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# Beacon

December  
2002

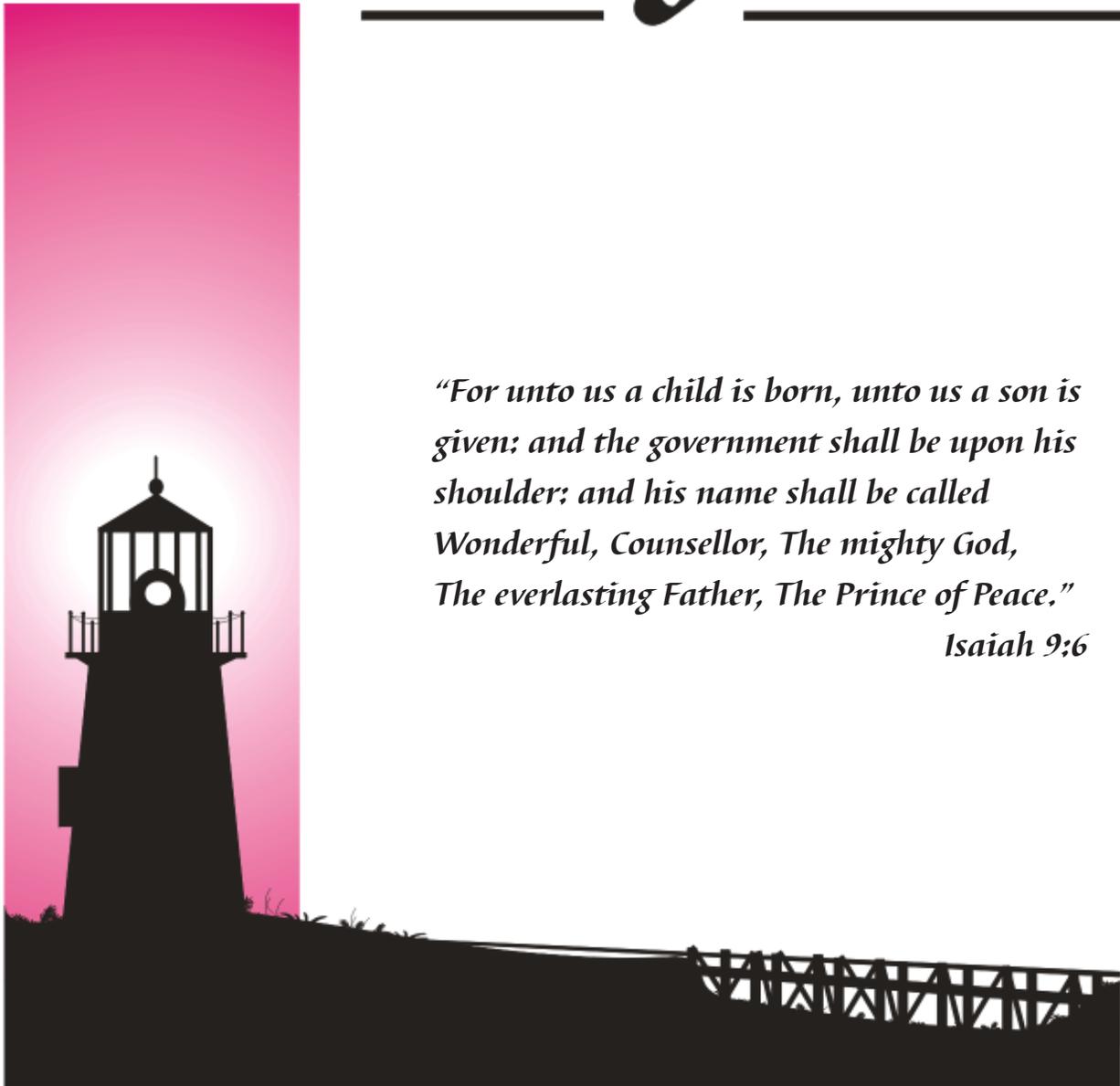
Volume LXI  
Number 11

# Lights

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*“For unto us a child is born, unto us a son is given; and the government shall be upon his shoulder; and his name shall be called Wonderful, Counsellor, The mighty God, The everlasting Father, The Prince of Peace.”*

*Isaiah 9:6*



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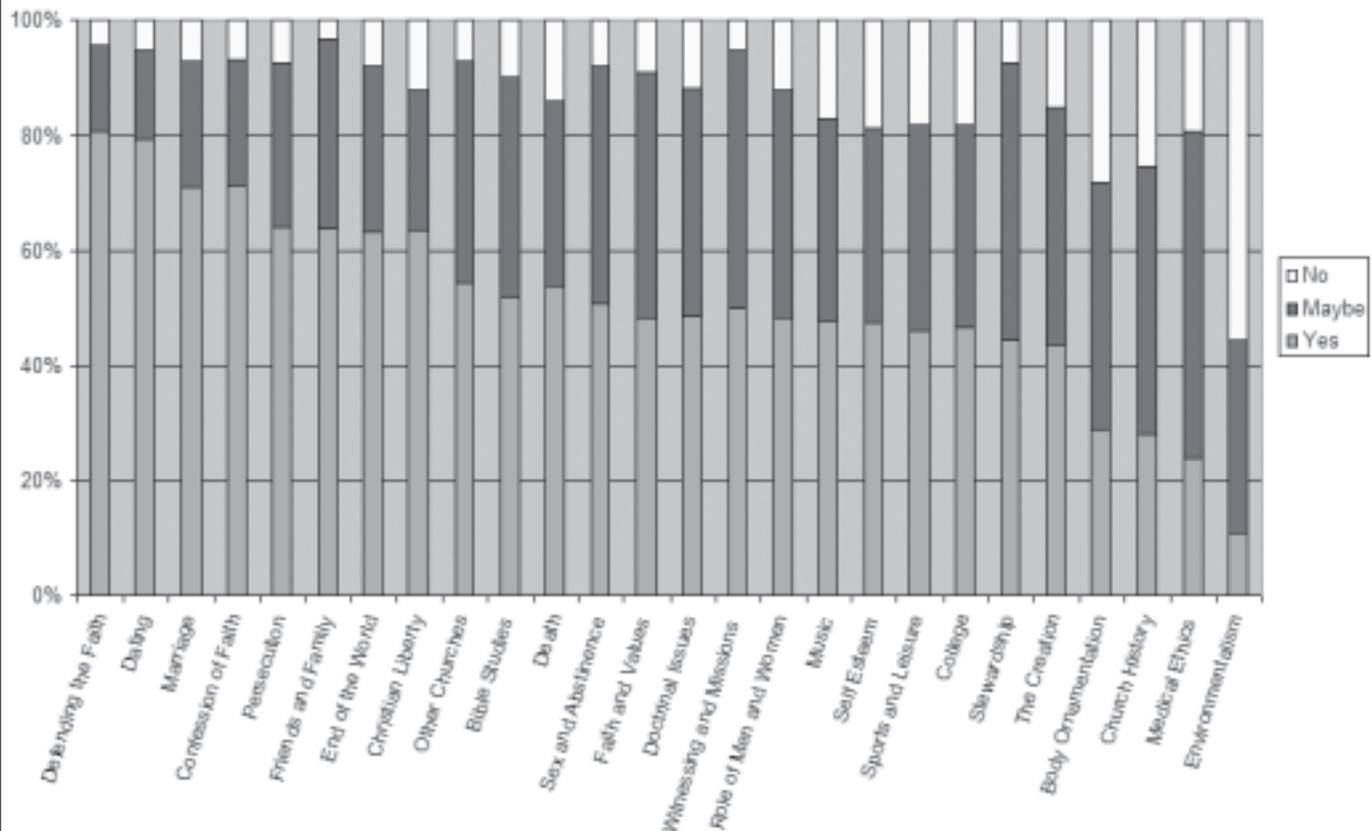


# The Survey Results Are In!

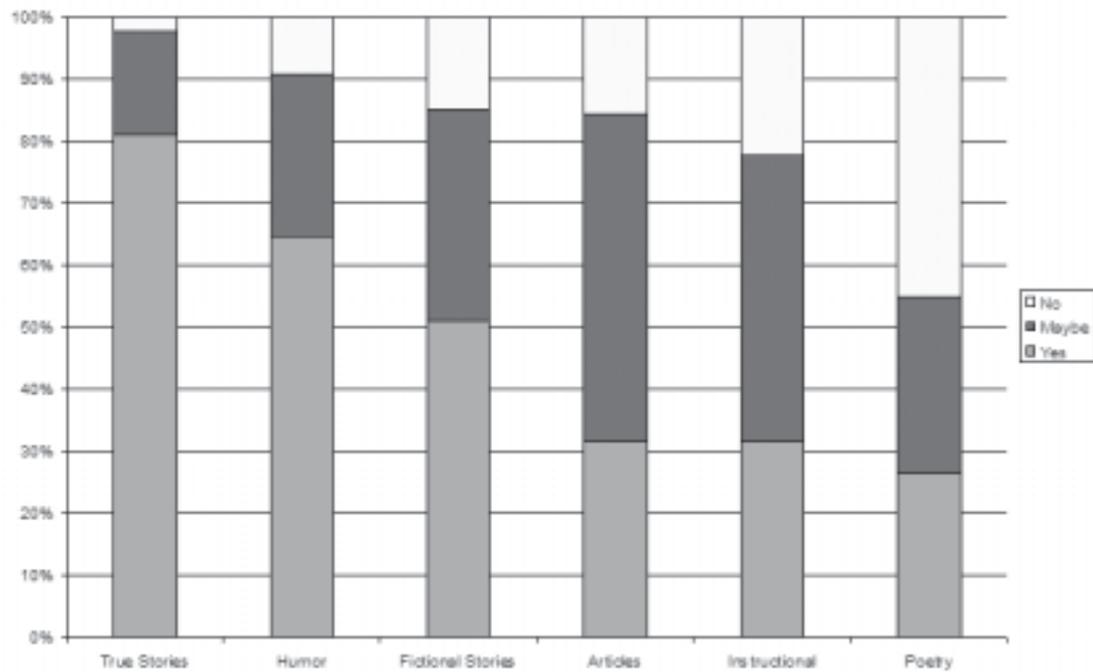
by John Huizenga

Last month we published some of the comments that came back from the surveys that were filled out by the conventioners at the last convention. With the help of the Young People's Society of Randolph, Wisconsin, the data has been tallied and summarized in the following charts. It is our goal to use this information to make this magazine interesting and spiritually edifying for our readers. Thanks again for all those who helped bring this information to our attention.

