

Beacon Lights

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*For we are his workmanship,
created in Christ Jesus unto
good works, which God hath
before ordained that we
should walk in them.*

Ephesians 2:10

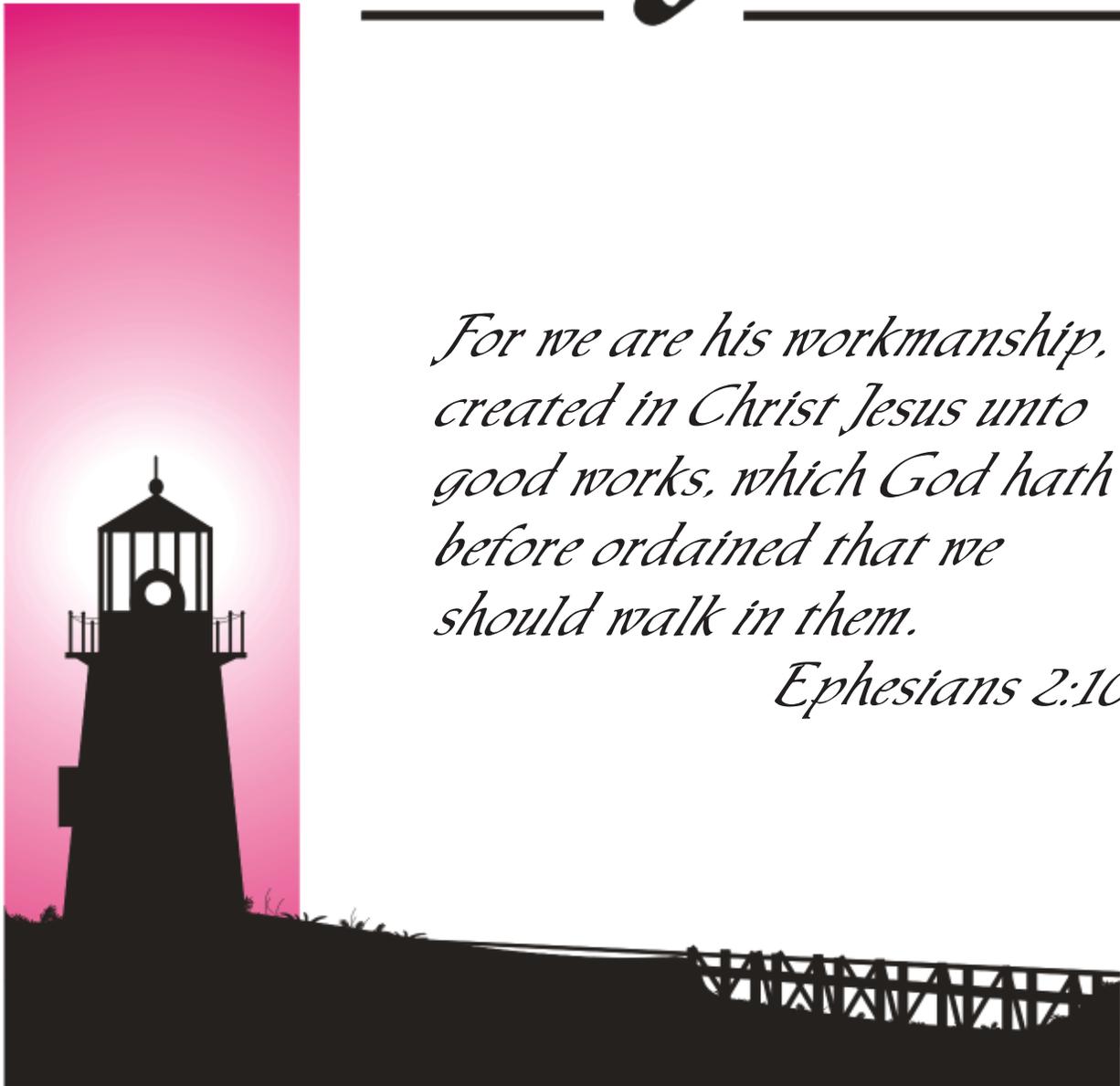


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Good Works (1)

by Aaron J. Cleveland



The topic of “good works” is very broad. There are many aspects of good works that can be discussed. Certain questions involving good works are: What exactly are good works? Who are able to perform good works? Who or what is the source of good works? What is the purpose of good works? Are good works meritorious? Are good works necessary? All of these are profitable questions about good works, and to them we must know the answers.

In the following paragraphs, however, we will concentrate mainly on the first question: What are good works? In answering this question correctly, we will have to touch briefly on the other questions, but we will try to stick with the task of defining what good works are.

One important truth that we must understand as we begin our discussion of good works, is that it is impossible for a person to be idle. We are always involved in performing an outward act with our body, speaking, seeing, hearing, tasting, touching, or smelling. And even if our body is not active, or we are not speaking, our mind is active. Never is there a time when we are not thinking, willing, planning, or desiring. Even when we are asleep, our mind continues to work.

It is accurate to say that we are always working, even when our bodies are not physically involved. This is true in a spiritual sense. Every act we perform with our bodies, every word we speak, and every thought we have is a work. When Jesus hung motionless on the cross, He was actively involved in the most important work there was, loving the Father perfectly while suffering His eternal wrath for our sins.

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speak, and every thought we
have is a work.**

In a spiritual sense, all of our thoughts, words, and deeds are works. As children of God, there are two kinds of works which we perform. There are good works and there are evil works. There is no gray area between the two, or works that we may call neutral. Evil works are those works which we perform according to our old man of sin. They are works which are performed contrary to God’s standard of what a good

work is. Good works are those works which we perform according to our new man in Christ. They are performed according to the standard of a good work established by God.

The God-established standard of a good work we find recorded in His Word. A good summary of this three-fold standard is found in the Heidelberg Catechism, Lord’s Day 33, Q. & A. 91. Here the Catechism asks, “But what are good works? Only those which proceed from a true faith, are performed according to the law of God, and to His glory; and not such as are founded on our imaginations, or the institutions of men.”

