Young people, and people of God of all ages, do you worship Jehovah God alone? Do you have other interests that intrude on our worship of God? Remember worship is not reserved for Sunday alone. We must worship God every minute of our lives. Do we trust in God for all things for both body and soul? If we do, then we will keep the First Commandment. If we do, the devil will go away from us. Sing Psalter 391 especially stanza 3.

January 7 Read Jeremiah 10:1-10; Exodus 20:4-6

How do we worship Jehovah? Do we make images of Him in our minds? Do we pick out attributes of God that we are comfortable with and ignore those we would rather not deal with? You know what I mean. It is easy to say that God is love, but not God is judge. Our worship must confess that God is true, living, and sovereign over all. Our worship must be from the heart and not from the lips. Israel was reprimanded many times for lip-service; what about us? Sing Psalter 308 especially stanzas 1-3.

January 8 Read Matthew 5:33-37; Exodus 20:7

How do we speak about God? Is our speech full of profanity—even mild profanity? Do we speak of spiritual things lightly—even using them in jokes? None of us likes our names used in stories that promote evil about us. Do we do that to God? Are we guilty of taking God's name in vain? We must reverence that name. We must treat it like we treat our most treasured earthly possession. He has given His name to us so that we can worship Him. Let us use it with fear and reverence. Sing Psalter 164.

January 9 Read Isaiah 58:1-3; 13-14; Exodus 20:8-11

Today is the middle of our work or school week. Are we preparing for the Sabbath today? Are we looking forward to the day when we can enter Jehovah's house in order to worship Him in spirit and truth? Are we making plans for Saturday that will hinder our Sabbath's worship? Is our family ready to worship come Sunday? Do our friends know what to expect of us on the Sabbath? God has given to us six days in which we can carry out the business of caring for our needs. He has reserved one day so that He can be worshiped by us. There are many practical aspects to this commandment, but I think they can be summed up in the thought, "Remember the Sabbath day to keep it holy." Sing Psalter 348.

January 10 Read Romans 13:1-7; Exodus 20:12

We now come to the second table of God's law—that which deals with our love for our neighbor. Young people, do you think that you are old enough that the fifth commandment no longer applies to you? Are Father and Mother old-fashioned and do not have to be listened to? If you are living away from home, do you have any responsibility to this commandment? Of course you do, and of course I do. This commandment speaks about all authority—all those whom it has pleased God to place over us. We never escape the demands of the fifth commandment. and this is a good thing. This commandment has a promise. Our days will be long in heaven. Is this our joy? Sing Psalter 84.

January 11 Read James 1:17-25; Exodus 20:13

"Thou shalt not kill." This seems easy enough to keep, does it not? Have you read the words of Lord's Day 40 lately? We realize that shedding blood is only one way to break this commandment. Do we realize that when our anger comes forth against one another we have transgressed this com-

mandment? We must see that we use our tongues quite often and kill the brother with them. Notice verses 20-22. We must love our brother in all things and at all times. Then and only then can we keep this commandment. Sing Psalter 386:1-4.

January 12 Read I Corinthians 6:15-20; Exodus 20:14

The negative aspects of the seventh commandment bring God's wrath in this life. Unholy marriages are full of strife. Impure actions bring disease and other consequences. How do we look at this commandment positively? We must realize that our bodies are the temples of the Holy Spirit. In order not to quench the Holy Spirit, we must keep our bodies pure. This includes actions, words, and dress. According to verse 20 we keep the seventh commandment when we glorify God in our bodies and in our spirits. Sing Psalter 143.

January 13 Read Nehemiah 5:1-13; Exodus 20:15

Israel had returned from captivity, and soon some in the nation stole from their brethren. They stole by taking advantage of the brother and not caring for their needs. We know that stealing is wrong, though at times we participate in it. But this commandment is also broken when we do not promote the advantage of the neighbor. When we take advantage our friends, we steal from them and from God's honor and glory. The last part of the Heidelberg Catechism speaks of helping the poor as a way of keeping this commandment. Did we do this when the collection for benevolence was taken today? Is that so hard? Sing Psalter 26.

January 14 Read Proverbs 11:11-14; Exodus 20:16

This commandment has much to say to us as we returned to school and work today. We are full of conversation. All of us speak to others and about others often. How do we do that? Are we talebearers? Do we love the neighbor as ourselves in our conversations? Much damage has been done in the church when this commandment is broken. Teachers bemoan the fact that students do not love the brother or sister and use their tongues to show this hatred. Our speech can bring glory to God or Satan. Which will it be? Sing Psalter 394.

January 15 Read Romans 7:14-25; Exodus 20:17

Coveting is an inward sin. Coveting means we are not happy with God in the lives He has chosen for us. After we are guilty of coveting someone else's place in the world, we try to take it from them. We must constantly remind ourselves to be content and happy with our lives. This is not easy; but it is the lesson taught in the tenth commandment. When we walk in the tenth commandment, it will be easier to keep the others. Sing Psalter 81.

January 16 Read Exodus 20:18-26

When the people heard the voice of God including the signs accompanying it, they were afraid. They asked Moses to speak to God for them. Moses reassured them that God had not come to destroy them but rather to give to them

guidance for life. He speaks those two little words which can be found throughout the Bible; “Fear not.” When God says to us “Fear not,” we need not fear anything. In Romans 8 we are told that nothing can separate us from the love of God. He then reminds them that He is the only God and that there is a proper way of worship. Are we comforted by the words “Fear not”? Do we acknowledge God as the only God of heaven and earth? Do we worship Him properly? Let us use the Ten Commandments to examine ourselves today and every day. Sing Psalter 242.

January 17 Read Exodus 21:1-6

In the next few chapters of Exodus we have a summary of the civil and ceremonial laws which God gave to the children of Israel. There are many principles that we can learn from these laws. We will examine some of them during the next few days. In today’s reading we read principles about slaves. The year of jubilee is also introduced. What can we gain from this? First of all we see that Christ’s death freed us from the slavery of sin. Because we are “dead to sin,” we can live to righteousness. This should make us to live a life of sanctification. We also see that our redemption is nothing that we can do or have done. It is all from our master in heaven. Sing Psalter 325.