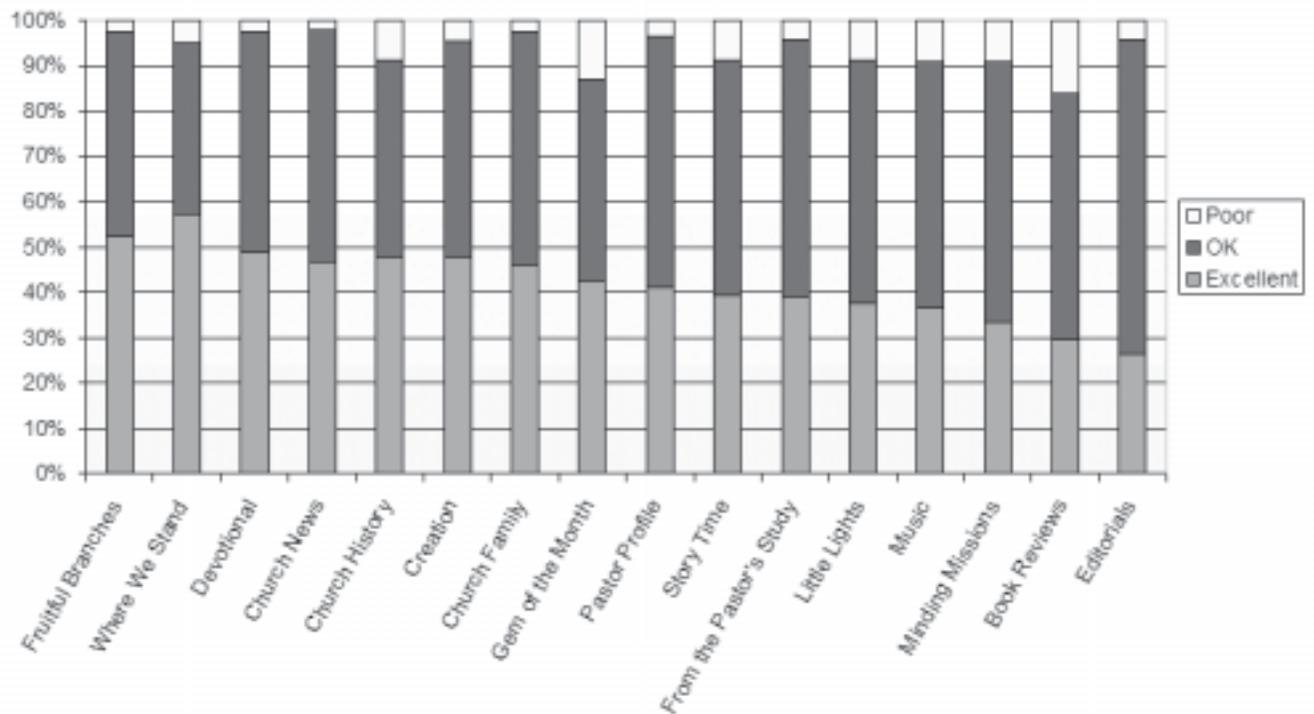
2002 YP Survey Results: Are You Interested in Articles About ... ?

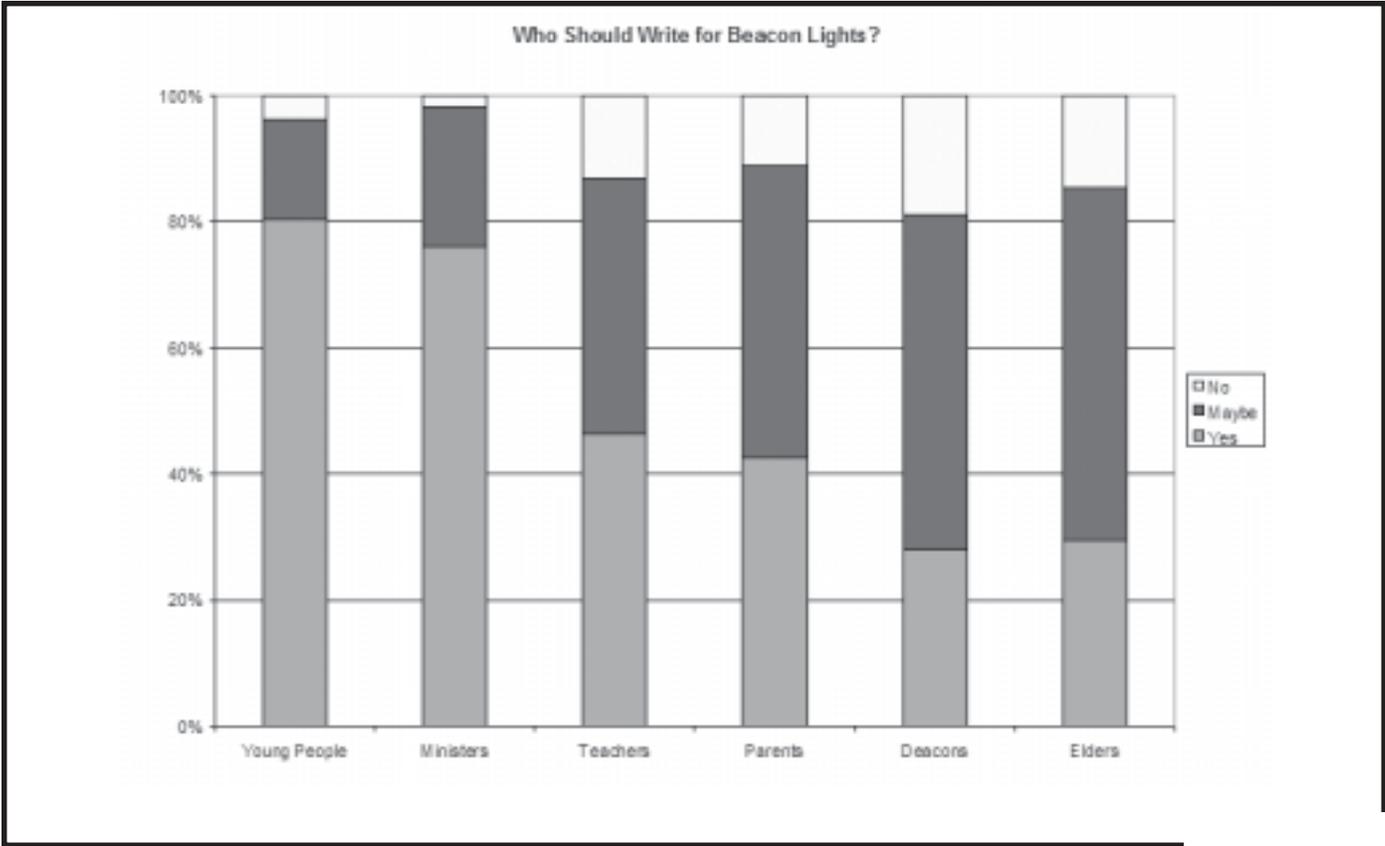


Types of Articles that Interest the Conventioneers



How the Conventioneers Feel About the Current Rubrics





Story Time

# Together in the Snow

by J.P. de Klerk

**I**t happened about sixty years ago. There was a small family in the mountains of Austria—a poor minister of the church with his wife and children, high up under a big layer of snow.

There was no electricity, no telephone, no radio. In the kitchen they had a pump which remained frost-free. In the shed behind the house they had three milch-goats and four chickens. The village was in the next valley far from their house. That winter a lot of snow had fallen and fresh layers were added almost every night; nevertheless, Rev. Karl Menger went out to visit sick people when someone came to bring him there. It could take him all day, but he never refused.

As a family, he and his wife Elise, and their children, Hanna, Deborah and Peter, shared the happy and

the sad days in life with the members of the church, under all circumstances. The girls helped their mother gladly with taking care of their little brother. They were all in good health and they felt blessed in the simple wooden house.

They had scarcely enough clothes. They made everything themselves and they repaired old clothes with pieces of a curtain or a blind.

In the cellar they had stone jars with salted beans and sauerkraut. Often their breakfast was only a slice of gingerbread with a cup of tea without sugar.

They knew that their province struggled that year. The minister prayed every day for them all.

In those days the whole of Reformed Churches in Austria counted 16,000 people (seminary in Vienna).



The children could not get a gift at Christmas, as was the tradition; they needed the money for food. Elise knew that Hanna would have loved to get a pair of skis, and Deborah hoped that someone would give her a new doll on which she could try out her ideas of dressing. There was nothing Elise could do about it and she asked God to make her more thankful for the things they did have.

Hanna and Deborah understood that it was difficult for their mother and they did their appointed tasks with joyful devotion, more than ever. They also continued to do a good deal of work for the correspondence school, since some years ago they had become used to receiving lessons by mail. Hanna was a good help for her younger sister. She also always looked after the administration of the church for her father. Elise made the living room as cozy as possible and she served dinner on nicely garnered dishes, in front of the log fire of fir wood and cones.

Deborah was feeding Peter, who was put in his high chair by Hanna, so that Elise did not need to strain her back. They sang together and praised God's name for all His blessings.

The morning before Christmas, Rev. Menger was called away by a young farmer with a horse and sleigh to see a member of the congregation who had had a heart-

attack high up in the mountains while he was clearing snow. He was in a sorry state. Hanna put a woolen scarf round her father's neck and fastened it with some safety pins. Elise helped him in his thick winter overcoat.

When it became dark, Deborah put the oil lamp on and her mother went to sit behind the small treadle organ and she taught the children two more Christmas songs she had found in an old book. Later they kneaded dough for bread and put it in the oven of the big farmer's cooking range. Then it was time for Peter to go to bed.

That night, when the girls were already asleep, Karl was brought home, grown numb with cold, exhausted by the great distance traveling over the frozen snow.

Elise pulled off his boots; the thin worn-out socks slipped out with them. His feet were swelled up.

She made a cup with warm goat's milk with anise for him. They sat in front of the fire with clasped hands and looked silently at the flames.

Suddenly they heard the sound of jingling bells. A big sleigh with two horses stopped in front of the house and there was a knock at the door. Karl stood up and opened the door. At the stoop stood Deacon Merton Gaulhofer who was of Hungarian heritage.

"Well, minister," he said, "Just before it became dark, a big box was delivered, express goods. It's for you. I

could not leave my business at once, but I thought I should bring this yet. After all, I am the postmaster. My wife thought we had to give you this turkey for Christmas, and some other things which could come in useful.”

He put down a basket with apples, a bag with flour and a bottle with olive oil. He grinned, walked back to his sleigh and left clouded in flying up snow.

Karl and Elise brought everything to the table in the living room, and he took a knife to open the box. The first thing, that came out of it was a big new blanket of yellow wool, and from under it came all kinds of clothing for the whole family.

“Praise God from whom all blessings flow,” said Elise.

“Amen,” said Karl. “I have noticed how worried you looked the last couple of weeks.”

They took more out of the box. Packets with dried fruit, a butter cake, a long sausage, a slab of bacon, some books, a small box with sewing things, an envelope with money, and a doll dressed in the traditional costume of Tirol. They displayed it all on the table.

Early the following morning the children discovered the gifts and they were very excited and surprised. Deborah rocked the new doll in her arms and sang a cradle song.

Their breakfast became a kind of thanksgiving dinner. Rev. Menger prayed, with emotion.

They still remember that Christmas. The old house is also there, lovingly restored, and the retired minister with his wife went back too—after some years in the western and southern parts of the country.