We can see from the Catechism’s definition that the standard for good works is spiritual and concerns inward matters of the heart. We must remember that all of our outward actions and all of our speech have their beginnings within us. Jesus explained this truth to his disciples, especially as it related to sinful activity in Mark 7:21-23 where we read, “For from within, out of the heart of men, proceed evil thoughts, adulteries, fornications, murders, thefts, covetousness, wickedness, deceit, lasciviousness, an evil eye, blasphemy, pride, foolishness: all these evil things come from within, and defile the man.”

Therefore, when we discuss good works, we must speak of them as they originate in the heart. We must not concern ourselves merely with the outward actions or the audible words we speak. God judges

the thoughts and the intents of our hearts. Remember Ananias and Sappira (Acts 5:1-11). From their outward actions and words it appeared as though they were performing a good work very pleasing in the eyes of God and of great benefit to the body of Christ. However, after reading the passage, it becomes obvious that their seemingly good actions were motivated by hearts filled with deceit. And this is what Peter sets forth in his dealings with them. Peter's response to Ananias (vs. 5) is this, "Why hast thou conceived this thing in thine heart? Thou hast not lied unto men, but unto God." God looks deeply into our hearts and He judges every thought and intent.

Let us take a closer look at the definition of good works given to us by the Catechism. First of all, in order for a work to be good, it must proceed from a "true faith." Faith is a "certain knowledge" that all of God's Word is truth. It is also an "assured confidence" in our hearts that our sins are forgiven, that we are righteous before God, and that all of our salvation is graciously given us from God only because of Christ's work (Lord's Day 7, Heidelberg Catechism). Faith is also the living bond which unites us to Christ. This aspect of faith is important in our discussion of good works, for we cannot perform good works unless we are ingrafted into Christ by a true faith.

Christ is the source of every good work we perform. We read in Ephesians 2:10 that we are "created in Christ Jesus unto good works, which God hath before ordained that we should walk in them." The ability to walk in good works is God's gift to us in Christ. Our good works are really Christ's work in and through us. It is only because we are connected to Christ by faith that we are able to do good in the eyes of God.

It is important to note that all that which is not performed by faith is sin. Those who are not ingrafted into Christ by a true faith cannot perform good works. Christ is the source of every good work and no good thing is done apart from a living connection to Him. "Whatsoever is not of faith is sin" (Romans 14:23b).

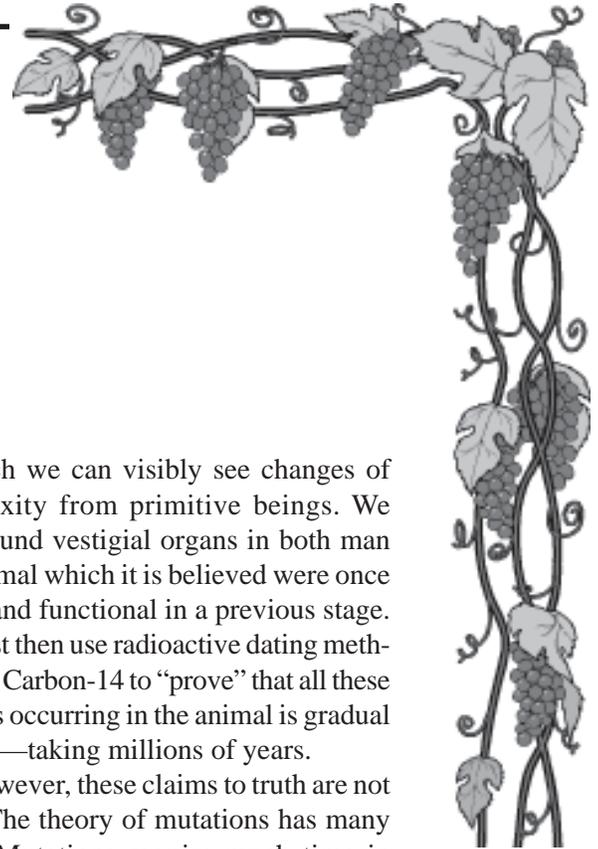
**Our good works are
really Christ's work in and
through us.**

Secondly, a work is good only if it is performed according to the law of God. This too concerns matters of the heart. While it may seem that this is merely an external requirement, we must remember that God forbids even the smallest thought within us that is contrary to any of His commandments.

Thirdly, a work is good only if it is performed to the glory of God. Who can know this but God alone? It is Christ, and all those united by faith to Christ, who desires the glory of God.

The Catechism is also careful to point out that works "founded on our imaginations, or the institutions of men" are not good. This is a very convicting phrase, for how quick we are to spend much time designing elaborate schemes of how we might bring honor to ourselves apart from God's way for us. We very easily find ourselves sinfully setting up our own standard for what a good work is, and then praising ourselves that we have attained to that standard and that we are deserving of the praise of other men and of God. We may also be tempted to make up our own standard of good works based upon the sinful behavior of others. When we judge ourselves to have excelled that sinful behavior, we declare our works to be good and pleasing to God and we condemn the brother. The Catechism identifies this sinful behavior for what it is.

There is more to be discussed in relation to how good works are performed. We must notice that all of our labors, even the most mundane, have a spiritual character to them, and they all must be done according to God's will. We must see how it is that we know God's will for us and how He gives us a particular station and calling in this life in which we are to perform His will in all good works. Finally, we will look at various examples of this from God's Word and from our own lives. This we will discuss next time, Lord willing. ❖



Evolution

by Lisa Poortinga

The question of the origin of man is not a new question. Scientists define it like this: “Man is the result of a purposeless and a natural process that did not have him in mind.” These people believe our existence is just a cosmic accident. Christians, on the other hand, have purpose in life because we believe that life is not just an accident but we are governed by the one and only almighty, all powerful God who created us.

There are many concepts and scientific observations woven into the theory of evolution which seem to prove evolution. Evolution is not merely “descent with modification.” First, scientists must assume that the creatures that evolve change into “improved” beings. Mutations occur within the cells which produce better species and will ultimately aid in this process. In order for one thing to survive, they must possess the mindset of survival of the fittest. Only the strongest will succeed. Secondly, common DNA and physical comparisons suggest that they have come from the same origin. Samples found of extremely different animals were found to have the same embryonic form as other animals. Third, the fossil record appears to be a documented history of organic evolution

in which we can visibly see changes of complexity from primitive beings. We have found vestigial organs in both man and animal which it is believed were once useful and functional in a previous stage. Scientist then use radioactive dating methods like Carbon-14 to “prove” that all these changes occurring in the animal is gradual process—taking millions of years.