January 18 Read Exodus 21:7-11

In these verses we see guidelines for female slaves. It must have been a time of great adversity in which a man had to sell his daughter to be a slave. The one aspect to which I wish to draw our attention is to that in the last part of verse eight. These maidservants could not be sold to foreign nations. Are we selling our daughters to the foreign nations of music, drama, lust, and other evils? As fathers are we forgetting that our children are owned by God? We must examine our lives, fathers. We must see to what we are bringing our children. Let us go to God in prayer to ask Him to deliver us from this great evil. Sing Psalter 393.

January 19 Read Exodus 21:12-17

Here we have various verses which deal with the sin against the sixth commandment. As we saw a few days ago there are many ways we can kill someone. Here we see some of those ways. This sin is more prevalent in our lives than we probably wish to admit. Young people and children, re-read verse seventeen again. To curse our parents probably happens too often in our lives. We do this by willfully disobeying them. We do this when we refuse to listen to their judgment and counsel. In the Old Testament, the punishment for refusing to listen to parents was severe. This should impress upon us the necessity of obey parents today. Sing Psalter 89.

January 20 Read Exodus 21:18-27

In the last two verses of this section we see the famous or infamous “eye for eye, tooth for tooth” declaration. How much has this been ignored in today’s justice system! The world preaches forgiveness, forgiveness, forgiveness. Yes,

there is a place for forgiveness. But there is also the necessity of responsibility for one’s actions. God chastises us for our sins by bringing troubles to us. We must see that there should be consequences for our actions. This consequences may not be nice, but they are nothing compared to the death that Christ went through for us. Sing Psalter 98.

January 21 Read Exodus 21:28-36

This section continues the idea of the previous ten verses, only now the focus is on possessions. We are not only responsible for our own deeds but also those of our possessions. Take an example of our car. If we lend this to someone we still bear responsibility for what happens with that car. The driver has responsibility, of that there is no doubt, but in lending it we share that responsibility. This can be applied to other possessions as well. Parents, this is also true of our children. When our children fall into mischief we must take responsibility for their mischief as well as for them. Let us see that that responsibility extends over far more than our own deeds. Sing Psalter 217.

January 22 Read Exodus 22:1-6

In this chapter, as well as the previous one, our attention is drawn to the love of the neighbor. In the last chapter the emphasis was on the bodily person of the neighbor. In the beginning of this chapter we see the emphasis on the property of the neighbor. What is our attitude toward the neighbor’s property, young people, children, people of God of all ages? Do we knowingly destroy his property? Do we allow his property to be destroyed by our silence? Adults, do you fail to allow your neighbor to have some advantage in financial dealings so that you can gain an advantage? If we sit down and ponder these verses, we can find many ways in which we fail to show love to our neighbor by causing his property to be damaged. Let us keep the second great commandment of the law by honoring the neighbor’s property. Sing Psalter 13:1-5.

January 23 Read Exodus 22:7-13

In this section, which continues with thoughts about a neighbor’s property, we see two ideas. First of all, the use of a third party to arbitrate a dispute, and secondly, the necessity to make good to the neighbor what of his has been damaged. Sometimes two people of God cannot come to terms over a matter concerning property. It becomes necessary to have help. This is not a shame or a disgrace. This is very Biblical. This was Paul’s admonition to the New Testament Church. He warned them not to go to an earthly judge, but use the church. A man of the church or of the consistory itself must not refuse to help brethren settle their differences so that love can continue in the church. Secondly, we see that we must make it good if we, our children, or something else in our control damages the neighbors property. Not to do so is to sin against the eighth commandment. Sing Psalter 25.

January 24 Read Exodus 22:14-24

Here in this section we see continued instruction on how to keep the whole law of God. The instruction covers situations from adultery to witchcraft. We see that living the life of sanctification covers every area of our life. There is no area in which we can say that the Ten Commandments have no authority. In the last part of this section we see that God makes special notice concerning widows or orphans. These widows and orphans can be by the strict definition of the words, or it can be those whom society has deemed to be widows and orphans. Do we make orphans on our playgrounds? Do we make widows in our conversations after church or wherever we gather together? If we do, rest assured that God will look out for them and will hear their cries. His wrath will be poured out upon those who oppress widows and orphans. Sing Psalter 305:1-5.

January 25 Read Exodus 22:25-31

It might be just as good that we just reread these verses and apply them to our lives. God gives to each believer in the office of believer this ability. The Scriptures are clear for God's people. There is one phrase to which I wish to call your attention. That is the phrase in verse 31 "holy men unto me" This is our goal in life. We are to walk holily in this life to ready ourselves for the life to come. Reread today's reading and see how to live in this life. Sing Psalter 213:1-4.

January 26 Read Exodus 23:1-7

There are two thoughts to which we should consider into today's reading. The first is found in verse two. Here we are admonished not to "follow the crowd" for the purpose of doing evil. How often do you get caught in that situation, children and young people. You go with a group for some "fun" and it ends up in disaster. The majority is not always the way to go. To do good and not to do evil is the way to live a life of sanctification. A similar thought is found in verse seven. The old saying, "stay away from fire and you won't smell like smoke" is true here. Evil is something that must actively be avoided. If we do not avoid it, it will find us and taint us with its ugly smell. Let us heed God's Word as found in these two verses. Sing Psalter 175.

January 27 Read Exodus 23:8-13

Moses continues to relate to us the laws set down by God. Once again these laws guide Israel and us in our lives of sanctification. It is to verse nine I wish to call your attention. Each of us comes into contact with strangers almost daily. How do we treat those strangers? Do we give them the cold shoulder or do we, like Abraham, show boundless hospitality to them? In showing hospitality we may be used by God to bring someone into His church. Let us stop and consider this especially the next time God puts a stranger in our path. Sing Psalter 164.