The children married. Hanna lives in Hungary, Deborah in Germany, Peter in Linz. There is now central heating in the house and there is a bus stop (the driver brings and picks up their mail every day). The Mengers have ten grandchildren, which often come to see them on the school holidays. Their eldest granddaughter intends to marry this year in Vienna. ❖

*J.P. deKlerk is an author and journalist from Ashhurst, New Zealand.*

## God's Eternal Love

Jannet Moore

*Our Father has shown  
His infinite love  
By sending His Son  
From heaven above*

*To men who were sinners  
Condemned from their birth  
Dead in sin and transgression  
To His chosen on earth.*

*Apart from His Mercy  
And wonderful Grace  
Man's place is in Hell  
Ne'er to look on His face.*

*To serve Him, we would not.  
How evil our thought.  
Our deeds and our actions  
Were all set at naught.*

*How marvelous then,  
As we look at Christ's birth,  
God come in the flesh  
To redeem "His" on earth.*

*And from all eternity  
God had in His plan  
To save His chosen ones  
From all races of man.*

*God's gift, freely given  
From Heaven DIVINE  
Emmanuel, God with us!  
Hallelujah—He's Mine!*

# The Fourth Pointer on the Spiritual Roadmap: Keeping Jehovah's Day Holy (1)

by Rev. Doug Kuiper

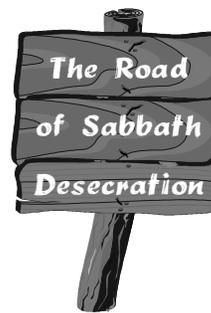


*Remember the sabbath day, to keep it holy.  
Six days shalt thou labour, and do all thy work:  
But the seventh day is the sabbath of the LORD thy God:  
in it thou shalt not do any work, thou, nor thy son, nor  
thy daughter, thy manservant,  
nor thy maidservant, nor thy cattle, nor the stranger that  
is within thy gates:  
For in six days the LORD made heaven and earth, the  
sea, and all that in them is,  
and rested the seventh day: wherefore the LORD blessed  
the sabbath day, and hallowed it.  
Exodus 20:8-11*

*The sabbath was made for man, and not man for the  
sabbath:  
Therefore the Son of man is Lord also of the sabbath.  
Mark 2:27-28*

**Y**oung people, we have seen that God's law requires us to acknowledge Him to be the only God, to worship Him rightly, and to use His name rightly. In obeying these commands, we show that we are traveling on The Way of Thankful Obedience, which ends in the glory of His name, and in heaven.

But we have not yet finished with the dangerous intersections and crossroads—there are several more to come! And now we approach an intersection with a road down which so many travel, The Road of Sabbath Desecration. What pleasurable attractions we can find, if we travel down this road! We can stop at the Sunday



Sports Show; visit the Sunday Travel Museum; and stay at the Man-Is-Made-For-Sunday Hotel. Some justify traveling on this road, because it has churches on it, and they stop in to visit these churches. That isn't really so bad, is it? Sadly, the names of the churches give away the real problem: there is the False Doctrine Church (doctrine is preached, but it doesn't glorify God), the All-Tolerant Church (everything goes, because we are all going the same place anyway), the Entertainment Church (you leave feeling really good, unless you came to serve God), and the McDonald's Church (the one where you get your sermon fast, so you can be on your way doing your own thing).

Should we turn on this road? It looks like a very nice road to take. We are tempted!

The problem is this: to get on this road, we must turn off the road we are traveling on at the moment—The Way of Thankful Obedience. We are tempted to try it—just to see if the two roads will intersect again, and if we can get back on The Way of Thankful Obedience later. What a nice detour it might be! But God, in His grace, gives His children road signs warning us not to turn left onto The Road of Sabbath Desecration. One sign says, "God's Glory - straight ahead. Man's Glory—turn left." Very clearly we are told that we will not reach our destination if we turn. The next sign says, "Bridge Out Ahead on The Road of Sabbath Desecration." Why

do so many ignore this warning sign? After making the left hand turn, and traveling down the road a little way, they will see that the sign was true. They have the option only of turning around, and going back to The Way of Thankful Obedience, or speeding towards the bridge that is out, and falling into a deep chasm, to their own peril and destruction.

Let me make it more clear. God hates sabbath desecration. He made that clear to Israel in the Old Testament: “Ye shall keep the sabbath therefore; for it is holy unto you: every one that defileth it shall surely be put to death: for whosoever doeth any work therein, that soul shall be cut off from among his people” (Exodus 31:14). This warning of death is found also in other Old Testament passages. God meant it! At one point in their wilderness wanderings, the children of Israel found a man picking up sticks on the sabbath day. Either they did not remember God’s command, or they were not sure He meant it, or they thought picking up sticks was not really to be considered work, for they did not know what to do with the man. God’s answer was: “The man shall be surely put to death: all the congregation shall stone him with stones without the camp” (Numbers 15:35).



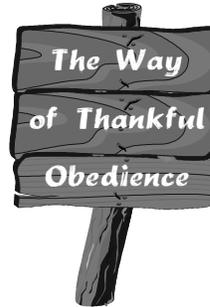
Some say, “But all that was in the Old Testament. We live in the New Testament. Because Christ fulfilled the law of the sabbath, we have freedom to do as we please on Sunday.”

It is true that Christ fulfilled the law—the moral law, that is. But this does not mean we are no longer required to obey this law. Rather, it means He obeyed it perfectly, that He might bear God’s wrath against us for disobedience. This ought motivate us to obey it as best we are able.

It is also true that Christ abolished the ceremonial law (the laws in the Old Testament that governed Israel’s worship). In the New Testament, no man is physically put to death by the church for desecrating the Sabbath. Also, the New Testament church must have a different outward form of observing the sabbath than did Israel (for example, Israel worshiped with sacrifices, and worshiped in the temple in Jerusalem; we may worship anywhere, and are forbidden to bring animal sacrifices).

The New Testament also teaches us that Jesus Christ, having rose from the dead the first day of the week, changed the day of rest from being the seventh, to being the first; from being Saturday, to being Sunday. Paul did find many Jews in the synagogues on the sabbath, that is, on Saturday, because they had not yet come to be-

lieve that Jesus was the Christ, and that He fulfilled and abolished the laws of the Old Testament. Those who, by God’s grace, came to faith in Christ as the Savior, worshiped on the first day of the week (I Corinthians 16:2). Worshiping on Sunday rather than Saturday is symbolic - it shows that we have begun to enter into the rest of salvation in Christ. We rest the first day, then work the next six.



But is it true that we never need to observe a day of rest, and never need to keep a day holy, as God’s day? Is it true that Christ abolished the idea of the sabbath, and our need for a day of rest?

If so, He abolished the fourth commandment. If He abolished the fourth commandment, why not argue that He abolished each of the other nine commandments? If He did that, why not argue that we can live as we please? The answer is this: because Scripture, also in the New Testament, teaches us that the ten commandments of God’s law are still in force.

The fourth commandment itself indicates this. Notice the reason God gave: it has to do with creation: “For in six days the LORD made heaven and earth, the sea, and all that in them is; and rested the seventh day.” This fact did not change when Christ died and rose again. Creation ordinances, such as marriage of one man and one wife for life, and such as the need to observe a day of rest, abide as long as this creation abides. The fourth commandment is still in force.

The words of Jesus also indicate this: “The sabbath was made for man, and not man for the sabbath.” That is, God did not make the sabbath day first, as His ultimate goal of creation week, and then decide to make a man to enjoy the sabbath day. Rather, He made man first. After creating man, God made the sabbath. Why did He make the sabbath? Because He knew that His creature, man, was a frail creature, who needed rest from work; and He knew that man needed an opportunity to enjoy the spiritual rest of fellowship with God. The sabbath was made for man—in light of man’s needs. And man is as frail, weak, and sinful today as ever he was.

Young people, we need the day of rest. We need it as a day to rest from our earthly labor. But even more, we need it as a day to draw nigh to our God, to delight our-

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selves in Him, to praise and serve and love Him rightly, and to enjoy the rest of salvation He gives in Christ.

Until Jesus Christ returns, we need this day of rest. Until Jesus Christ returns, God requires us to keep this day holy, and put aside our earthly work. Until Jesus Christ returns, God teaches us that He hates the desecrating of His day, and those who desecrate it must repent (turn back to The Way of Thankful Obedience) or will perish (fall off the road into a deep chasm, to their own

peril and destruction). *God* will see that they are brought to death!

It is important that we ask the question, then: how, practically, must we keep the sabbath day holy? What *must* we do on Sunday? What *may* we do on Sunday? And what is *forbidden* us to do on Sunday? These questions we will answer in our next article. ❖

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*Rev. Kuiper is pastor of Randolph Protestant Reformed Church in Randolph, Wisconsin.*

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## Pastor Profile

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# Rev. Arie den Hartog (2)

edited by Kris Moelker

**D**uring the last of the final year of our ministry in Covenant, in the providence of God, we came into contact with several young people from Singapore. We made the decision to sponsor one of these young people as a foreign exchange student. Johnson See stayed in our home for three months, and we learned more about the young people in Singapore who were at the time a bible study group of new Christians, zealous for the new found Reformed Faith. All of this led us to accept the call to become a missionary to Singapore in 1979. It was a pretty major decision for us. By now the Lord had blessed our marriage with four children. Moving not only to another place, but to another country on the other side of the world, an Eastern country with a culture very different than the one that we had lived in all our lives, was almost a frightening prospect. But we were strongly convinced of the will of the Lord and prayed that He would be with us.

We have vivid remembrance of our first arriving in Singapore and being greeted at the airport by a group of Chinese young people. We were overwhelmed with how different everything was in Singapore than it was in America. So began our seven years of ministry in Singapore. The Lord exceedingly blessed us during the seven years of our labors. We experienced things there that were pretty much unimaginable in America, wonderful conversions of young people who were born and raised in pagan homes, groups of adult young people as

large as 20 at once who were baptized, the organization and institution of the church among the saints of Singapore, and so many other wonderful things which I could not begin to tell of. During our stay in Singapore, the Evangelical Reformed Church grew in knowledge of the truth and in numbers in wonderful ways. We had the privilege of baptizing many converts, of conducting about 40 marriages among the saints of ERCS and to give counsel and advice to new and growing Christians in the many and varied experiences and stages of their life. There were sorrows and struggles as well as joys, but the Lord was with us through them all. We had the privilege of ordaining the first pastor of ERCS, Pastor Lau Chin Kwee.

During our last year in Singapore, we participated in the work of establishing a second congregation among the saints in ERCS. We also ordained the man who would become their first pastor, Pastor Jai Mahtani. The experience of leaving Singapore was certainly bittersweet. When we left, we never imagined that we would return some day.