However, these claims to truth are not valid. The theory of mutations has many flaws. Mutations require much time in order to dramatically change one organism to another. Most importantly, mutations 99.9% of the time are harmful, usually fatal to the organism. So in order for millions of mutations to occur, the chances are pretty minimal for any progress to occur. Scientists have yet to find a real example of a beneficial mutation in order to state their case upon it. The fossil record also isn’t the best evidence for evolution. There are gaps in between essential groups of plants and animals that are left unexplained. We still haven’t found a fossil between a monkey and a human. Radioactive dating is not always accurate either.

For example, a sample of the lava rock which was formed by the 1980’s eruption of Mt. St. Helens was found to be an amazing 2.8 million years old. Oddly enough, in fact this rock was formed less than 20 years prior.

In order to fully grasp evolution, we must realize that evolution is not just a theory but a religion. Belief in evolution requires certain assumptions that cannot be proven scientifically. The thought process behind it is much deeper than we think. This worldview is based on having no absolutes and that human reason, through experience, will determine the truth. That is the fundamental error in evolution. It amazes me how scientists go out of their way trying to prove something they know is false. Even Darwin him-

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self was having some problems coming up with a theory for what he was noticing. No one was still physically seeing the animals evolve into other animals but things in nature were fighting for their very existence. Through reading literature by another man, Malthus, Darwin found his theory. "It at once struck me that under these circumstances, favorable variations would tend to be preserved and unfavorable one to be destroyed. The result of this would be the formation of new species. Here, then, I had at last got a theory by which to work."

True Christians know that there is only one, true knowledge which is found in the Bible. The Bible clearly shows us in the first two chapters of Genesis that the "evening and the morning were the first day." This doesn't mean six unspecified periods of time as theistic evolutionists think. No other place in the Bible did "evening and morning" imply anything other than a twenty-four hour day.

God created all things, not just a bunch of cells that would evolve into this universe. Genesis says that God saw all that He had made and it was very good. This implies that it was perfect and complete. Evolution also states that these changes continue to occur. Though evolution,

it is claimed, has no goal in mind, the evolutionist believes that things are constantly getting better. So would that then be saying that God is a liar because His creation wasn't complete? By no means. Matthew.19:17 says, "There is none good but one, that is God." We see also in God's attributes of being, loving, gracious and full of mercy that the method of survival of the fittest does not fit with Who God is. Would God use the method of eliminating the weak when all that He created was good? No. For God is a God of love and that is the God revealed in scripture.

Finally we must realize that even though most scientists believe in evolution, that doesn't mean that science teaches evolution. Evolution is a theory—a continually tested and accepted hypothesis, it is not truth. So it is easy to see that the only way to have purpose and dignity in life is to believe in creation. Not only does it provide our lives with order, but it gives us comfort and hope in a risen Christ. ❖

Lisa is a student at Heritage Christian High School in South Holland, Illinois. She wrote this persuasive paper as an English assignment.

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The Fourth Man

A Story from the Time of the Afscheiding

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

Chapter 17

An Unexpected Escort

The Secession was spreading and matters that had to do with the relationships between the Secessionists and the authorities were coming to a head. A small congregation of Secessionists had been organized in Hilversum, the small village where the events of this book take place. A Rev. Buddingh, a rather eccentric and old-fashioned minister, but a faithful preacher of the Scriptures, had offered to come to Hilversum to preach. The Secessionists knew it would provoke deeper anger among the people, but were determined to have him anyway. The last chapter ended with Rev. Buddingh and his escort arriving on the outskirts of Hilversum. They were traveling at night to avoid detection.

That same night in the thick brush near the tavern of Rademaker, just outside the built-up area of Hilversum, a boy was to be found squatting. He was staring steadily with wide eyes at the tavern where a slender figure moved back and forth in front of the windows.

Suddenly the spying figure disappeared. That Koen certainly had a lot of nerve! Now he was even hiding behind the Rademaker tavern!¹

Quite naturally the events of the previous day passed once more before the mind of Maarten, as he too was hiding in the shrubbery along the road.²

How had all this come about?

Koen had once again come at noon to play with Maarten, just as on the previous Saturday. Albert Van Vliet, Thijs' uncle, had just brought his beehives and placed them in their enclosure. The insects were released on the white beauty of the blooming buckwheat. Breathlessly the boys had regarded the fascinating sight.

The old beekeeper had stayed for dinner, and then a strange thing began to happen.

Father had taken the two boys to the threshing floor and there told them that Maarten had to go to bed. Dumbfounded they had stared at father. Go to bed at 6:00 on this beautiful Saturday evening? Indignantly Maarten had kicked off his wooden shoes and Koen had disappointedly taken his cap to leave. However, then came the surprise: "Koen is going to stay here to sleep," Father said.

Suddenly, they realized that something special was going to happen. With eager attention they had looked at Maarten's father, whose face, while cheerful, was also solemn.

"Have you both kept secret the proposal of Reverend Buddingh?" he asked.

They had done that, but it had been difficult.

"Well, the plan will be carried out. Tonight he is coming to our town. We will try to bring him safely and unseen to the farm of Gijsbert Haan. Therefore you boys will first sleep a few hours, for..." here the farmer paused a moment; "you may take part in the doings tonight."

In vain they had begged for more information.

"You will hear more tonight! Maarten, to bed! Now!"

"Father, may Koen sleep in the spare room?"

"No, the uncle of Thijs Van Vliet will sleep there. He is also eager to hear the minister tomorrow. Koen will go to the haymow. There is still a bit of hay in it."

"Father, then may I also sleep in the haymow?"

"Not a chance, in that case you would get no sleep at all."

At 11:30 father had to shake both boys awake. Half asleep they had dressed and Father had led them along all sorts of small lanes to Koen's house. There they met Koen's parents and Gijsbert Haan. In the quiet darkness of the little rear garden—the children who slept in the small one-room dwelling might not be awakened—they received their instructions. Their hearts pounded when they realized that they would be the first guard post that the wagon would pass when it came from Bunschoten.³

"Your fathers and I are getting too old to creep between the bushes," the elder had said with a grin, adding

in an earnest note, "You understand, boys, tonight this is no game, this is serious! I almost said 'bitterly serious,' but the cause of the gospel is never bitter." He had shook hands with both of them.