January 28 Read Exodus 23:14-19

Among the various ceremonial laws were laws concerning three feasts. These were feasts of thanksgiving to God for what He had given to them. There was the feast of the passover and two feasts of harvest. The first feast dealt with thanksgiving for the deliverance of the bondage of Egypt. The other feasts concerned thanksgiving for food for the physical body. Each of these signified spiritual thanksgiving as well. We as well as Israel need to be thankful for deliverance from the spiritual bondage of sin. We, as well as Israel, need to be thankful for the spiritual food which we receive from God. Let us be thankful each day for all the bounties God has given to us. Sing Psalter 169.

January 29 Read Exodus 23:20-33

The final part of the chapter deals with the promise of entering Canaan. Now there were many enemies that stood before them. God assured them that He would help through His Angel. This too had spiritual implications for Israel and for the church of all ages. Canaan is a picture of heaven. Our entering heaven comes from living a life in which we are beset by enemies from all sides. We do not enter heaven on our own strength; God has sent His Angel to help us. That angel is our elder brother Christ Jesus who by His blood delivers us from all the enemies in this life and prepares us for the world to come. Sing Psalter 31:1, 3, 4, 7.

January 30 Read Exodus 24:1-8

"All that the Lord hath said will we do, and be obedient." People of God, is this your response to hearing the Word of the Lord? Have you vowed to do *all* that the Lord hath said? This means every jot and tittle of the law. The Pharisees thought they were doing all, but it was not with the heart. We must from the heart keep all of the laws of God. We cannot pick and choose. We must do them all. The obedience mentioned is the obedience from the heart not from the lip. We may not obey in eye service to please men as Paul tells us. We must please God. This means wholehearted obedience. We must vow to do this and we must pay our vows. This is living the life of sanctification. Sing Psalter 109.

January 31 Read Exodus 24:9-18

Nadab, Abihu, and the other elders got a glimpse into the glory of God on Mount Sinai. They were protected by God from His glory; otherwise, they would have died as no man can see God and live. This is true because God is holy and we are sinful. They had communion with God as they ate and drank in His presence. Then Moses went farther up the mount and God covered the mount with His cloud of glory so that all of the people could see it. Each day God reveals His glory to us through His creation. Let us bow before that glory and praise God as He is to be praised. Let us live the lives of sanctification which His glory demands. Sing Psalter 349.

More Struggles Against Worldly Music

by Melissa Van Baren

As we see the church in the New Testament grow, we also see temptations increasing. The apostles had much to battle against in their ministries and missionary journeys. They had to hold fast to the truth and go proclaim the gospel in all the world. What a task! It was a great undertaking having to work against the ungodly customs engrained into these peoples lives. Even as the church of old fought against sins which creep into every area of life, we too find some things hard to give up. The apostles encouraged the church as we read in I Peter 2:11: “Dearly beloved, I beseech you as strangers and pilgrims, abstain from fleshly lusts, which war against the soul.” This was certainly meant for all areas of life including that of music: one of the main elements in the people’s lives.

Their festivities, activities, conduct, music, etc. lead the people from and to the worship and praise of God.

The apostles had to lead the church away from the rich and captivating culture and music of the Romans and Greeks. The Greeks had beautiful enchanting music and exciting festivals and feasts to the gods and goddesses. Toe tapping finger-snapping music filled the courts. In fact, very often at these festivals there were competitions where musicians would compete to be considered the “best.” (I wonder if that’s similar to what we have today with the “war of the Rock bands” or the “Country Music Awards”?) The worldly music of that time was also associated with the “party” or festival scenes. They would often have huge gatherings and the host of the party would hire a musician to play for the group. Dancing, loud upbeat music, prostitution and drinking all belonged to these parties.

The music was rich and well developed. No doubt it was difficult for many to turn their backs on this life, but God has blessed the church with music and song which give God and not man the glory. It was pointing them to

the one and true God. What a relief it must have been for them to sing songs that touched their heart a different way and took on a new meaning for them no matter how many times they sang them. It was music with words that drew them into covenant fellowship with God instead of the emotional roller-coasters produced by the worldly music they had previously listened to.

The church has much to battle against in the world of music. Are we to watch out just for the words in the songs or the notes as well? Is there any danger in the music? How are we to distinguish one form from another? Are just the psalms and hymns ok but the rest a danger? What about classical music? Is the music that we as christians listen to acceptable and God glorifying? Those are just some things to consider before flicking the switch on the radio or popping the CD in the player. Again as I said in my first article—look around you and notice how much music is engrained into our culture. It was the same with the Greeks and Romans. We have the same battles to fight but just in a different form. It’s amazing how timeless the Bible is. The struggles and hardships they went through can be applied to our lives to today.

The church of the Reformers and Reformation faced the same struggles. The Reformers had much to battle against in the field of music but also a rich and glorious heritage of church music that had been built up and preserved through all those ages for them. The next article will show the many forms of church music and how the God glorifying music stayed true even through all of those ages and trying times. ❖

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

A Look at Oil Use Through the Spectacles of Scripture

by John Huizenga

Man pumps millions of barrels of oil out of the earth every day and the nations of the world use this oil to power their economies. Energy from the oil is released to melt down ore, extract metals, and drive the massive machines that manufacture goods. The oil itself is refined and used in everything from plastics to fertilizer. Semi trucks, ships, and airplanes guzzle the fuel to distribute these goods around the world as fast as possible. The citizens of the world use the goods and also use oil to cook food, heat their homes, and propel their bodies from here to there. We have developed ways to use this oil more efficiently and therefore stretch a barrel of oil much further than before, but still we buy more and more things and the growing populations has caused oil production to soar.

When compared to people in other nations of the world, Americans are oil gluttons. Viewed at night from outer space, the continent of the United States glows with the millions of lights from the sprawling cities. Our voracious appetite for oil translates quite directly to fat wallets, gigantic homes, and powerful engines in our automobiles. In general, the more oil we consume, the wealthier we become. We can see this quite clearly if we look at someone building up a trucking business. A truck bearing a load down the highway is making money for its owner. If that owner gains money enough to buy more trucks, he will also be using more oil and his money will multiply provided he spends it wisely. It is the same in the manufacturing industry, farming, and virtually every type of business. Bigger farm, bigger tractors, more fertilizer, makes bigger bucks. By the way, much of the fertilizer farmers use is made from oil. In general, more oil means more productivity, technological advancement, and an increase in knowledge. Oil use, then, is directly proportional to prosperity.