After seven years, the time came when we had to leave Singapore. The churches there were at a stage where we believed they could be on their own. Our family circumstances were such that going back to America seemed wisest. Our churches decided that we should come back. We can remember also the great joy of receiving the call to become pastor of the church in

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Randolph, Wisconsin. Our years at Randolph gave us new appreciation for the strength and stability of our Protestant Reformed Churches. It was again a real change to live in America and experience snow and cold weather. Once again, the Lord blessed us in our ministry in a PRC congregation. But just before three years of our stay in Randolph, we received a call to become pastor of the congregation in Redlands, California. It is not always possible to put in words the mysterious ways the Lord moves us to become convinced of a call to a new church. We left behind a church with which we had a close bond, and breaking the pastoral ties was again very difficult.

This led to the 12 years of our ministry in the church in Redlands, California. Also, these years were wonderful years. For the first time, our children could attend a Protestant Reformed Christian School. The Redlands Church was a strong and stable congregation, mature and united in the love of the Protestant Reformed faith and practice. During the twelve years of our labor in Redlands, strong bonds of Christian love were developed between us and the members of the congregation. Our children grew up during the years of our labors in Redlands. We experienced the joy of new people coming into the congregation and also the sorrow of some of these leaving again. There were weddings, births of children, baptisms, confessions of faith of young people and a number of deaths of elderly saints as well as the tragic death of the father of one of the young families in the congregation, all of which made its own profound impact our lives. Once again as we look back, we can say that the Lord greatly blessed us during our years in the congregation of Redlands. It seemed as though we would never be able to leave this congregation because of the strong bonds that had been created over the years.

But the Lord strongly called us to return to Singapore to again serve the churches here. There were sorrows of having to leave the church of Redlands and now having to leave most of our children behind in the USA, to once again move to the other side of the world. But the Lord has already given us great joy and excitement in our labors in the churches of ERCS as well as becoming involved in various mission endeavors in other countries such as Myanmar and India. We are thankful for all that the Lord has done in our lives so that we are again settled and established in the work of the Lord's Church here and living among the saints of God, who are widely different in cultural background, but truly one in the faith that is in Jesus Christ.

Over the years of our ministry, we have had very little time to be engaged in pastimes, sports, etc. I did enjoy doing some gardening in all three of the states we lived in during our ministry in the PRCA. Because of my experience of growing up on a farm in my youth, I learned to be able to fix cars a bit and how to do odd jobs around the house. This has served as a source of relaxation and diversion which is sometimes necessary to relieve a minister of the anxieties and cares and pressures of day to day life. Though the ministry keeps one very busy, we have always enjoyed our work in every congregation that we served by the grace of God, and we are thankful for His abundant blessing.

Probably everyone knows about our family. The Lord gave us seven children. Having a large family is not very popular in our day and we experienced interesting reactions to this over the years. The Lord abundantly blessed us in our family life. Never did we lack anything important as far as material things. Though we had less than many others, we also had more than many others. Our children learned a lot from growing up together, I believe. They were required to pitch in at home and learned valuable lessons for their future life by doing this. We are very thankful to God that now five of our children are already married, all of them to godly partners who are members of our PR churches. Only our two youngest are single yet. We had a happy home life and were very sad to see our children move out in order to establish their own marriages and families, but we are also thankful for this. The older we get as parents, the greater source of joy and reason for thanksgiving to God our children are.

I guess the greatest joy in teaching catechism came to us after we had served in Singapore. During the years of our being in Singapore, there were still no children old enough to be in catechism class. All our catechism classes there were of new converts preparing for baptism and confession of faith. When we came back to the USA, I was so impressed, even overwhelmed with how much our children, who have been raised for years in covenant homes, know about the truth of the Word of God. What an amazing blessing of grace that our children from childhood on already can be so thoroughly instructed in the truths of God's Word. What an accumulation of knowledge of the truth we receive year after year when we are instructed in our homes and catechism. May the Lord give us grace to appreciate this and also to love the truth we have learned, and live our lives by it.

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One of the greatest joys of our ministry, without a doubt, was seeing our own covenant young people coming to make confession of faith. Another great joy for us was when the Lord added to the congregation we served from outside and brought new people into the congregation through the work of evangelism. In connection with the latter, we found great joy in seeing adults and young people bringing others to church with them, and encouraging newcomers in such a way that they would feel welcome in the fellowship of the church and grow to become a real part of the communion and life of the congregations. We believe this is a very important calling of the members of the church.

Some of the deepest sorrows and things that also made an impact on my own ministry in different ways than the joys and blessings of the life of the church were the troubles we were part of that took place in several of

our congregations over the years of our ministry. Having been a church visitor on a number of occasions, we felt the pain and anguish of situations in some of our congregations perhaps more deeply even than other ministers. Even through these struggles, the Lord shows us the depths of His grace and mercy and unfailing faithfulness to His people. Standing for the truth in hard times is sometimes very difficult. It can involve great costs in terms of losing friends and dividing families. Only when we look back, can we confess that the Lord, through our many weaknesses and short comings and often in spite of sin and controversy, preserves His true church among His people. What a blessing this is!



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

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## Church Family

# Remember your Fellow Saints with Special Needs

by Kris Moelker

**D**uring this season of year, many young people have the opportunity to show their love and compassion to those with special needs. Several young peoples societies set aside one night during this time of the year to go caroling. They visit the aged and those who have special needs.

Last year, at the beginning of the Christmas season, Faith PRC's young people's societies sponsored a Special Needs Program. With the young people's assistance, many special needs children, young people, and adults participated in the program. Voices joined together in Christmas carols and other songs of praise to worship our Saviour. Some of the participants sang solos, duets, read scripture passages and other special writings which testified of God's grace and goodness to us. It was a wonderful evening that brought tears to many eyes. Many said this program was more edifying than many of the professional concerts given during this season.

In the Grand Rapids area, those with special needs also have the opportunity to get together for fellowship on a regular basis. Young adults and those with special needs have formed a Christian Fellowship Club. At least ten times a year, on the third Saturday afternoon of the month, an outing is organized. We have had cookouts, gone on hayrides, played miniature golf, gone bowling, watched the Holland Tulip Time Parade of Bands, visited John Ball Park Zoo, the Grand Rapids Public Museum, and the Fredrick Meijer Gardens in Grand Rapids, Michigan. Sometimes we just meet to play games and sing the songs of Zion.

What a blessing it is when all God's people can experience fellowship with each other. ❖

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

# Watching Daily At My Gates

by Chester Hunter

reprinted from December 1993 *Beacon Lights*

## **December 1 Read Genesis 3:14-21**

What a promise in the darkest of days! Adam and Eve had just lost the beautiful face-to-face fellowship that they had had with their God. Now, because of their sin, they were condemned to death. Out of that darkness comes the promise of enmity between their seed and Satan's seed. The promise would crush the head of Satan. Christ is that promise. In this month in which we celebrate His birth we must give thanks for the enmity between Satan and us. We must also live our lives in the hope of the final return of that promise. Sing or read Psalter 4.

## **December 2 Read Genesis 22:15-19**

The preceding verses of this chapter give the wonderful account of Abraham offering up Isaac. Our verses today repeat the blessing that God has given to Abraham, namely, that in him all the nations would be blessed. This blessing would only come by way of Christ and His death on the cross. This should be our focus in this time of the year. Do you, young people, walk as true spiritual seed of Abraham? Or are you trying to get to heaven because you physically belong to and attend church? There is a big difference! Think about these things during this season of the year. Sing or read Psalter 432, especially stanzas 3 and 4.

## **December 3 Read Genesis 49:8-12**

In the Old Testament, God little by little showed from whom He would send Christ. The line went from Abraham to Isaac to Jacob. Now in this text we see that Christ would come from Judah. The tribe of Judah would be the leader in Israel. They would rule their brethren until Christ appeared. Here Christ is called Shiloh or peace. Does the name of Christ give you peace? Sometimes we make this season too hectic. If we remember that Christ is the Prince of Peace, it may help make this season what it should be. Sing or read Psalter 101, especially stanzas 1, 4, and 5.

## **December 4 Read Numbers 24:15-19**

Our God moves in mysterious ways! This is borne out by today's passage. The false prophet Balaam, even though it was not his desire, was compelled to make this

beautiful prophecy of Christ. Here Christ is called the Star of Jacob. A star is a beautiful heavenly object. Christ is a beautiful heavenly being. This Star would also be a scepter. He would rule over not only Israel but over all nations of the world. Are you looking for that Star? Are you bowing before the Scepter even in this time of the year? Sing or read Psalter 302.

## **December 5 Read Deuteronomy 18:15-19**

Christ is a Prophet. His words of His prophecy cannot be ignored because they are the words of God. God's word is perfect and cannot be changed. This Prophet will come to a particular people: the people of the Church of God who are elect from the foundations of the world. Are we listening to His words as they are proclaimed by Christ through the preaching each week? Verse nineteen speaks of a grievous chastisement to those who do not listen. Let us listen to the words of Christ which are the wonderful words of life given by God. Sing or read Psalter 42.

## **December 6 Read II Samuel 7:12-17**

David had desired to make a house for Jehovah. God through the prophet Nathan had told him that Solomon would make such a house. We also have a promise that it would be from David's seed that Christ would come. David was a type of Christ in that he fought the battles of God. Solomon was a type of Christ in his wisdom and in the peaceful kingdom over which he reigned. From these two men would come Christ, all-wise and all-powerful. His throne is eternal. It will never pass away. Let us look to the eternal kingdom of our king, Christ. Sing or read Psalter 367, especially stanzas 4 and 5.

## **December 7 Read Psalm 40:1-8**

Do you desire to do the will of your heavenly Father? Christ did. In this Psalm of David we have prophecy of such desire. The will spoken of here is obedience to God's law. Christ fulfilled that law in that He was obedient even unto the death of the cross. We must be obedient to that law as a means of gratitude for the salvation earned for us by Christ on the cross. Even as Christ was obedient in

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every point of the law, we, too, must strive for perfect obedience to that law. May this be our desire all through our lives. Sing or read Psalter 111.

**December 8 Read Psalm 118:19-29**

In His life on this earth, Christ had nothing to recommend Him for greatness. His family was not important in Israel. They lived in a town of no great importance. Yet from that unimportant beginning came the cornerstone of the most beautiful structure ever—the Church! The Church rests upon and gains its strength from Christ. This is the Lord's doing. Let's not make more out of the baby Jesus than what God makes out of Him. Let's remember that He was despised and rejected of man. Let's remember from His lowly birth came our great salvation - nothing more and nothing less! Sing or read Psalter 319, especially stanzas 1, 2, and 5.

**December 9 Read Proverbs 30:1-6**

Do you know the answers to the questions of verse four? Do you know the name of the Son of God? Notice that truth as you ponder these verses. Jesus is the Son of God! He is not mere man born of a woman. He is the Son of God. Being the Son of God He can claim all the attributes belonging to God. Are you celebrating this idea this Christmas? We may not worship the baby Jesus in His human nature alone. We must worship Jesus as the Son of God. Many will sing and speak of Jesus in this month. Not all will rejoice because He is the Son of God. Make that your rejoicing this Christmas. Sing or read Psalter 3, especially stanzas 1 and 4. Use the tune to Psalter 15 to make it more meaningful.