They succeeded in reaching the tavern of Rademaker without being seen and now they had already laid more than an hour in the quiet darkness waiting for the mysterious wagon.

One thing had gradually made the boys uneasy: even though it was long past midnight all the inhabitants of the tavern were obviously not sleeping. A pale ray of light still shone out from the rear. Finally Koen had sneaked across the road to check on it.

These events explained the presence of these two boys at Rademaker's Tavern so late at night.



Suddenly Maarten scared out of his reveries. Koen was coming back!

Cautiously he slipped back across the road and immediately bent down with his mate.

"So!?" whispered Maarten tensely, "Could you see anything?"

"No, the shutters were closely drawn. But they are not sleeping. I plainly heard talking."

"That doesn't sound good to me," Maarten said slowly after a minute or so. "The time for closing is surely long past."

"Why man, so far away from the town they are not so particular," answered the weaver's boy in a worldly-wise tone. "Did you think that De Nooij or Van Huizen ever..."

Suddenly Koen was silent for Maarten gave him a hard pinch on his arm. In deathly silence they leaned against each other. Then Koen also picked up the sound that the sharper ears of the farmer boy had already heard: the dull stamping of horses' hooves.

"Let's go," hissed Koen, for whom thinking and doing were the same. "There they are!" Followed by Maarten he crept to the edge of the bushes.

Suddenly the loud and piercing neighing of a horse echoed through the quiet night. The boys, who were ready to make their appearance, were filled with terror. But soon they had the feeling of sinking through the ground as the door of the tavern burst open and a figure in uniform went up the road with determined footsteps.

It was the hussar sergeant Manus Rebel.



Badly scared, Jan Hartog, the driver of the carriage, tugged at the reins. After the neighing of one of the horses, the dark figure of Manus suddenly appeared.

At once two well-trained hands brought the animals to a stop, and through the darkness there echoed a dusky voice "Halt, ruffraff of wretched flayers!"⁴

The driver of the carriage saw the shining of the uniform buttons, and his first thought was that he was dealing with a county constable.

"We have no forbidden goods with us, constable, we are merely traveling."

"Tell that to the cat!" was the sarcastic rejoinder of the non-commissioned officer, who inwardly chuckled at the thought of being taken for a county constable. He let go of the horses and with a rumble in his throat, he stepped away from the wagon. Only then did he spy the other two occupants. Dumbfounded he stared at Reverend Buddingh, whose three-cornered hat was plainly visible over against the moonlit sky. "What in the world do I see now? In what regiment do you serve?"

The next moment Jan Hartog sprang from the wagon, hitting the ground hard. The quick-tempered Bunschoten man had discovered that the man who waylaid them was only a hussar, and now faced him with his colossal figure.

"Who gives you the right to hold us up, inflated bagpipe? Get out of our way and sleep off your drunken stupor."

Manus Rebel, who was on the verge of dropping the matter, flared up in a rage. Instructor Beuker climbed from the wagon, for it appeared that the two men were about to engage in a fistfight.

Before he could come between them, however, the bushes stirred. Two boyish figures sprang into the road. Maarten and Koen did not want to be left out of it any longer.

Maarten gathered up all his courage, stepped up to the gigantic driver and said in an undertone "Zuiderzee." That was the password that Gijsbert Haan had given to them. Gradually Jan Hartog opened his fists and silently stepped back.

In the meantime Koen had approached the old hussar, saying "You keep your hands at home, Rebel, this is an honest matter." The hussar took hold of the lean chap and swung him around as if he were a spinning top, so that he could see the face of the boy in the moonlight.

"Speak up, mate, who do you belong to? Your face looks familiar to me."

“My father is known as Evert Splint,” answered the boy without any evidence of nervousness. “And now please let the minister go on his way.”

“Evert Splint, aha,” grunted the sergeant, who remembered that memorable Saturday night when he had inadvertently kept Koen’s father from returning to his former addiction to alcohol.

Instructor Beuker and Jan Hartog, after a few whispered words between them, had climbed back on the wagon, and Maarten sat next to the driver. “Come on, Koen, we’re going now!” he called.

Koen did not need that repeated. Swiftly he scrambled up into the carriage.

Manus Rebel stood dazed, then it penetrated his mind what this was all about.

“You folks are completely out of your minds to bring a secession minister to Hilversum. If Constable De Nooij sees it...”

For the first time Reverend Buddingh raised his voice, “My life is in God’s hand, friend. Maybe you will now step aside?”

Manus Rebel was quiet for a moment, then answered in a much softer voice, “Must I then be pushed aside like a clown? But that is not my make-up! True, I have involved myself with that which is not my business,” he continued. “But now that I know what is happening, I would gladly take part in it. I offer to you to take you safely into the town. Agreed?”

For a split second Jan Hartog glanced back, but he only saw the others silently nod in agreement. “Settled, sergeant! And forget what I said about sleeping off your drunken stupor.”

Manus Rebel, flattered by the fact that he was addressed according to his former rank, shook the enormous hand of the driver, an action which forced him with difficulty to suppress a cry. Then he settled the horses. “They are good animals,” he said with approval, “I have sat on much worse than that.” Soon the wagon rattled on, while Rebel walked ahead of the horses.

“Why were you so late at the Rademaker tavern?” asked Koen with the boldness of a weaver boy. Maarten colored as he thought: That Koen dares to say anything.

“When you are reminiscing about the past it sometimes becomes a bit late, sir cavalry captain,” replied Rebel. “And now keep your beak shut, for we are right by the toll house.”

They had now approached the place where their road met the road to Utrecht. At this intersection was a toll-house with two tolls in order to cover the cost of the

upkeep of both roads. The surroundings of the small building began to become visible in the darkness. All at once Jan Hartog tugged at the reins, while Maarten and Koen in surprise called out “The toll beam is closed!”⁵⁵

“You were to keep your windbag shut!” snarled Manus Rebel in an undertone. Then without hesitancy he pushed up the heavy beam. Alas, this did not happen quietly: the hinges screamed for oil. Almost at once a window opened and an angry voice cried: “What is all the racket about in the middle of the night? What do you want?”