Oil consumption also produces pollution. There is no way around the fact that each barrel of oil is converted mostly to carbon dioxide in the process of ex-

tracting its energy for our use. The carbon dioxide makes plants grow better, but it also seems to be acting as a blanket around the earth trapping solar heat. This heat, it is feared, is starting to melt ice in the mountains and poles. The melted ice will, in turn, cause the sea level to rise and flood coastal cities.

Looking at this consumption of oil through the spectacles of man's wisdom, we see some potential problems. Most of those who do any reflecting on oil consumption agree that there is good potential for catastrophic problems if the levels of carbon dioxide keep increasing in the atmosphere. But to do anything about it would amount to pulling the plug on the economy and bringing all the money machines to a screeching halt. Losing money today is far worse in the general mind set than potential catastrophe tomorrow. And what about when the oil runs out? Well, by then we will have found a much better resource, just like man did when he ran out of wood. From wood he turned to coal, and then to oil. Don't worry, we will find a way. If we don't use the oil now, someone else will and they will get ahead of us.

What do we see when we look at oil consumption through the spectacles of Scripture? The oil referred to in the Bible is mainly olive oil. But oil, whether squeezed from olives or pumped out of the ground is a very valuable concentration of energy derived from plant material. It is the "cream of the crop" so to speak. Energy poured from the sun into the marvelous diversity of plants created by God is transformed into a liquid rich in energy that can be used by man for a variety of purposes. Olive oil can be pressed directly from the fruit of olive trees and the petroleum we use now was produced by plant material buried beneath the ground. The essential quality of oil whether used for food or lighting lamps is virtually the same as the oil we use today.

Looking through the spectacles of Scripture we see that oil was a sign of wealth. God describes the riches he bestowed upon Jerusalem in Ezekiel 16:13-14 "Thus wast

thou decked with gold and silver; and thy raiment was of fine linen, and silk, and brodered work; thou didst eat fine flour, and honey, and oil: and thou wast exceeding beautiful, and thou didst prosper into a kingdom. And thy renown went forth among the heathen for thy beauty: for it was perfect through my comeliness, which I had put upon thee, saith the Lord God.” Again we read of the earthy riches enjoyed by Israel as a picture of God’s blessing in Deuteronomy 32:13-14, “He made him ride on the high places of the earth, that he might eat the increase of the fields; and he made him to suck honey out of the rock, and oil out of the flinty rock; Butter of kine, and milk of sheep, with fat of lambs, and rams of the breed of Bashan, and goats, with the fat of kidneys of wheat; and thou didst drink the pure blood of the grape.” Oil was also used as a form of currency in trade: “Judah, and the land of Israel, they were thy merchants: they traded in thy market wheat of Minnith, and Pannag, and honey, and oil, and balm” (Ezekiel 27:17).

God’s word in Deuteronomy 32 quoted above speaks of “oil out of the flinty rock.” We also read of oil from rock in Job 29:6 where we read “When I washed my steps with butter, and the rock poured me out rivers of oil.” This is not referring specifically to the crude oil we pump from the earth today, but simply to God providing an abundance of blessing out of what appears to be barren land. Olive trees grow well in rocky soil and God provides this abundant richness.

God used many pictures and earthly things as symbols and signs of spiritual realities as he trained up the church as a child. Canaan and the abundance provided there for the Israelites was a picture of the spiritual riches of heaven. The land was described as “a land flowing with milk and honey.” Milk and honey as well as olive oil and other such things were the best earthly things that the Israelites could have. Just as these educational tools are eventually discarded, so today the mature church has the complete word of God and does not need earthly pictures. God does not promise to give believers today land and prosperity in order to teach them about heaven and spiritual riches.

Today most of those who enjoy great earthly prosperity do so without a shred of praise or thanksgiving to God. Our sinful natures make it very difficult to use the abundance of earthly riches we have for the glory of God. Not only did the land of Canaan with all its richness give the Israelites a glimpse of heavenly glory, it taught them how sinful they were. Immediately following the passages quoted above from Deuteronomy 32 and Ezek-

iel 27 where we read “thou didst eat fine flour, and honey, and oil,” we find the words, “But thou didst trust in thine own beauty, and playedst the harlot because of thy renown, and pouredst out thy fornications on every one that passed by; his it was.” And in Deut. 32 we find the words, “But Jeshurun waxed fat, and kicked: thou art waxen fat, thou art grown thick, thou art covered with fatness; then he forsook God which made him, and lightly esteemed the Rock of his salvation. They provoked him to jealousy with strange gods, with abominations provoked they him to anger. They sacrificed unto devils, not to God; to gods whom they knew not, to new gods that came newly up, whom your fathers feared not.”

God created the earth filled with an abundance of resources for man to use. God has called man to use this abundance for the glory and praise of God. Sin, however turns everything upside down. The abundance of earthly riches only plunges man further into wickedness. As man discovers more and more riches and different ways to use them, he develops in wickedness as well. The psalmist writes, “Surely thou didst set them in slippery places: thou castedst them down into destruction” (Psalm 73:18).

Christians may observe the truths of God’s word at work in the world today and decide to flee from all the inventions and developments that flow from the oil wells. Certainly we do well to understand the power of sin and riches. Yet we must not forget either that there is nothing evil in itself to have riches. The believer understands that God is the one who gives riches and He instructs Timothy to “Charge them that are rich in this world, that they be not highminded, nor trust in uncertain riches, but in the living God, who giveth us richly all things to enjoy” (I Tim. 6:17). The godly in Israel received the oil with gladness and treated as a symbol of gladness. In Isaiah 61:3 we read of the “oil of joy.” When the Psalmist rejoices in Psalm 92:10 he says “I shall be anointed with fresh oil.”

Finally we see that all the riches of the world and even man’s sinful use of them will be used to serve God’s purposes. Missionaries are rocketed to remote regions of the world with jets and airplanes. Printing presses churn out copies of God’s word in more languages than ever before. The pollution and destruction of this earth is a sign of the eminent return of Christ. And when Christ does return, all the energy man craves will be released in an instant and this earth will melt with a fervent heat.