**December 10 Read Isaiah 7:10-16**

The book of Isaiah is replete with prophecies of Christ and His coming. Some of them, such as this one, were given to men who did not prize the word of the Lord. They scoffed at Jehovah and His word. In this passage Jesus is foretold to be born of a virgin. What a wonder! But then is that more a wonder than the wonder of our salvation? He is given the name Immanuel, or God with us. What a comfort! Jesus is our comfort in that He came to bring us salvation. Sing or read Psalter 28.

**December 11 Read Isaiah 9:1-7**

Israel was groaning in the days before the captivity. They had troubles because they were not following the ways of God. To the faithful Israel Isaiah brought the words of comfort of today's passage. A child would be born who would be Wonderful for His people. He would be the Counselor of the oppressed. He would be Mighty God and Everlasting Father for all of God's children. And He would be the Prince of Peace who would bring contentment into the souls of all the elect. He would restore the

glory of the kingdom of David. This is not an earthly glory but a heavenly one. Thanks be to God for such joy. Sing or read Psalter 125, especially stanzas 1, 2 and 5-7.

**December 12 Read Isaiah 11:1-10**

Jesus is the rod of Jesse. A rod stands for power and authority. With a rod the shepherd guided the sheep from place to place. With a rod Moses led the people of Israel from Egypt to Canaan. Jesus is the rod that guides the elect sheep from the Egypt of this earth to the heavenly Canaan. Are you obeying the rod? Do you wish to go where He leads? If you do not wish to follow Jesus, re-read verse ten. Notice the glorious rest He gives His people. Isn't that your desire? Sing or read Psalter 110.

**December 13 Read Isaiah 35**

Does the joy of this season get us down? Do we sometime become weary of the whole thing? Could it be that our focus is wrong? This text speaks of people who seemingly have reason to be down. They have spiritual problems for which there seems to be no solution. This chapter not only gives solution to those who are spiritually down, it also gives to us our focus in this season of the year. The focus should be on salvation from sin. When we make that our focus our joy will be great. We will not spend our time on the superficial but rather on the heavenly. Then we will have true joy and gladness in this season of the year. Sing or read Psalter 398.

**December 14 Read Isaiah 40:1-8**

Comfort is never more needed than in these days of spiritual darkness and sin. Israel of old felt a need of comfort. Isaiah brought to them the word that the king was coming. We in the church have the same comfort. The KING is coming! Are you preparing the way for Him? If the president or some other government official were coming to your house, wouldn't you make some preparations? Christ is coming! Are you making spiritual preparations? If you are, then you will feel the comfort that He alone can bring. We know this is true because of the words of verses 5 and 8. Sing or read Psalter 125, especially stanzas 2-4.

**December 15 Read Isaiah 53**

What Christ are you waiting for? Is it the Christ whom the world celebrates at Christmas? Their Christ is a baby that remains a baby. Their Christ never matures into the Christ of today's passage. This Christ is not handsome. He is not the world leader that the Jews of His day wanted. He will not be the man that leads the world into Utopia. This Christ is despised and rejected of men. This Christ dies without fighting back. This Christ dies a horrible death. This Christ is our Savior. Thanks be to God for

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this Christ! Is this your Christ? Sing or read Psalter 185, especially stanzas 1 and 5-7.

**December 16 Read Isaiah 60:1-5**

“A light to lighten the Gentiles” was old Simeon’s testimony as he held Jesus in his arms in the temple. What a glorious idea for us who are Gentiles. We are brought into the church after Pentecost. We are engrafted into the vine. Christ’s glory will be seen upon us as well as the Old Testament church. Are you reflecting this glory in this season of the year? Do your songs show that you have the light of Christ in your life? Is your celebration of CHRISTmas Christ-centered? Sing or read Psalter 362.

**December 17 Read Jeremiah 31:12-25**

God used the wicked Herod to fulfill the prophecy of this passage when Herod ordered all baby boys two and under to be killed. Satan was also at work in Herod’s heart because he did not want the Christ to die for our sins and crush his head. This passage is a passage of hope. Israel had hope that even though they were going into captivity their children would return to the land of promise. We, too, can gain hope from these verses because we know that the powers of this world cannot prevent our salvation or our children’s salvation. What a comfort! What a Christ! Sing or read Psalter 361.

**December 18 Read Hosea 11**

The Old Testament is full of types and shadows concerning Christ. Here in this prophecy we see another. Looking back, the first verse refers to Israel coming out of Egypt under Moses. Looking ahead, it prophecies of Jesus coming out of Egypt where He had fled with Joseph and Mary. For us it has this significance: Egypt is always the picture of Hell in the Bible. Christ descended into the depths of Hell while on the cross. Sustained by His divine nature, He returned from Hell and our salvation was accomplished. Do we flee the Egypt of this world today? Do we wish to leave it and go to heaven? Sing or read Psalter 307, especially stanza 1.

**December 19 Read Micah 5:1-7**

Bethlehem, the least among Judah, was the birthplace of our Lord. Things have not changed much since then. The Church is small in the world. It will never be great nor should it wish to be great. We should be content to be the body of Christ. Bethlehem did not know the glory that was theirs. There was no room in the inn. Christ had to be born in a cattle stall. Do we know the glory that is ours? Are we anxious to glorify Him as the Christ of our salvation? Think about it, young people, as we draw closer to Christmas. Sing or read Psalter 380.

**December 20 Read Malachi 3:1-6**

How do we receive the message that Christ is coming? Do we read His word and then ignore it, or do we take heed as unto a light that shineth in a dark place? This passage contains words of great warning for the unprepared. The judgment mentioned for the wicked is awful. This passage also contains words of great comfort for the elect in verse 6. If it were not for the sure covenant promises we would be as the wicked. We would deserve their judgments. Celebrate this week, child of God, but celebrate Christ our Savior. Sing or read Psalter 426, especially stanzas 1, 3 and 4.

**December 21 Read Malachi 4**

The last chapter of the Old Testament contains the final written promises of Christ. Israel was about to go into four hundred years of silence before Christ made His appearance. The words we read here are truly blessed for the child of God. Those that fear His name will enjoy the healing mercies of the Sun of righteousness. There is a command found here. We must remember the laws of Moses and do them if we are to experience the benefits of Christ. From our perspective we can also see that verse five speaks of Christ’s final return on the clouds of heaven. Are we watching? Are we waiting? Sing or read Psalter 29.

**December 22 Read Luke 1:13-17**

The words of today’s passage are the fulfillment of yesterday’s. For four hundred years the faithful in Israel waited for the appearance of the forerunner. This is His announcement. To two unlikely parents comes the announcement of the birth of a son. This was not any son. This was the son who would prepare the way for the Christ. We, too, await the announcement that Christ will return. His return will not be heralded by a John the Baptist, but rather His return will be heralded by signs in nature, the world, and the church. Are you waiting anxiously even as you celebrate the birth of Christ? Sing or read Psalter 170.

**December 23 Read Luke 1:26-33**

Once more the angel Gabriel makes an appearance on earth. Once more he brings both a bewildering and joyful message. Mary at first did not understand how she could be the mother of Christ. Once it was made clear to her, she rejoices at the announcement that at last a woman in Israel would be the mother of the promised seed. That Christ is a Savior is bewildering to some today. Let us look at His birth through the eyes of faith and then respond with great joy to the wondrous things He has done for us. Sing or read Psalter 320.

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**December 24 Read Luke 1:46-55**

Mary went and spent three months with her cousin Elisabeth. What do you think these two God-fearing women talked about? Was it babies and clothes and other such things? Of course they did! But they also spent time in spiritual conversation. How were they to care for two such special babies? They knew that their sons were not ordinary children. They knew that they had special tasks. They talked as women who feared the Lord. They knew the Scriptures. How else can you explain the words of our passage today? Do you know the Scriptures well enough to understand tomorrow's importance? Sing or read Psalter 272, especially stanzas 1, 3, and 5.

**December 25 Read Matthew 1:18-25**

I am glad that you are taking time today to listen to God's word. This recounts the fulfillment of Isaiah 7:14. Christ was born from a virgin! Do you believe that? Many in the world wish to steal this wonder from us! They would have us to believe that Mary was only a young woman. But of course they wish to steal more than this wonder from us. They wish to steal the wonder of our salvation from us. After all Jesus means Jehovah Salvation! Embrace the wonder today. Give thanks for it. Do not leave Jesus in the manger. Make sure you worship Him as He was on the cross. Sing or read Psalter 47:5, 6, 7, 10, and 11.

**December 26 Read Luke 2:8-14**

The baby Jesus' birth was announced to different people as recorded in Scripture. These people were not uncles, aunts, grandparents, and other family members. Some of these people were shepherds. That these shepherds awaited the announcement, is easy to figure out. They did not mock: no, they said, "Let us now go even unto Bethlehem, and see this thing which is come to pass, which the Lord hath made known unto us." How did you receive the message of Christ's birth yesterday? How are you going to receive the good news of the gospel today in church. Will you be as anxious as the shepherds to worship? Sing or read Psalter 228.

**December 27 Read Luke 2:25-35**

How do you wait for the Lord Christ's return? Are you like Simeon, frequenting God's house and His word? Will you recognize Him even as Simeon did? What about your life? Is it in order as you await Christ's return? It was no accident that Simeon was in the temple that day. He belonged there. We must be like Simeon. This is God's commandment! Watch and be ready for the day of our Lord. Sing or read Psalter 428, especially stanzas 1, 9, and 10.

**December 28 Read Luke 2:36-39**

On top of Simeon's example comes that of Anna. Anna was a remnant of the ten lost tribes. She, too, loved the Lord her God with all of her being. She, too, frequented the house of the Lord waiting the day when the Christ would be revealed to her. I believe that this godly woman was also busy doing alms deeds in Israel because when she saw the Christ her immediate reaction was to tell others who shared her faith. What about us? Are we Simeons and Annas? Are we waiting? Do we spread the gospel to all those who wait redemption? Sing or read Psalter 195.

**December 29 Read Matthew 2:1-11**

Approximately two years after Christ's birth another group came to worship Him. These were Gentiles. These were the firstfruits of the church of the New Dispensation. They, too, had been watching. Their faith, also, was rewarded by God. They saw the star, they left their homes, and they came and worshiped the Christ. The nation of Israel did not want a savior, but God's people did. Lowly shepherds, aged saints, and Gentiles longed for their Savior with the faith of a little child. May we ask God that he give us that faith to await the second coming. Sing or read Psalter 187.

**December 30 Read John 1:29-24**

"Behold the Lamb of God which taketh away the sin of the world." This was John's message to the people around the Jordan and to all of Israel. This is the message to which we must listen. Christ the lamb who would be slain for our sins. This is the Christ of Christmas—a lamb with blood pouring from His body. This is the Christ we must worship. Why? This is the only way that our sins are removed. Thanks be to God for His unspeakable gift. Sing or read Psalter 140.