Manus Rebel did not let this bother him. With a voice as if he were bellowing at a regiment, he responded, “Man, slam your big hay barn shut, this is an important transport.”

The toll boss saw vaguely a uniform and chose the wisest way out. Angrily he pulled the window closed, and the wagon continued on its way.

Both boys shook with laughter, but Reverend Buddingh and instructor Beuker were offended by the unmannerly action of the old sergeant. “Be not too hasty in your judgment,” whispered Jan Hartog. “He will presently be forced to prove his worth.”

He was right. While the wagon slowly rocked along the dark Veeneind into Hilversum the old sleuthhound proved his value. Nothing seemed to escape his experienced ears and eyes. One moment he grasped the horses by the bridle. They all were as quiet as a mouse, although no one detected any danger.

But after about a half minute a drunkard’s song pierced the night “At Uitert, at Uitert, at Uitert on the Do.” A ghastly figure staggered from between the trees on the way to a worker’s shack. To his surprise Koen recognized Lammert Vlaanderen, a former mate of his father. If he should have discovered them...

The drunken weaver disappeared behind his little house. They could still plainly hear his chanting, but also the “hearty” welcome he received from his wife.

After fully five minutes Manus Rebel risked moving again. He went to the driver’s seat and whispered to the boys, “Where exactly are you going?”

Koen leaned toward the old codger, “To the farm of Gijsbert Haan. But we must first park the wagon in the tavern of Huig Corton on the Baarnse Lane. My father and Jan Donker will be on guard at the end of the Veeneind!”

“Order accepted,” muttered the sergeant, well satisfied. “Forward to the Baarnse Lane!”

Fifteen minutes later, after parking the carriage, the men and the boys walked over the Groest like a row of geese, right alongside of the houses and farmers. Manus Rebel, who was at the end of the line, let his eyes rest on the slightly bent figure of the minister, who walked ahead of him. A figure on the other side escaped his view. That dark figure withdrew as fast as he could fly and from another vantage point watched the strange procession.

A minute later the goal was reached. The men slipped through the side door into Gijsbert Haan's home.

As the last one, Manus Rebel closed the door behind him and put a fresh plug of tobacco behind his teeth. "Operation accomplished. No enemy has seen us," he muttered with satisfaction.

But in that respect he was mistaken. ❖

¹ We have met Koen Splint before. He had very little education because he had to work in a weaver's mill to help support his family. His family had begun to worship with the Se-cessionists, but Koen himself was a bit of a rascal. He was a good friend of Maarten.

² These events were described in chapter 15.

³ Bunschoten was the village from which Rev. Buddingh was being fetched.

⁴ The reader will remember that it was common in those days for scoundrels to go about during the night, finding and butchering dead animals and selling the meat the next day in the markets.

⁵ A beam was lowered across the road to prevent any from entering the road until he had paid his toll.

Gem of the Month

The Cross

by Tom Cammenga

*My Savior bore His wooden cross,
Up Calvary's dismal hill.
Without a word, without complaint,
Quietly accepting the Father's will.*

*The crushing weight, the cuts and bruises,
Abused, rejected, condemned to die.
Bleeding from his crown of thorns,
His hurt beyond my mortal mind.*

*Each step He took was filled with pain,
Each breath a ragged gasp.
His hurt and sorrow mounting,
Each moment, till the last.*

*Soldiers screaming, women weeping,
Crowds gathering in His blood-stained wake.
Not to praise or honor him,
But for his life to take.*

*At last the heavy weight was gone,
Yet, still, more suffering.
The soldiers seized my Lord, my King,
And nailed him to that cursed tree.*

*His precious blood ran down the cross,
And gathered on the dusty ground.
His Father had forsaken him,
No room on earth was found.*

*Through tear-filled eyes His mother Mary watched,
Recalling words from long ago.
Spoken by old Simeon,
That a sword would pierce her soul.*

*And finally when all was done,
He bowed His head and died.
Yet not in hopelessness or loss,
For soon He would arise.*

*He conquered death, the grave, and sin,
The devil and all his hosts.
He crushed the head of the hideous beast,
And brought to naught his evil boasts.*

*The agony and pain he bore,
To save a wretch like me.
I scarce can understand it,
Yet by grace I do believe.*

Watching Daily At My Gates

by Chester Hunter
reprinted from April 1993 *Beacon Lights*

April 1 Read Psalm 119:1-8, 11

Do you have God's Word hidden in your hearts? Is it hidden there to keep you from sin? That was the Psalmist's confession in verse 11. Many of us have learned large portions of Scripture. Why? Was it because we wanted to be armed against Satan when he came to beguile us into sin? We still must hide away God's Word in our hearts. The best time to memorize is when a person is young. The best time to hide God's Word in our hearts is now. Sing or read Psalter 322.

April 2 Read I Peter 3:8-16

Now that God's Word is hid in your heart, are you ready to give an answer to anyone who asks after your salvation? God promises His people the Spirit and with that promise assures them that they need not fear when their faith is called in question. But He also gives the command to learn the Word. Without the Scripture in our hearts we will not be able to answer one question. Even Christ made Satan flee by saying, "It is written..." Sing or read Psalter 332, especially stanzas 3 and 4.

April 3 Read Revelation 10:8-11

John was instructed to take a little book, eat it, and use it. That little book is God's Word. We, too, must take the little book, eat it, and use it. Eating it is to take it into our being. We must diligently study the Word of God. It must become part of us. Then we must use it. We must not confine our use to just those we call our friends. We must use it all the time. As churches we must "prophesy again before many peoples, and nations, and tongues and kings." As individuals we must support the work of missions in whatever way God has given us. Sing or read Psalter 177.

April 4 Read Zechariah 9:9-17

Palm Sunday. A day quite often misunderstood. We often see a triumphal entry. But Christ as He left the city in the days to come wept over that picture of the Church. "Blessed is he that cometh in the name of the Lord" are great words, but they must be shouted with the cross in view. Most of the throng that day looked for a saviour not a Saviour. How about us? Do we look back on our Saviour? Do we look ahead for His return? Sing or read Psalter 318.

April 5 Read Matthew 21:17-22

The last week of Christ's life is often called the Passion week. Quite a fitting name when you consider how much Christ loved us. We also see how much the Father loves us when we see how much His Son suffered in these days. Look at the great gift of faith given us in these verses. We must exercise that faith as the last verse teaches. We pray faithful prayers; the Father hears; He answers us. What a gift! This is what was in the manger on Christmas. Sing or read Psalter 185, especially stanzas 1-4.