May we continue to view all things through the spectacles of Scripture. If we do not, we are sure to stumble

and fall. The more we have, the greater is our responsibility to serve God. The energy resources and goods we derive from oil are a part of the talents we receive from God for active use in His kingdom. ❖

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

Pastor Profiles

Rev. Ronald Van Overloop (2)

edited by Kristina Moelker

During my high school years, the idea of being called to serve God's church as a minister grew and developed. The prayers changed from, "Lord, what dost Thou want me to be?" to "Lord, I think I am called to be a minister. I think I want to be one. If that is not Thy will, then stop me! Make me fail in the necessary courses or put something in my way so I cannot serve. Close the door. But otherwise, I am going to pursue it. So stop me, Lord, if that is not Thy will." Not only did God not stop me providentially, but He continued to use my fellow-saints to encourage me in the pursuit of the ministry.

While there were no internships during my years in the seminary, the seminarians did a lot of "speaking a word of edification" I was on the pulpit over 140 times while in seminary. During the summer of 1970, I spent many weekends in Randolph, Wisconsin. Six weeks of the summer of 1971 were spent in Forbes, South Dakota which was followed by five weeks in Doon, Iowa. The God of all grace kept opening the doors, each time in answer to prayers, confirming the call which I increasingly experienced within my soul. However, I and my fellow-seminarians were very conscious of the fact that no matter how much we may have felt inwardly called, what was ultimately required was an external call which God would send our way through a local congregation.

The hours and hours of oral exams required to graduate from our seminary took place before synod at its meetings in June of 1972 at First Church in Grand Rapids. The graduation ceremony for Candidates Bekkering, Kamps, and Van Overloop was a few days later. Then we waited. Had the Lord really called us to the ministry of His Word and sacraments? Would the internal call be confirmed by an external call? For each of us that call came, for myself from Hope Protestant Reformed Church

in Walker, Michigan. Ordination into the ministry took place on a well remembered Thursday night, October 5, 1972.

Almost seven years were spent with the good saints at Hope. A very young minister was carefully nurtured by godly, experienced elders. Baptism into the ministry was by the fire of funerals. The first funeral was only eight days after ordination—an older (by comparison) saint died of cancer at the age of 61. By comparison he was older because in the next nine months there were three more funerals, of a 22 year old, then his 18 year old brother, and then of a 10 year old. Before another calendar year closed, there were four more funerals, two for a set of twins who died two weeks apart shortly after birth, and two more for beloved saints who, while still in their 40s, left their mates and children.

During the time at Hope many catechism classes were taught and pastoral calls made. One year the number of pastoral calls almost equaled the number of days of the year. Powerfully God used every experience to mature and develop me in the service of His church and people.

Also during my ministry at Hope, the consistory sacrificially took a decision to send me, their pastor, away for seven months, in order to meet a need presented by Synod and the Committee for Contact with Other Churches. Those seven months were spent at a small, Presbyterian congregation in Christchurch, New Zealand. Sue and I still remember the long, wearying flights with four young children to and from New Zealand. The experience in New Zealand was powerfully used by God to teach me the breadth of the body of Christ and it instilled in me a desire to teach to others the rich Reformed tradition in which I had been raised and often took for granted. This experience undoubtedly played a role

when, a year later, I had to consider the call from South Holland PRC to be a home missionary in Birmingham, Alabama. God was pleased to use a weak means. And every step of the way He used to equip me further. Included in that which God used to further develop me for the ministry were children. During our almost seven years at Hope the VanOverloop family had grown from two to five children.

The seven fruitful years of growth and development spent at Hope were followed by five years of missionary work in the deep South from 1979 to 1984. God used new experiences to bring further development during these years. Birmingham is located in what has been called the Bible Belt, where churches of the Presbyterian, Baptist, and Methodist denominations filled the towns and dotted the countryside. But there was not a congregation with “Reformed” in its name in the whole of the state of Alabama. So this was different (read “difficult”) work. But it was most enjoyable work. It was work which taught me patience. It is with good reason that the Scriptures frequently draw a parallel between the work of preaching the gospel with that of the farmer who sows the seed and then waits, praying that the Lord of the harvest will cause the seed to sprout, grow, and bear fruit (cf. Mark 4:26-29). It was while we lived in Alabama that God added a sixth child to our family. And God graciously continued to use these experiences to develop me in the ministry. I was growing in the grace and knowledge of the Lord. And God was increasingly teaching me love for His church.

After five years of labor in Birmingham the calling church, the Domestic Mission Committee, and the Synod decided that it was time to move the home missionary and his family to another area. Good interest in the Reformed faith had been found in the northwest suburbs of Chicago. This was located much closer to the calling church, about an hour away from South Holland. While I was in Birmingham and in the northwest suburbs of Chicago the consistory and congregation of the calling church proved to be excellent caretakers of the spiritual and physical well-being of myself as their missionary, of my family, and of the saints to whom I was ministering.

The work in the northwest suburbs was different still. There I, the missionary/pastor, and the saints who formed the core group learned together that God required faithfulness in all evangelism efforts. We were not to be weary in well-doing. Be faithful and He would bring the increase. From 1984 until 1989 we labored together, using

every lawful means available and within our means. God slowly and surely brought others who joined the mission. In March, 1989 the mission effort became an organized congregation of thirteen families.

Normally that would have meant another move for our family (which now numbered nine, as the seventh child was given of the Lord). But the new congregation, which took on the name, Bethel Protestant Reformed Church, extended a call to me to be their first pastor, which I was led of God to accept. The work of evangelism never slowed down as many efforts to reach out into the community with the precious Reformed faith continued. But now there was another emphasis to my work. Now I was to help the congregation rule itself. As a missionary I had worked toward their development so they could be self-governing, not needing the supervision of a calling church or of a missionary. Now I was the pastor of this new congregation, and together I and the new consistory sought to do things decently and in good order. We sought to learn the Church Order, which now was our rule for good order.