**December 31 Read John 1:43-51**

As we come to the last day of this year it is good for us to hear the words, "Follow me." Are you following Jesus day by day as you walk on this earth. Do you follow Him in what ever circumstances He has placed you? Are you going to follow Him tonight as you prepare for the Sabbath? We don't follow of ourselves. We only follow when He leads us by grace. We are commanded to follow. Are we obeying? If we are, then we will have Nathanael's reward as found in verse 31. What a glorious thing to see Christ in heaven! Let us follow Him! Sing or read Psalter 33.

# The Right And Godly View of Discipline

by Bruce Koole

## *Protestant Reformed Scholarship Essay*

**B**aptism Form, Question 3: Do you promise and intend to see these children, when come to the years of discretion (whereof you are either parent or witness), instructed and brought up in the aforesaid doctrine, or help or cause them to be instructed therein, to the utmost of your power?

If you were asked why you believe in spanking children as means of discipline, how would you answer? Generally a man tends to observe that Christians and conservative going church members tend to spank their children much more than secular parents do. This is no hard and fast rule but if surveys were done one would see that those who go to church more often will tend to spank their children more often, and those who go to church less often will spank their children less often. The general response of both spankers and nonspankers is “I love my children and I never wish to see them harmed.” It goes without saying that the Reformed Christian’s perspective on discipline always differentiates between harm and a stinging backside. My response to the Doubting-Thomas’s of spanking is that all men and Reformed Christians, especially, must believe in spanking as a means of discipline because God says so. Thus, I call your attention to the theme: The Right and Godly View of Discipline. Let us consider this theme under the three headings: 1) An example, 2) The responses, and 3) The public opinion.

### **The example**

Early morning dawns bright and glorious in the little farm town of Anywheresville, USA. It’s almost perfect. It’s not too hot and not too cold. The morning sun has just peeked over the horizon and is now warming the front room of the Jones’ house while one sunbeam manages to slowly creep its way toward the kitchen. One hears only chiming birds, crowing roosters, and somewhere in another county a methodically powerful chug-chug-chug of a John Deere tractor as it continuously turns over the Lord’s great and beautiful brown earth. But one imperfection remains because Little Johnny refuses to

drink his orange juice which he just threw a tantrum for and this was in front of the Jones’ company. Ma had hoped to thank her guests for staying the night with a good hearty farmer’s breakfast but Little Johnny’s pouting has ruined that and now Ma sets out to correct this disobedience of Little Johnny. Let’s listen in and watch a covenant parent as she rightly corrects Little Johnny.

“Johnny, Drink your orange juice.”

“JOHNNY, DRINK your orange juice.”

“NO!”

“JOHNNY, If you don’t drink your orange juice, your father will spank you. Now, DRINK.” “NO.” So Father hauls Little Johnny off to the next room and spank, spank, spank. Five minutes later Father brings a red-eyed Little Johnny back to the table.

“Now Johnny, Drink your orange juice.”

“NO!! I don’t wanna.”

“Johnny, if you don’t drink, I will spank you again. You wanted this orange juice now drink it.”

“NO!! I want water.” So Father hauls Little Johnny into the next room and SPANK, SPANK, SPANK. Once again Father and a red-eyed Little Johnny re-enter the kitchen. This scene repeats itself once more and then Little Johnny is sent to his room with the warning that he will eat no breakfast until he drinks his orange juice and learns to listen and love Father and Mother.

### **The Biblical responses to the Little Johnny example**

Now we will not overanalyze the parents’ motivations and actions in this example since this is a fictional story and the characters are fictional as well. It is sufficient to say that Ma and Father live under the doctrine of the covenant followed the way of Proverbs 29:16 “The rod and reproof give wisdom: but a child left to himself bringeth his mother to shame.”

But, an objector might ask, was it really necessary to spank Little Johnny three times? Surely one spanking would have served Father and Ma’s purposes as equally as three. The parents could have had their company drink their orange juice and then give the company their break-

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fast thus showing Little Johnny the positive benefits of drinking orange juice plus it would have shown that more people than just the parents drink orange juice. All Little Johnny was trying to do was developing his own independent persona. Because his uncool parents said yes to orange juice, he decided that he needed to say no. But now that the cool guests and the uncool parents drink orange juice perhaps Ma and Father are cool and orange juice is worthy drink for Little Johnny to consume. After all, is it not true that “a reproof entereth more into a wise man than an hundred stripes into a fool?” (Proverbs 17:10). Three spankings from Father is too much for Little Johnny to endure. Perhaps Father has forgotten about Colossians 3:21, “Fathers, provoke not your children to anger, lest they be discouraged”.

I would reply, first, that the previous story is not a fully developed allegory such that every line, every character, and every action fully and completely flows together and that in the story a multiplicity of meanings has been wound together such that a man could spend a lifetime reading the story and never fully understand all the subtle nuances of the story. If a man searches for a well-developed allegory, let him read John Bunyan’s *Pilgrim’s Progress*.

Secondly, Little Johnny is a child, not a wise man. If Little Johnny were a wise man, then the author of the preceding story would have named him Jonathan not Little Johnny. Plus Little Johnny has not come yet to his “years of discretion” and as such he acts upon impulse and not on well developed principles.

Finally, only after a man has read and applied Colossians 3:20 can he read and apply Colossians 3:21. Colossians 3:20 reads, “Children, obey your parents in all things: for this is well pleasing unto the Lord”. Let him who wrongfully and wantonly uses Colossians 3:20 also read Proverbs 13:24, “He that spareth his rod hateth his son.”

Now, sadly, the public might not agree with using so much Scripture to support spanking as discipline. Truthfully, a man can never have enough Scripture but let us consider then those who have influenced and shaped the public opinion on child discipline.

### **Those who have influenced the public opinion on spanking as discipline**

In the USA since 1945, the two most familiar names in the public conscience associated with raising up children are Dr. Benjamin Spock, M.D, and Dr. James Dobson, President of *Focus on the Family*. Dr. Dobson agrees with the Reformed Perspective on Spanking. In the *The*

*New Dare to Discipline*, Dr. Dobson writes “Children thrive best in an atmosphere of genuine love, undergirded by reasonable, consistent discipline... When properly applied, loving discipline works!... It allows the God of our ancestors to be introduced to our beloved children... As might be expected, there is a price tag on these benefits: they require courage, consistency, conviction, diligence, and enthusiastic effort” (Dobson, 7). Though he mentions love, discipline, and diligence in his introduction, he does not mention spanking as a means of discipline. He does mention it later, though, when he states, “I would suggest that most corporal punishment be finished prior to the first grade (six years old). It should taper off from there and stop when the child is between the ages of ten and twelve” (Dobson, 65).

In *Dr. Spock on Parenting*, Dr. Benjamin Spock summarizes his own position on discipline with this paragraph, “I keep mentioning the serious and quiet manner of speaking to emphasize that when parents just shout or scold or slap a child they give up their position as mature moral guides. They descend to the angry child’s level.” (Spock, 148).

In the end spanking is necessary quite simply because the Bible says so. Spare the rod, spoil the child. Do not be afraid to use it to end Little Johnny’s disobedience. Use it with love and with prayer. Spock does not speak of it, but Dobson does speaks of a righteous man’s prayer availing much and the sooner a man begins to pray for guidance in child-rearing the more God-glorifying he and his family will be. Let us remember finally Proverbs 22:15, “Foolishness is bound in the heart of a child; but the rod of correction shall drive it far from him.” But no matter how much we do, only a sovereign electing God will save us and our children in our foolishness. ❖

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King James Version of the Bible

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# Farewells

by Deane Wassink

**T**he shoreline is a place of farewells. Throughout Michigan's history water transportation has been the primary mode of long distance travel. As a result, the Great Lakes and the famous rivers that feed them have been places of many tearful farewells as loved ones departed on the water highways. I know, there were also many joyful welcomes. Nevertheless, I would like to take a little time to look at farewells.

Our modern age of travel and communication has softened the hard edge of saying good-bye. Today, a move of hundreds and even thousands of miles can be retraced in a matter of hours. Also, we can talk to our loved ones very easily via telephone and e-mail. In the recent past a move of hundreds of miles could mean that farewells were forever. When one traveled, especially on the water, many perils had to be faced. Often, it would be months before the family knew if a loved one had arrived safely. In places shipwrecks litter the floor of the Great Lakes. Also, sickness and death seem to accompany the voyages of the immigrants who traveled to America from the "Old Country."

If we let our minds eye look down the shore of Lake Michigan one hundred fifty to two hundred years ago we would have seen a far different shore. There were no gigantic jetties built by the Army Corps of Engineers to protect the primary harbors like we see in Holland, Grand Haven, Port Sheldon, etc. Instead, wooden wharves protruded into the waters of the lake wherever a stream or river made a cut through the sand dunes to make it easy to access the shoreline. In Holland, for example, the settlers first had to land on a sandbar on the shore. Then they transferred their possessions to another boat to make the journey across Macatawa Lake to get to the new settlement. It wasn't until later that a channel was dug by hand to enable boats to travel directly to Holland. I recently read an old newspaper article about a wooden wharf that collapsed, dumping about thirty people, including women and children, into the water. Everyone was rescued.

On the shore between Saugatuck and South Haven I have been working in an area called Pier Cove. There, a small stream cut through the forty feet clay cliffs to allow a road to reach the shore. A large wooden pier was built there to serve the settlers and the logging industry about two hundred years ago. A small community was started there. Today, the pier is gone. There are few signs of the community's existence. Only the locals know the history.

During this early history, the arrival of settlers to the shores of Lake Michigan meant that farewells had been said to far away family and friends that were never seen again.

In later years, around the turn of the century when resorts were in their heyday, the many visitors would arrive as strangers during the summer months. After spending time together, many friends would be made that might never be seen again. The same thing can be said of the cruise ships that were popular on the Great Lakes during this time.

We still have many farewells in our lives. We move. Friends and family move. If I think about it, I have many, many dear friends across the country and around the world that I have had the opportunity to know and love in years past. Though we keep in touch, I have not seen them for years. I miss them. I hope to see them again one day. I am sure you also miss your friends that live far away.

The most difficult "farewell" for us is death. Though our modern age has reduced the finality and pain of the farewells of travel, everyone faces the pain of the farewell of death. Sometimes death is so sudden that we cannot say goodbye. Other times, death comes slowly so that we have time to say farewell. It is only as Christians who believe in the forgiveness of sins and the resurrection of Christ that we can have comfort to know that the farewells of death are only temporary. In Glory we will see our loved ones again. Do you have that hope?