April 6 Read Matthew 21:28-32

Which son are we? Many of us have been privileged to have been brought up by God-fearing parents, to have attended a church faithful to the Word, and to have had the blessing of faithful covenant instruction. What is our answer to all of that? Do we hear the Word of God with our lips but not with our hearts? Or are we the son who with all of those privileges needs the grace of God to prick our hearts so that we repent and do the will of the Father? Sing or read Psalter 111, especially stanza 4.

April 7 Read Mark 13:28-37

On Tuesday evening and into Wednesday, Jesus and His disciples rested on the Mount of Olives. Jesus taught them about His return at the end of time. The disciples needed this as they still were looking for a return of the earthly kingdom of the Jews. We, too, need this. We must know that Christ will return, this earthly kingdom will pass away, and He will establish the heavenly kingdom of the new Jerusalem. That is why we must constantly watch and pray. Sing or read Psalter 29.

April 8 Read John 15:1-10

On Thursday, Jesus continued to fulfill the signs of the Old Testament as He and the disciples celebrated the feast of the Passover. He also showed the Church how to celebrate His death in the New Dispensation. He gave to us the sacrament of communion. In the verses you read, we see that we have a calling to bear fruit because of the work of Christ in us. The summary of that calling is in verses 8-10. Read those verses again and ponder their meaning. Sing or read Psalter 368 especially stanzas 3-5.

April 9 Read Luke 22:54-62

One of the saddest episodes of Good Friday is Peter's denial. But yet it is one of the very necessary episodes of that day. Peter and the Church had to learn that "it is not of him that willeth, nor of him that runneth, but of God that sheweth mercy." We must know that God's way is always best. Peter wept because he saw his dreadful sin that day. Do we weep when we see how our sins caused Christ to suffer the hellish agonies of the cross? Sing or read Psalter 47, especially stanzas 1, 4, 8 and 9.

April 10 Read I Corinthians 15:50-58

Jesus was in the grave over the Jew's Sabbath. His closest followers must have experienced the longest Sabbath ever. Why? Because they had forgotten the Word that He would arise after three days. Instead of that Sabbath being a day of joyful anticipation, it became one of extreme sorrow. What about us? Do we wait for His return with joyful anticipation? Are we waiting for Him to return on the clouds of heaven? Do we abound in the work of the Lord knowing that we have the victory? I hope so! Sing or read Psalter 407.

April 11 Read Mark 16:1-8

Is there power in the cross? Can we find forgiveness through Christ's sacrifice? Peter did. First the angels made special mention that Peter was to be notified of

the resurrection. Then Christ Himself appeared to Peter that day. This was all part of God's preparing Peter for the work he would do in the church. That message is just as personal to us as it was to Peter. Christ comes to us with forgiveness. Are we thankful for that forgiveness? Do we show it in our lives? Sing or read Psalter 47, especially stanzas 10 and 11.

April 12 Read Luke 24:13-33

This long passage has long been one of my favorite Easter stories. I picked it as our last meditation on the Passion Week because of a theme I have been developing this month. That theme is knowing God's Word. Notice the travelers were discussing the things that had happened in the past few days. True they needed the Word of Christ to open their eyes. We do too. We must study the Bible, but we need Him to open our eyes to its beauties. We have His Word. Study that Word, pray for divine guidance in that study, and then discuss the things that have happened and will happen with fellow believers. Sing or read Psalter 333.

April 13 Read Song of Solomon 2:10-17

This short book is a love song between a man and his wife. Solomon wrote it looking at the relationship between Christ and the Church. Those of us in the northern states look at this time of the year for the promise of spring and summer. Quite often we use verses 11-13 as verses to help us look at spring. If we stop there, we miss a great deal. We must see in the beauty of spring the beauty of Christ and the Church. God speaks to us in creation. We must listen to Him and respond. Sing or read Psalter 125, especially stanzas 1-3 and 5.

April 14 Read II John

Love, we know, is powerful. We also know that the world spends a lot of time talking about love. The world claims that we can cure many of our problems if we would just love better. God has given us a command to love as well. In Christ's summary of the law we are told to love God and our neighbor. Here in II John we are given the definition of the only love we are to have. Love is to walk after God's commandments. We can start with the Ten Commandments and then see how God has given commands for our whole life. If we truly love God and our neighbor, we will keep all of God's commandments. Sing or read Psalter 109 especially stanza 3.

April 15 Read Mark 12:12-17

For those of us who reside in the United States, the date of April 15 has unpleasant connotations. It shouldn't. Even if we have to pay taxes, we should see that this is a way to obey a commandment of God. Christ taught His Church to render unto Caesar that which is Caesar's. You have the same thought in Romans 13. Our cheerful obedience to our government is our obedience to the Fifth Commandment. Our cheerful obedience to government is our cheerful obedience to God. Sing or read Psalter 69, especially stanzas 1-3; and 6.

April 16 Read Isaiah 48:12-22

Once again it is Friday night. Traditionally this is the night that young people go with their friends and enjoy themselves after a week of work or school. It is good that we stop and examine the activities we have planned for this evening. First we should examine the who. Who are we going with? Who is your date tonight? Then we should examine the what. What are we going to do with our friends tonight? Read verse 18 again; then read verse 22. Must we change our plans to make them God-glorifying? Sing or read Psalter 335.

April 17 Read Ephesians 6:10-18

In Chapter 5 Paul tells the Church to be followers of Christ. He then goes on with practical applications of that truth. He concludes the epistle with the words of verse 10, "Finally, my brethren, be strong in the Lord, and in the power of his might." We must be strong in the Lord. Our own strength and the strength of others will fail us. Only in the strength of the Lord will we be able to stand. We must use His power. As we worship tomorrow let us listen to the command of Christ to be strong in the Lord in whatever we do and wherever God places us. Sing or Read Psalter 403, especially stanza 3.