In the summer of 1994, I received the call from another new congregation which was looking for its first pastor. For the previous ten years God had been pleased to use me to be His instrument to nurture a new congregation. Now He made known His will to use me in a similar work. Much of the work was similar (nurturing and developing, growing together in the grace and knowledge of Jesus Christ), but whereas the work in Bethel was almost exclusively with those who had not been members of the PRC, the work at Georgetown was with those who had been members of the PRC. The Georgetown congregation was a daughter of Hudsonville PRC.

For the past seven years (1994-2001) at Georgetown PRC the work of serving Christ and His church has been the source of continued joy. Preaching, teaching, pastoral work within the congregation, and the opportunity to lend a hand in denominational work keeps one busy. The work can be wearying at times, but for the most part the work itself is a source of joy. It is always amazing to me that God, in His wisdom, ministers to me through every opportunity He gives me to minister to others. Through every part of the work of the ministry I am being molded and shaped, and thus prepared for the next thing God is pleased to use me. That God is pleased to use just an earthen vessel is increasingly the reason for gratitude.

Weakest means do fulfill His will! Nothing is impossible with the Lord. This is what must be considered

by the young men who think they might be called to the gospel ministry. Young men who wonder whether God would call them to the ministry must examine themselves whether they have (though never to the degree that we ought) a heart for God, for the church of Christ as manifested in the Protestant Reformed Churches, and for the souls bought by the most precious of all blood. They must pray earnestly for God to give them this love, and that God will graciously cause this love to develop. Undershepherds must love. The sheep in the Protestant Reformed Churches in America are just that, sheep. Their nature is to wander, to butt each other, to be easily anxious. But they are God's sheep, bought with the highest price He could pay—His own and only begotten Son.

This characterizes the young sheep too. God has given to me a love for our young people. I believe that in most ways, today's young people are not different from what their parents and grandparents were. The times in which we live today have not essentially changed (there is nothing new under the sun). Nevertheless the forces of evil are much more open and blatant in their attacks. This is not, therefore, a time to be at ease in Zion. Constant and watchful effort must be put forth by those shepherding the lambs, just as it was for their parents and grandparents. And I am convinced that every effort must be put forth to urge our young people to grow in

grace, i.e., to know ever more intimately their Savior and Lord and all He has done for them. This growth in grace arises from a growth in the knowledge of Him—Who He is and What He has done. They must know what it is to be loved first. And, in response, they must love Him, the truth of His Word, and the church of His Son.

God uses weak means to accomplish His will. My life and work in the ministry are a testimony to that. God calls and uses whomever He will. And He equips, and never stops equipping, even as He uses them. He gives abilities in the measure He wants and He gives opportunities for those abilities to be used. God opens and closes doors. My life is a testimony of these truths. It is truly amazing!

I believe that this is true, not only for the ministers, but also for every young person. Our usefulness in the church of Christ depends not so much on the native intelligence God is pleased to give to us. Rather it depends much more on the fact that God is pleased to use us, and that He develops us for His use every step of the way. Our calling is to strive to love Him, to love the truth of His Word, and to love the Church of His Son. As we strive to fulfill those obligations of gratitude, God will use us for good. Weakest means fulfill His will! ❖

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

Where We Stand

The Signs of Christ's Coming

by Rev. Ronald Hanko

Reprinted from the Loveland PRC newsletter.

Scripture makes it very clear that Christ's coming is always accompanied by signs. So it was with His coming in the flesh (Luke 1:18-20; 41-45; 2:12). So it is with His return (Matt. 24:3, 30; Luke 21:11, 25). These signs are important and must be rightly understood.

The signs fall into several different categories. There are signs in creation (Matt. 24:7, 29), in history (Matt. 24:6, 7), and in the church (Matt. 24:10-16). Some

are only the "beginning of sorrows" (Matt. 24:5-8), others speak more clearly of the end (Matt. 24:14-16), and some actually accompany the visible coming of Christ (Matt. 24:29-31).

There are several things we wish to emphasize about these signs, and that in connection with the wonderful Biblical truth that Jesus *is* coming. Remember, Scripture speaks of His coming as something already happening. He is already *on the way!*

This means that all the signs of His coming are not like the signs along the motorway, which simply makes

an announcement or point to something in the distance. These signs of Christ's coming are like the sound of a train's whistle and the humming of the rails. They are *part of* the train's coming and *are caused by* the coming of the train.

We might, therefore, describe these signs of the coming of Christ as the sound of His footsteps as He approaches. And just as the sound of a person's footsteps are heard the more loudly and clearly the closer he comes, so these "signs" of Christ's coming are seen and heard the more clearly as He comes.

This, we believe, is the meaning of the progression in the book of Revelation from one fourth (Rev. 6:8) to one third (Rev. 8:7, 9, 10, 12, 18) to the whole (Rev. 16:3, 4, 17). In other words, the seals, trumpets and vials picture the same signs and judgments, but as they increase in intensity and are seen more clearly as history progresses and Christ approaches.

However, there is a sense in which these signs are more than just the sound of His footsteps. The truth is that they are *caused by* the coming of Christ, not just as the coming of the train causes the sound of its whistle and its wheels to be heard, but they are caused by the

coming of Christ in that He rules all of history and creation, as well as the church.

He, as the sovereign King and Lord of all is the one who brings all things to pass and causes all things to happen in heaven and on earth (Matt. 28:18). That is the comfort of believers, for then they know that nothing happens by chance or apart from His will. But it is also the reason for these signs.

We might, then, think of those signs as the evidences of His hand and work in the creation and in history. They are signs that He is not working at random, but bringing day by day all things to their appointed end and thus coming.

What a different perspective that puts on all that happens to us and around us! Instead of being afraid and despairing we hope and wait, for all things speak of His power and coming. Truly, in the midst of wars, disasters, and apostasy, while men's hearts are failing them for fear, and while the powers of heaven are shaken, we can look up and lift our heads, for our redemption draws nigh! (Luke 21:25-28). ❖

Rev. Hanko is a minister in the Protestant Reformed Churches.

Church History

State Reformed Church of Odoorn

by J.P. deKlerk

Odoorn is a small Dutch town in the province of Drenthe, nine kilometers north of the industrial city of Emmen. There are about 14,000 inhabitants, and 60% of them are State Reformed.