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## Sailing Home

*Some ships sail at noontday,  
Some at eventide.  
Some in gentle mooring stay,  
While at the quay reside.*

*Before the loosening of the rope,  
That holds our ships fast.  
To say a long farewell we hope,  
And want our stay to last.*

*Some it seems so quickly sail,  
Ere their stay has just begun.  
Others who are old and frail,  
Look longingly to the setting sun.*

*When my ship now moored to the pier,  
Sails past the jetty to the open sea,  
I'll miss the loved one's I hold dear,  
Yet, long for the land awaiting me.*

*With the Captain at the helm,  
Steadfast and sure, standing alone,  
Though wind and wave would overwhelm,  
Through every storm He'll bring me home.*

*When despair shakes my longing soul,  
And fear grabs from the deep,  
He sets a course around the shoal,  
In safety He my soul shall keep.*

*Someday filled with wind so sweet,  
I'll set my sails for the distant shore.  
A part of a great and mighty fleet,  
Sail home where trials will be no more. ❖*

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Our Young People's Federation

## Reasons for Preaching in a Protestant Reformed Church

by Rodney Kleyn

**W**hy preach in a Protestant Reformed Church? One of the main reasons, which especially the young male readers of the Beacon Lights ought to consider, is that the Protestant Reformed Churches (PRC) need ministers.

Looking at things numerically, we need ministers. Many of our ministers will retire from the active ministry in the next ten or so years. Not many men are graduating from our seminary for the ministry in the PRC. More and more vacancies are arising in our churches,

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both through internal growth and through the work of missions. Common sense mathematics tells us that we need ministers.

But, more importantly, the Word of God tells us that we need ministers. “The harvest,” Jesus says, “is plentiful, but the laborers are few.” We need men in the ministry because there is always a need for the preaching of the gospel. The PRC themselves need preaching. They need this in order to continue to exist. Preaching is the life-blood of the churches.

Besides this, there is a need for the preaching of the gospel in missions. Doors are opening up for our churches across the United States and across the world. Preaching on the mission field is God’s means of bringing his elect into fellowship with himself and his body, the church. Through preaching, the elect are saved.

There is one further thing that demonstrates the need for preachers. This comes close to the heart of every one of God’s people. We need preachers and preaching ourselves individually. We need to hear the preaching ourselves so that we may be saved and also might know and experience that salvation. In the preaching Christ speaks a saving word to each one of his elect, calling them by name and bringing them to a knowledge of their salvation. The preaching brings to each one of us, personally, a knowledge of our sin and guilt and a consciousness of our need for a savior. The preaching presents Christ to us as the only way of salvation, and by that preaching, with the work of the Spirit, Christ calls each one of his own from darkness and into life and fellowship with himself. Each one of us, as children of God, experiences. We know the need for preaching and preachers from our own lives. Without preaching, we would never be called from our sin and would never come to know Christ as our Savior, but rather, would be left in the darkness of our sins. We need preaching because we are sinners who need to be saved.

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Why the rigorous eight years of preparation in the PRC when one could easily spend three years at some Bible institute and become a preacher in some other denomination that is far less demanding of its ministers?

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The young men of our churches should consider studying for the ministry and becoming ministers in our PRC because we need ministers. Before they do this, however, they will also have to ask themselves the question, “Why the PRC?” Why not somewhere else? Why the rigorous eight years of preparation in the PRC when one could easily spend three years at some Bible institute and become a preacher in some other denomination that is far less demanding of its ministers? The answer to this is that in the PRC we teach that God is God. This fundamental truth pervades all our theology, and the maintenance of this doctrine in our churches should motivate a sincere reformed man, desiring to be a minister of the word, to want to be a minister in the PRC.

In the life of the Christian, God must be God. It must be God who the Christian sees as the Lord of his life, so that his life consists in obedience to God’s will. The Christian must see also that God is the one who saves him and brings him from darkness to light. The Christian must live and use all that he has only for the glory of God. If this is the Christian life that a Reformed man who wants to be a minister lives, then he will want to study for the ministry in the PRC, and will want to preach in the PRC. In the Reformed Faith, as taught in the PRC, the truth that God is God is maintained as nowhere else.

The truth that God is God is maintained in the worship in the PRC. This becomes evident in the way we worship. We worship only as God has commanded in his word, and central to that worship is the preaching. In the preaching God speaks to us in Christ and through the preacher. The preaching then is authoritative and effectual. Not many churches maintain such a view of worship and preaching today. Instead, a man gets up on the pulpit and “shares” a few of his thoughts and the people, by their own free will, have the ability and right to accept or reject what he says. Such a style of preaching should be totally unattractive to a Christian man desiring to be a minister. Instead, he should want to preach the Word of God as found in the Scriptures as the authoritative and powerful Word of God to his church, and not as man’s word. He should not want to bring his own word.

The PRC teach that God is God in salvation, that is, that God is sovereign. This doctrine has been fought for throughout the New Testament era. Many others teach that in salvation God is not sovereign. Pelagianism, Roman Catholicism, Arminianism, and many in Reformed churches teach that man has a part alongside God in saving himself. Over against this, the PRC maintain faith-

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fully that God is sovereign in salvation. This is clear from our history, especially in 1953 where we fought the heresy of conditions unto salvation. We maintain that only God can save and that man is helpless to save himself. This should make a sincere Christian young man, desiring to be a minister of the Word, want to preach in the PRC. Preaching that is a mere offer, or that is an invitation left up to the sinner to accept or reject, should be wholly unattractive to such a man. If that is all preaching is, then why not just become a car salesman?

The PRC teach that God is God in his covenant relations to his people. The covenant is unilateral, established by God in Christ with his elect. The other view is that the covenant is broader in its scope than just for the elect, and that real participation in that covenant is conditioned on man's faith. Thus, the truth that God is God is denied. Instead, man becomes a covenant maker alongside of God. This view of the covenant is not attractive to the Christian young man seeking the ministry. It destroys the richness of the friendship that is enjoyed by the believer with his God. It makes that friendship contingent on the sinner's will so that the covenant of friendship between God and his people is not everlasting, but prone to collapse. We preach an eternal and everlasting covenant between God and his elect in Christ which can never fail because it is established by God without any contingency on the will of the sinner. In this connection, practically, the PRC teach a view of marriage that fits

with this proper view of the covenant. Marriage is a life-long, unconditional, and thus unbreakable bond. So with God's covenant with us.

Practically, that is, in the application of preaching to the lives of God's people, the PRC maintain that God is God. We insist on the antithesis of the church over against the world. The reason for this is that as those redeemed by God from sin, we belong to him and so must follow him in all our walk. God is God in the life of the believer. This makes the preaching of the Christian life attractive to the one who desires to be a minister. He tells God's people who they, by the grace of God, are. They are God's redeemed people. Then he tells them how God wants them to live in gratitude to him for that redemption. When he preaches in this way, the exhortations and admonitions which he brings are never his own word, but are the word of God for his people. This kind of preaching should be far more attractive than the moralistic style of so many today.

Why preach in the PRC?

Because the harvest is plenteous and the laborers few.

Because God is God in the PRC. ❖

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*Rev. Rodney Kleyn is Pastor of Trinity Protestant Reformed Church in Hudsonville, Michigan. This essay was written for the Protestant Reformed Scholarship when he was a seminary student.*

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## Book Review

# Essential Truths

reviewed by Jeff Kalsbeek

*Essential Truths of the Christian Faith*

By R.C. Sproul

Paperback 302 pages

Tyndale House Publishers, Inc. 1998

In this book, R.C. Sproul seeks to familiarize people with the "key concepts" of a sound theology. He states in the book's Preface, "This is not a textbook

of formal theology. It is a layperson's introduction to the essential doctrines of Christianity." He points out that the importance of having a sound theology is that one's life is shaped by one's ideas. Having corrupt ideas will lead to a corrupt life. The introduction of the book is devoted to explaining ten reasons for the great ignorance of this theology by the masses of Christianity. Christian

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“faith”, it is said, has had little impact on society because of this lack.

Sproul goes about this stated purpose by separating the material into 102 separate chapters. Each of the “key concepts” is briefly set forth in, what he calls, “bite-sized” portions. No one chapter is more than 4 pages long, and this is presumably so that it can be read easily and be less daunting to the average reader. At the end of each chapter there is a list of Bible passages for further reference, and a summary of what was explained in the specific chapter.

There are ten main sections in the book, and the 102 “key concepts” serve to further develop these ten areas. The first five sections (Ch. 1-43) explain the key beliefs concerning God, Jesus Christ, and the Holy Spirit. Sections six and seven (Ch. 44-74) explain the Fall and Salvation, section eight the Church, section nine Spirituality, and section ten the End Times.

It seems as if the author’s target readership is people who have a minimal knowledge of the Christian faith, and need to be catechized on the more in-depth truths (No concept discussed in the book has not been taught to the young person in the PRC). For such an unschooled reader, he or she will be able to read and comprehend much of the information quite easily, but will come across some hard-to-understand doctrines that are mixed in throughout the body of the text. Since the book is normally uncomplicated and easy reading, a problem can arise. When a more difficult section comes up, the reader will be inclined to take R.C. Sproul’s word for it, that what he is saying must be true, without studying carefully. This “problem” is also what makes the book appealing in our society that desires a spoon-fed theology. The book is geared to this mentality which knows nothing of the God who “rewards them that diligently seek him”.

To “take R.C. Sproul’s word for it” on certain essential truths, would be a huge mistake. The author’s assertions are not tied to the reformed confessions nor based on careful exegesis of scripture. This leads to the use of new terms that sometimes tend to confuse things, or to professing things without any proof. For example, when writing about total depravity in Chapter 52, he uses terms such as “utter depravity” and “radical corruption.” In Chapter 89 he states, “Prayer is to be addressed to God alone, either to God as Triune or to the distinct persons of the Godhead.” There is no explanation or reference given to prove this remark, Sproul just continues as if it is unquestionable. The chapter on Marriage and

Divorce (95) is also void of any scriptural exegesis, thus of any proof.

If R.C. Sproul did base his writing on scripture and the confessions, he would be in big trouble in that he would be found to contradict them. In chapter 66 entitled “Justification by Faith”, Sproul asserts “...we are declared...to be righteous when God imputes the righteousness of Christ to our account. The necessary condition for this is faith.” The Canons of Dordt say that faith is a gift, not a condition: “The good pleasure of God is the sole cause of this gracious election; which doth not consist herein, that out of all possible qualities and actions of men God has chosen some as a condition of salvation” (First Head, Art.10a). Even though Sproul quotes periodically from the reformed confessions, he does so only to show what the Christian church has traditionally believed, not as a basis of belief.

Although one should not read this book strictly to be “catechized,” this does not mean that it has no value for the young person. This is a valuable tool in which we are confronted with how shallow our knowledge of God really is. Have you ever read something that you knew was wrong but were unable to refute thoroughly or convincingly? This book leaves one, at times, uncertain whether something written is true or false, thus an incentive to develop in the truth.

Some of the teachings in the book, the reformed young person will immediately perceive to be questionable. Man, for instance, is given way too much credit. Chapter 45 states that God’s image in man was merely marred at the Fall, and proof of this is said to be that man retained his humanity. Chapter 43 says that sanctification is a “cooperative venture.” In chapter 59, human beings are said to have the “ability” to resist the outward call of the gospel. Inclusive language is used many times in the book so that “humankind” is used often instead of “man” or “mankind,” and believers are said to have an “old person” and a “new person” (ch. 47). When this is done in today’s books, the impression is always left that the author imagines himself wiser than God.