April 18 Read I Peter 5:5-11

Do you know your enemy? I don't mean the person with whom you have had words or even blows. He is not your enemy. Our enemy is Satan. Satan has been the enemy of God ever since he was cast from heaven. Satan has been the enemy of the Church ever since the fall when God spoke the words of Genesis 3:15. After identifying the enemy we must fight the enemy. Peter tells us that we must be watchful and see what the enemy is doing. Paul, in Ephesians 6, tells us that the enemy is spiritual and requires that type of a fight. Paul also tells us that the enemy is tricky. Did you notice

him next to you in church to day? Sing or read Psalter 99.

April 19 Read John 19:33-38

The question of Pilate, "What is truth?" has been asked throughout the centuries. The child of God knows that God is truth. It is one of His attributes. Because God is truth, He imparts that truth unto His people. The highest form of that truth is that salvation is from Him alone through Christ. Jesus makes that clear in verse 37. Therefore to fight against the devil whose basic attribute is the lie, we must gird ourselves with truth. Sing or read Psalter 63, especially stanza 4.

April 20 Read Psalm 106:1-8

Part of the Roman soldier's armor was a metal breastplate designed to ward off the enemies' arrows and sword thrust. It protected the heart. A Christian also must don a breastplate to protect the heart. This is the breastplate of righteousness. This is a characteristic that we can only receive from God. To be righteous means that we walk in God's laws. To be righteous means that we will dedicate our lives to loving God and the neighbor. When we do that, Satan's arrows will fall harmlessly to the ground. Sing or read Psalter 290, especially stanzas 1-5.

April 21 Read Isaiah 52: 7-12

Any foot soldier from whatever historical era was concerned for his feet. His feet had to carry him from place to place as he hunted the enemy and then could not fail him as he faced the enemy. The child of God has footwear that will never fail him. We must have our feet shod with the gospel of peace. The gospel is the good news of Christ. That gospel is the news that our God reigns. We must study that gospel and we must take care that we see that it is spread to the four corners of the earth. Let not this part of our armor become weak, or else Satan will attack at this vulnerable spot. Sing or read Psalter 264, especially stanzas 1-3.

April 22 Read Hebrews 11:1-6

Ephesians 6 says, "Above all taking the shield of faith." Hebrews 11 defines faith clearly and understandably. Faith will give us the victory over Satan's fiery darts. Satan has many weapons. He will not hesitate to use any and all of them against you. Can you block them with the shield of faith? Your faith must be living. It is not the faith of dead doctrine, but rather it is a living faith that unites you to Christ. It must be evident in your life. By that evident faith you can please God as verse 6 of our text states. Please God and fight Sa-

tan; what a great combination. Sing or read Psalter 36, especially stanzas 1-3.

April 23 Read I Thessalonians 5:5-11

Salvation! What a beautiful idea. As we look around us, we can see sin and its effects. We can also see that, left unchecked, sin will drag us down to its level and Satan then will take us to hell. God has given us a helmet of salvation. It is a special helmet. This helmet is only for soldiers of the cross. It is not a helmet of our making; it is the helmet merited by the death of Christ on the cross. Paul put it on when he said that for the hope of salvation he was imprisoned. Take the helmet of salvation, put it on, and withstand all of Satan's blows. Sing or read Psalter 317 especially stanzas 2 and 4.

April 24 Read I Samuel 17:42-47

The fight of faith includes offense as well as defense. We are not only equipped with weapons to block Satan's blows, but we are also given the offensive weapon of the Word of God. Many places in Scripture exhort us to use the Word of God. As we well know, Christ himself fought off Satan with the words, "It is written." First we must learn that Word, and then we must use it. David understood that as he faced Goliath. The Church must be admonished to pick up the sword of the Spirit and use it every day. Sing or read Psalter 420, especially stanzas 1 and 6.

April 25 Read Ephesians 6:10-18

I wanted us to reread the words we have been considering the past several days. I especially wanted us to consider the words of verse 18. We cannot fight Satan unless we come to God in prayer. Again we can see in Christ an example to follow. In the garden of Gethsemane, He prayed to His Father for aid in His last battle on this earth. His final words were, "Thy will be done." As we enter the house of prayer today, let us pray for strength to always be fighting, but also for strength to always be praying. Sing or read Psalter 34, especially stanzas 1, 2 and 10.

April 26 Read Romans 8:31-39

Every child of God should spend time examining Romans 8. The verses you read form a summary of the chapter. What a beautiful comfort! "If God be for us, who can be against us?!" What can get in the way of knowing His fellowship? As we live in this world of sin and strife are we persuaded that nothing can separate us from the love of God? True, our sins do rise up against us, but God will show us mercy and take them

all away. If our sins are covered, need we fear any other enemies? Sing or read Psalter 431, especially stanzas 1 and 3.

April 27 Read Hosea 4:1-7

What a dreadful thing when God comes to His Church and tells them that they are destroyed for lack of knowledge. Israel's leaders of old have had to face that denunciation of God. Leaders of the Church today will also have to answer to that question. Fathers will you be guilty of not leading your children to knowledge? Children and young people are you guilty of not learning the knowledge of Jehovah? God gives us many ways to obtain His knowledge. Are we using them? Sing or read Psalter 324.

April 28 Read Obadiah 17-21

The book of Obadiah is full of judgment upon the wicked nation of Edom for persecuting the church. But it is also full of comfort for the child of God as he realizes that God will bring judgment upon the wicked through the church. We see in verse 17 the deliverance from the wicked but also deliverance from our sins. We see this because there can only be holiness where there is no sin. According to the last verse, Christ's kingdom is coming. It is not earthly but heavenly. Sing or read Psalter 432, especially stanzas 1 and 4.

April 29 Read III John 1-8

Every father, mother, grandparent, minister, elder, and teacher love to confess the words of verse four. They do that not because they are boasting in their work of teaching the truth to those whom God has given them. They do it because God's truth is followed and loved. Young people are you allowing good reports to be heard in the ears of those who teach and have taught you truth? If the people of the first sentence have joy, then also God in heaven has joy in your walk in His truth. Sing or read Psalter 311, especially stanzas 1, 4 and 5.

April 30 Read Micah 4:5-8

What a confession of faith we have in verse 5. "We will walk in the name of the LORD our God for ever and ever." As we close another month and find ourselves nearer to Christ's return, let this be on our lips. Let us walk in the name of Jehovah our covenant God. Times will become harder for Christians physically; we can make them easier spiritually by walking in the name of our God. Christ is coming: let us walk in His name for ever. Sing or read Psalter 53.