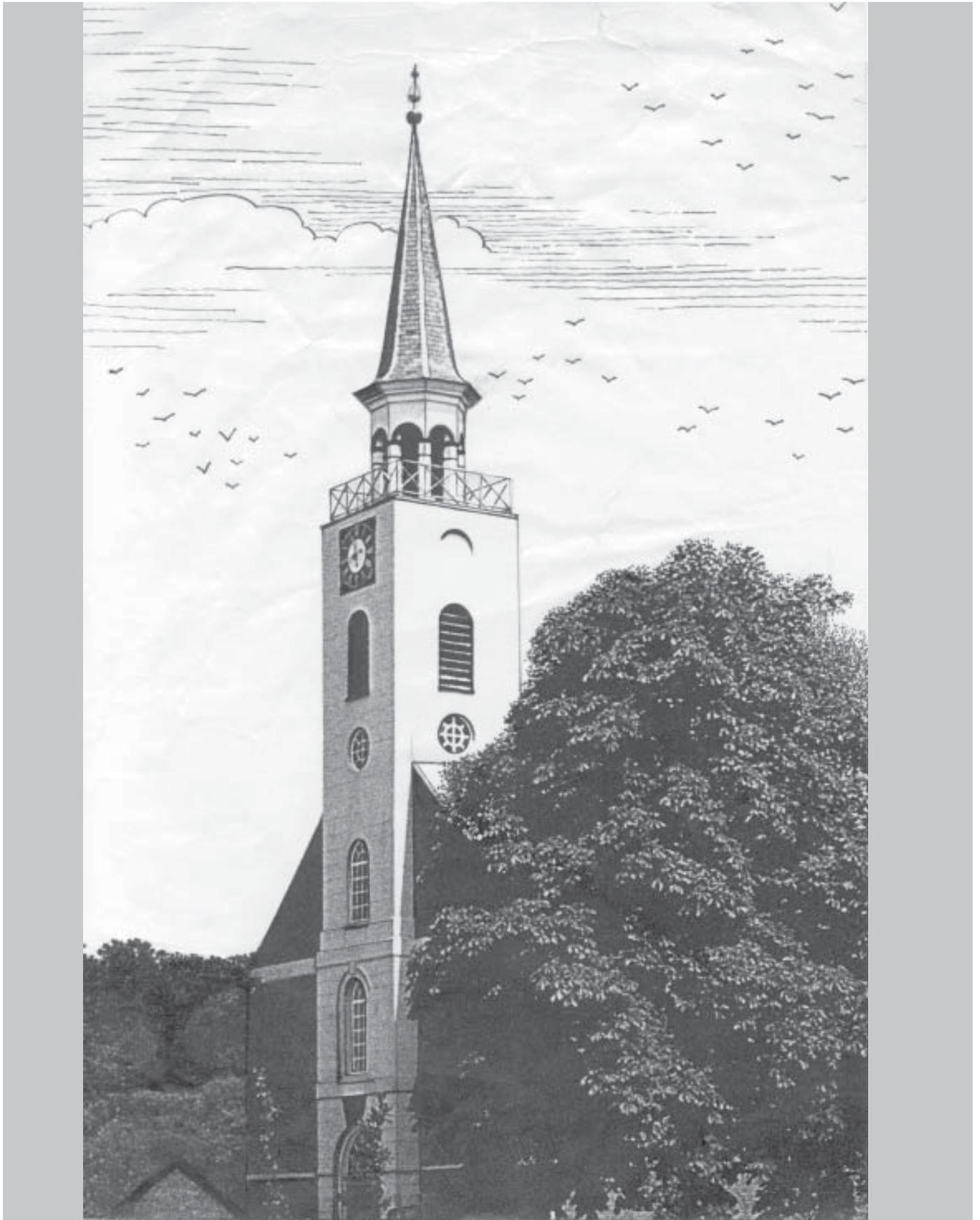
There was a church at this place already in 1200, but it burnt down in 1856. A new building was built immediately, made of natural hacked stones as well as big baked bricks. The builders used the old original drawings, so that it looks like a restoration. (See the picture on the next page.)

Odoorn is a very old historic settlement. In the soil, remnants of a village have been found which must have

been there already 1,400 years before the birth of Jesus Christ. A lot of ornaments of Egyptian origin and from Cornwall (England) have been found there, too. Perhaps robbed from people who had been there and traveled through Drenthe.

There are seven graves there also, made of huge natural stones ("hunebedden" or megalithic chambered tombs), a grave-mound or tumulus and corduroy roads (bridges made of peat), surrounded by rare plants and a piece of native forest. ❖

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



"LITTLE LIGHTS"

January 1560

... let it shine!