The chapter on the assurance of one’s salvation (71) is of no help at all to the believer who struggles with this. We are told to look at ourselves to see if we have any genuine love for, or true obedience to God. There is no instruction to look for Christ’s work in oneself, such as, sorrow for sin, a sincere delight in God, or hatred for the wicked.

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R.C. Sproul teaches the amillennial view of the return of Christ in chapter 98. He states, “His coming in this manner will be attended by the general resurrection, the final judgment, and the end of the world.” Since the writing of this book, Sproul seems to have changed his mind regarding this, in that he has endorsed a book which maintains the heresy of preterism, *The Parousia*, written by James Stuart Russell (See *Christ’s Spiritual Kingdom* Prof. D. Engelsma, Ch.21). In chapter 102, Hell is presented as a real place. By today’s standard, it is commendable to read of a popular teacher who still holds to this—unless he has changed his mind on this too.

The best description of this book is “ambiguous”. Although there are certainly times when Sproul states something clearly, for the most part, much of what he says can be interpreted more than one way. The reason for this vagueness is not the short treatment given each “essential truth,” because we all know that the truth can be explained precisely in very few words. Sproul wants it this way, and is content to set forth more than one interpretation of a point of doctrine, and then leave it open for the reader to make the judgment. This he does,

for example when writing on the truth of Predestination and Reprobation in Chapter 58. Sproul gives two possible explanations for the sense in which God “hated” Esau, one a lie, and the other the truth (though ambiguously stated), and then writes, “let the reader decide.” For a minister of the gospel to do this is inexcusable. Let the reader decide? This was supposed to be one of the “Essential Truths” of Christianity! A messenger of the King had better know his Lord’s message and distinguish it from the false. A shepherd of the sheep had better love his Lord and his Lord’s sheep enough to strengthen them against the wolves that threaten. A pastor and teacher had better know and love the truth so he is able and willing to set it forth distinctly and apply it to the saints’ lives in every area. To invite the parishioners to make their own decisions on essential truths of the Christian faith, thereby implying that it is unimportant, is treachery. ❖

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

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## Church History

It is our hope that the readers of this publication grow in their appreciation of the unique and precious heritage we find in the Protestant Reformed Churches. We have decided to reprint a series of articles that shed some new light upon the wonderful treasure that we experience today in our covenant families, the catechism room, and the church sanctuary on the Lord’s Day. How were those truths that set us apart as PR’s developed? Why were they developed as we have them today? Who were those men who labored to give this treasure to us today? We are confident that this series will unveil some things that will deepen our appreciation for what we have. The articles are slightly edited versions of the original series which was first published in November of 1975.

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# George M. Ophoff (1)

by Prof. Herman Hanko

**T**he history of the church of Jesus Christ on earth is the history of particular men. This is not because the church belongs to men, or, less yet, because the affairs of the church are in the hands and under the control of men. Christ is the head of His church. From His position in glory, He executes all the will of God. He does this sovereignly so that nothing at all happens without His will and outside His powerful control. In the words of our own precious Heidelberg Catechism, Christ “from the beginning to the end of the world, gathers, defends, and preserves to Himself by His spirit and word, out of the whole human race, a church chosen to everlasting life” (Heidelberg Catechism, L.D. 21, Q&A 54). All that happens to the church is the work of Christ.

But Christ uses men. There is something miraculous about this. For the men whom Christ uses are nothing else but mere men. They are men of distinct personalities with individual foibles and quirks of character. They are men who are not always the most pleasant and agreeable. They are, above all, sinful men. Apart from the work of grace, they are as sinful as any men that ever lived. Their regeneration and conversion and sanctification, while it makes them men of God and saints in the church, nevertheless does not free them yet from the same sinful nature which is the burden of all God’s people. Even in the work of the church, they are not perfect. They have only a small beginning of the new obedience. They also confess, along with the rest of God’s people, that their best works are corrupted and polluted by sin. Their sins enter into their work—also their work within the church of Jesus Christ. They do the work given them, but they do this work with all their shortcomings, all their weaknesses, all their transgressions of the holy law of God, a necessary part of their task. It would seem that the work of the church could never be carried out by such men. It would seem that sinful people would always spoil the work of Christ and make that work non-effective. For, after all, the work of the gathering, defense and preservation of the church is a most holy work. It involves nothing less than the salvation of the elect

and redeemed people of God. It involves nothing less than the preservation of the cause of Christ and His truth in the world. It involves the shepherdizing of Christ’s sheep. It involves the preservation of these sheep and their spiritual preparation for the perfection of heaven. Such a holy task, it would seem, cannot be carried on by sinful men.

Yet it is. This is a most astonishing fact. For the work which Christ himself performs is sometimes performed in spite of these sinful men; it is often performed in such a way that even their sins are turned for good in the cause of the church; it is always performed through them.

But we must not be misled into thinking that therefore, after all, the work of the church is a cooperative venture between Christ and the men who labor on behalf of the cause of Christ. It is not that way. These very men are Christ’s instruments. They are completely Christ’s instruments. They are such, often beyond their own ability to understand this. Luther, e.g., often spoke of being carried forward by a power greater than himself, which he could not even understand. So it always is. These men are chosen by God already from all eternity. They are chosen as distinct individuals with their own peculiar characters and personalities, with their own individual gifts and powers. It is determined for them by God from all eternity, that they should make their appearance on the scene of history at God’s appointed time and in God’s appointed place and in the midst of circumstances which are sovereignly determined by Him Who rules over all. They are saved by sovereign grace. They are appointed to a place in the church by divine appointment. They are assigned their work by Christ with an assignment which cannot be rejected, which must be and is carried out; for they are impelled in all their labors by the power of the Lord and King of the church.

There is a wisdom about this which defies understanding. God knows what kind of man is needed for what kind of task in any given moment in history. He knows this perfectly and never makes any mistakes. So, at the proper time in history, at exactly the correct mo-

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**God knows what kind of man  
is needed for what kind of  
task in any given moment in  
history.**

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ment in the ongoing stream of the church's life, God places men who are, in all their spiritual, physical and psychological makeup, exactly fitted for precisely the work the Lord wants them to do. They are the right men at the right moment—not by fortuitous fate, but by wisdom, a wisdom that transcends our earthly understanding.

To do any reading at all in the history of the church of Christ is to be impressed with the perfect accuracy of the judgment of God in this respect. To mention but a few of those whom history cherishes and whose memories have been kept alive in the minds and hearts of the saints: there was the aged Polycarp who literally loved not his life unto death in the fierce days of persecution by Rome's Caesars. There was the noble Athanasius who suffered exile no less than five times, who sometimes seemed to stand all alone in the battle of the truth when the divinity of our Lord Jesus Christ was repeatedly attacked. There was Augustine, brought out of immorality and pagan religion, to combat the horrible heresy of Palagius and to lay the groundwork of the salvation of

the elect by sovereign grace. There was Gottschalk who raised a lonely voice of protest against Roman Catholic error as he rotted in prison in defense of the truth of double predestination. And who of us does not know of Luther, of Calvin, of Knox, and all the other reformers who stood against the might of Rome to bring the church back to the truth of the Scriptures?

But each was a different kind of man; and yet, just because he was different, he was perfectly suited for the work which had been assigned to him. The work which each did was beyond doubt a work which could not possibly have been done without Christ Who does His work in gathering, defending and preserving His church against the gates of hell. These men were sinners. They themselves would be the first to confess it. They were also heroes of faith. They were stalwart men of God. They feared no one but God Himself. They were courageous with a courage which staggers the imagination. They loved the truth with a love which led them into the gravest dangers which men could face. They looked at these dangers with unflinching face. They would not compromise nor sacrifice the truth. They would not turn back in the day of battle. They accomplished the impossible. Because they feared God, they feared no man. And they did this because Christ uses men. The history of the church is the history of such men. ❖

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*Prof. Hanks is a professor emeritus of the Protestant Reformed Seminary.*

Dear Beacon Lights readers,

I made a very small, yet very big, mistake. In my article on the third commandment, as it appeared in the October 2002 issue of the Beacon Lights, this sentence is found: "For only those whose punishment Christ bore, will not be held guiltless any longer - Christ bore our guilt for us." Rather than reading "guiltless" we should read "guilty." God will see no guilt in those, whose guilt Christ bore.

The mistake is small, in the sense that it is a matter of a few letters. Yet it is very big, in that

it inaccurately conveyed the truth of the gospel, to the point of denying the gospel. Not to be held guiltless is to be declared guilty, to be held accountable for our sin, and to be subjected to God's infinite and just wrath on account of our sin. Such will NEVER happen to those for whom Christ died! God will not hold us guilty! We will be guiltless! That is the gospel.

I thank the reader who privately drew my attention to this error, and pray that none were misled by it.

Rev. Doug Kuiper



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## Church News

### BAPTISMS

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

*Mark 16:16*

The sacrament of Holy Baptism was administered to:  
Brett Marvin, son of Mr. & Mrs. Marvin Gritters—Byron Center, MI  
Jillian Rose, daughter of Mr. & Mrs. Jeff VanBaren—Faith, MI  
Jodi Faye, daughter of Mr. & Mrs. Greg Holstege—Faith, MI  
Caleb James, son of Mr. & Mrs. Coleman—Grace, MI  
Annika Joy, daughter of Mr. & Mrs. Matt Van Overloop—Holland, MI  
Chet Allen, son of Mr. & Mrs. Chuck Doezema—Holland, MI  
Stephanie Jean, daughter of Mr. & Mrs. Steve Langerak—Hope, MI  
Zachary James, son of Mr. & Mrs. Brad Schwartz—Hope, MI  
Allison Lynnae, daughter of Mr. & Mrs. Jeffrey Terpstra—Hope, MI  
Braxton Wayne, son of Mr. & Mrs. Evan Brummel—Hull, IA  
Jonah Matthew, son of Mr. & Mrs. Matt Medema—Peace, IL  
Micah David, son of Mr. & Mrs. Brian Bleyenbergh—Redlands, CA  
Alissa Kay, daughter of Mr. & Mrs. Nathan Pipe—Southeast, MI

### CONFESSIONS OF FAITH

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

*Romans 10:10*

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

Tim Elzinga—Byron Center, MI  
B.J. Mowery—Doon, IA  
Seth TenBroeke—Holland, MI  
Kelly Booth—Hudsonville, MI  
Nathan Engelsma—Hudsonville, MI  
George Kamps—Hudsonville, MI  
Tim Kortering—Hudsonville, MI  
Kim Westing—Hudsonville, MI  
Pam Westing—Hudsonville, MI  
Melissa Venema—Hudsonville, MI  
David Vermeer—Hull, IA  
Kevin Westra—Hull, IA  
Caitlin Looyenga—Peace, IL  
Michael Vermeer—Peace, IL

### MARRIAGES

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

*Matthew 19:5*

United in the bond of Holy Matrimony were:  
Mr. Andy Kalsbeek and Miss Olivia Boczar—Hope, MI  
Mr. Jeremy Langerak and Miss Kelly Rus—Hope, MI