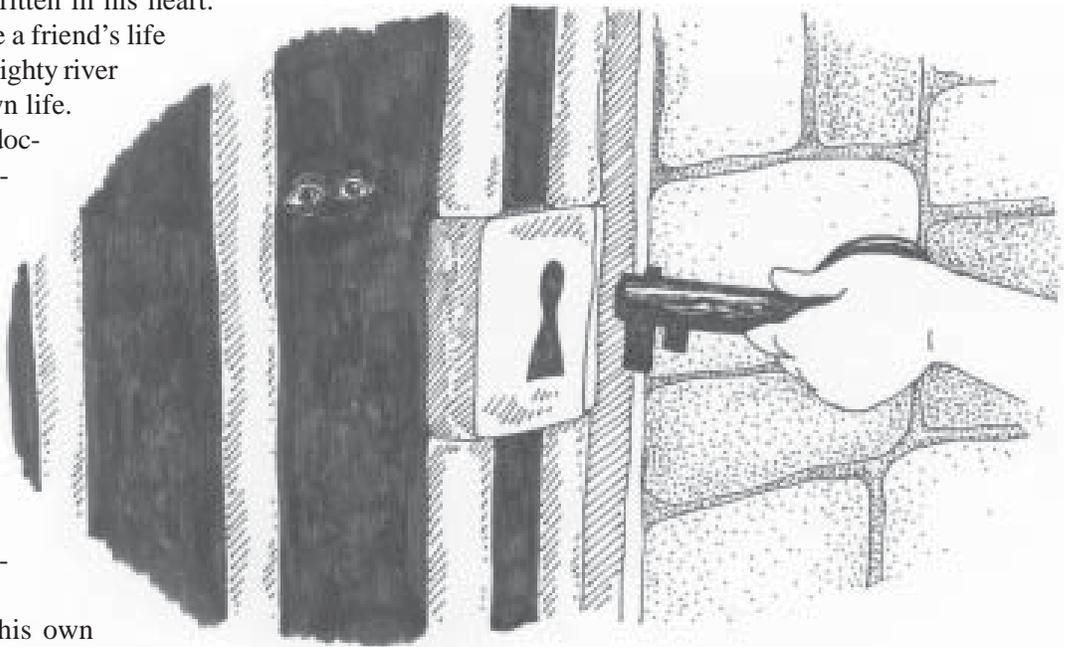
by Connie Meyer

He was twenty-three years old and had already learned much. He learned that going off to school in another country could teach him more than he expected. He learned that the truths of the Reformation, truths that were bubbling all around him, were the same truths that God had written in his heart. He learned that trying to save a friend's life by jumping into a swift and mighty river could nearly cost him his own life. He learned that studying the doctrines of the Reformation under men like John Calvin could make him zealous to bring those truths to others. And now he learned that preaching those truths to the people he loved, even in his own home town of Treves in Germany, could be a very dangerous thing. For ten weeks already he was a prisoner in the jail at Treves.

But it wasn't so much his own townspeople who hated him; it was the archbishop with his soldiers who came to their town. They came to quiet this young preacher and to squash the reformation that had started there. The soldiers made life unbearable for the new Protestant believers in Treves, but their number one enemy was that preacher, that twenty-three-year-old Caspar Olevianus.

It was cold in January in prison. Damp, dark, cold—and fearful. What would happen to him? His captors hated him so much that they would declare a holiday when they got rid of him! These were dangerous times.

But God had plans. God had prepared this man for a very important job, and in one of those cold, dark days of January the door to Caspar's cell was opened. He was free! A prince named Frederick, the father of the student Caspar tried to save from drowning, had paid for his ransom. Now, would Caspar come to Heidelberg and teach at Frederick's university there? Would he, two years later, help Zacharias Ursinus write a catechism for the



prince, a catechism to help both children and adults learn and love the truths of the Reformation?

Yes. Yes, Caspar Olevianus would come and serve his faithful Savior in that place. From the darkness of heresy, from the darkness of deep waters, and from the darkness of prison, Caspar Olevianus would know how to help write the words of endearing comfort that would be precious to the people of God for generations to follow. The Heidelberg Catechism—still a blessed comfort for us today! ❖

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

Can you quote from heart Question and Answer 1 of the Heidelberg Catechism? Try it and see how well you do!
"What is thy only comfort..."

BEACONLIGHTS

P.O. BOX 375
Jenison, MI 49428

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

Church News

BAPTISMS

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

Mark 16:16

The sacrament of Holy Baptism was administered to:

Gideon Samuel, son of Mr. & Mrs. John Chesebro—
Byron Center, MI

Jerron Perry, son of Mr. & Mrs. Perry VanEgdom—Doon,
IA

Ellie Mae, daughter of Mr. & Mrs. Jim Regnerus—Doon,
IA

Conner James, son of Mr. & Mrs. Jay VanBaren—Faith,
MI

Lindsey Joy, daughter of Mr. & Mrs. Joel Holstege—
Faith, MI

Nicole Grace, daughter of Mr. & Mrs. Matt Kuiper—
Faith, MI

Abbie Faye, daughter of Mr. & Mrs. Ron Kuiper—Faith,
MI

Brandon Dale, son of Mr. & Mrs. Clay Spronk—Faith, MI

Caleb Henry, son of Dr. & Mrs. Doug Bleyenburgh—
Georgetown, MI

Nicole Renee, daughter of Mr. & Mrs. Nick Westra—
Georgetown, MI

Trenton Peter, son of Mr. & Mrs. David Miedema—
Georgetown, MI

Makayla Lou & Mason Allen, children of Mr. & Mrs. Jeff
Berens, Georgetown, MI

Issac Shane, son of Mr. & Mrs. Thad Lubbers—
Hudsonville, MI

Thomas James, son of Mr. & Mrs. Tom VerStrate—
Hudsonville, MI

Thomas Lane, son of Mr. & Mrs. Lane Brummel—Hull, IA

Austin James, son of Mr. & Mrs. Kris Campbell—
Loveland, CO

Mary Olivia, daughter of Mr. & Mrs. Ray Schwarz—
Loveland, CO

Taylor Renae, daughter of Mr. & Mrs. Rod Griess—
Loveland, CO

Randall Duane, son of Mr. & Mrs. John Heys—Loveland,
CO

Meghan Rose, daughter of Mr. & Mrs. Eric Ophoff—
South Holland, IL

Luke Allen, son Mr. & Mrs. Eric Van Baren—South
Holland, IL

Austin Matthew, son of Mr. & Mrs. Eric Smith—South-
west, MI

Mason James, son of Mr. & Mrs. Mike Cleary—South-
west, MI

CONFESSIONS OF FAITH

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

Romans 10:10

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

EDMONTON, CANADA

Russell DeVries, Tammy Tolsma, Sara Klaassens

FAITH, MI

Lori Brummel, Sheri Deemter, Jill Griffioen, Alex
Kalsbeek, Ryan Richards, Brian VanTil

GEORGETOWN, MI

Katie VanOverloop, Lisa Jabaay, Kelly Zandstra

HOLLAND, MI

Daniel DeJong, Kyle TenBroeke

HOPE, MI

Jeremy Langerak, Joe Schimmel

SOUTH HOLLAND, IL

Shannon Koontz, Tracy Koonstz

MARRIAGES

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

Matthew 19:5

United in the bond of Holy Matrimony were:

Mr. Russ Potjer and Miss Lisa den Hartog—Georgetown,
MI

Mr. Kyle Borst and Miss Lynelle Wassink—Holland, MI