Worldly Music

by Milissa Van Baren

The topic of worldly music can be a rather touchy subject especially among the youth of today! I almost hesitate to write on this, but if I am to follow the series of articles that have been written and the theme that I have been following, this can't be left out. More importantly, I should not be scared to write on this because we are called to be bold in speech and not afraid to proclaim the gospel.

As I stated in my first article, music surrounds us on every side! It is constantly tempting us. Leading us in the wrong paths most of the time. Worldly music is something we must try to avoid. Yet we are all so drawn to it! Should we be? Is it something we as Christians should be spending our time with? We should seriously consider our answers to these and many other questions regarding music in the light of holy Scripture. We must always ask the question: Does it glorify God? Or can we glorify God through this music even though it was written for evil purposes?

What you listen to is your business but you must always remember—*you* will be held accountable in the end for the music that you listen to. Is that a type of thing that you wanted heaped on your head in the end days? Young people of God and fellow Christians, please take these all into serious consideration as you turn on your radio or pop in your next CD.

This is a hard, hard article for me to write on because I too am drawn to music that I probably should not be listening to. So, I know exactly where most of you are coming from. I also know the dangers that are available out there too! I am here to warn you and by God's grace, may your conscious be pricked as is mine! I cannot prick your hearts, only God can. In this article, I'm not going to go into specifics about this music being right or that being wrong, etc. I just want you seriously to consider the different types of music and what you listen too, and examine it in the light of Scripture. We could probably find something wrong with all types of music, but we need not go into that now.

I often ask myself, why am I drawn to worldly music? Asking myself that question leads me to think more

and more about music. Well, why are other young people and why am I drawn to the worldly music. Is it the beat? To a certain extent that is true. Is it catchy? In some ways. So what is the heart of the reason? Why are we all attracted to that music? As you may have noticed, the music used in the festivals of the Old Testament people was attractive at that time. It had a beat and was catchy. Yet, it would probably not be considered catchy or attractive in the same way as the worldly music of today. The same is true for that of the Renaissance and Reformation music. This is also true of the music of our grandparents and parents.

Let us consider the music itself. The festival music of the Old Testament most certainly would not be on the top hit list today. This holds true for Beethoven and the Beach Boys too! Why? Notice how the music gradually got worse! This, I believe points us to the devil. In each age and era, the devil had to find things that were more and more attractive for the Youth of the day. Things got "boring" for that of the world. So, things had to progress from there. The devil tempted the people and brought with him more evil music to embrace. The world readily accepted this. The church soon afterwards followed in the world's footsteps. Why? One big reason for this is peer pressure. The worldly views and music surround us on every side by means of movies and Hollywood. Young people are constantly looking to Hollywood and what it is doing. It is not just the "beat" or the "catchy tunes." It is peer pressure.

I don't think that we can leave it at that either, though! Another reason we are so influenced by worldly music is the old man of sin in us. He wants to lead us astray. He wants us to depart from doing good and pursue evil. The old man of sin makes the things of the world "look" good. So, we must be careful. Let us pray that God give us a life with the new man in us and peel off the old man of sin! It is a hard, hard thing to do! Especially if we are attracted to the music so much! Yet, with Christ at our side, we are able to do that. What a wonderful thought!

So with that thought in mind, let us test the music. Is it something that you should be listening to? Is it something that appeals to your old man of sin? Is it something you listen to “cause everyone else does?” Then maybe you shouldn’t be listening to it! Most importantly, does it and can you glorify God through it? If not, then you should probably consider changing your music selection. A hard thing to do. Yes! Yet life is short. Do you want to be spending it not glorifying God for all the things He has done for you? I would hope not. Young people, persevere in the faith. Go against the wiles of the

devil. Look to God for the faith and help you need. Psalm 25 is a good passage to remember and look at when considering these things. From this Psalm Psalter number 65 is taken which reads, “Grace and Truth shall mark the way, where the Lord His own will lead, If His word they still obey, and His testimonies heed.” So fellow young people, as you examine the type of music you listen to, let grace and truth mark the way! ❖

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

Pastor Profile

Rev. James Slopsema

edited by Kris Moelker

On December 31, 1947, Rev. James Slopsema was born in Grand Rapids, Michigan. His parents are George and Dorothy Slopsema.

Growing up in Grand Rapids, Rev. Slopsema attended Adams Street Christian School and Grand Rapids Christian High School. Covenant Christian High School did not exist yet. After high school, he attended Grand Valley State University for one year and then transferred to Calvin College.

As a teenager, Rev. Slopsema experienced peer pressure in a positive sense. He lived in a neighborhood of Christian families. The peer pressure at that time in his life was to godliness. This is the kind of peer pressure which should be promoted among young people today. Grand Rapids Christian High School was so big (550 students were in his class) that no one felt pressured to conform to anything. You could always find a group that had the same values as you did.

As he was growing up, Rev. Slopsema’s hobbies included basketball and softball. Now he enjoys walking, riding his bicycle and reading.

While Rev. Slopsema was in junior high, he had a close neighbor his age who talked about becoming a minister. This boy would even make “sermons” and preach them to his younger siblings. This made Rev. Slopsema think that a minister was the last thing he wanted to be. This attitude was reinforced in him by the fact that school was a struggle, but things changed in

high school. He got good grades and became interested in going to college. His goal was to become a school-teacher, but more and more his desire to become a minister came to the foreground. After his first year of college at Grand Valley State University, he became convinced of the call of the ministry and switched to Calvin College. His family and peers were very supportive when they knew of his desire to enter seminary.

Rev. Slopsema’s most memorable event during his years in seminary was the first time he preached in the churches. There were a number of vacancies in our churches when he entered the seminary. Consequently, he began preaching in our churches after only one practice preaching sermon in seminary. With one sermon each, he and Seminarian Ron Van Overloop and their wives traveled to South Holland, Illinois. The two seminarians each preached once in South Holland and Oaklawn.

On June 24, 1969, Rev. Slopsema married Joan Jansen. The Lord has given them a happy marriage. They have also been blessed with 9 children and 9 grandchildren and are looking forward to more of these little blessings in the future.

After graduation from seminary, Rev. Slopsema was ordained in 1974. His first charge was in Edgerton, Minnesota. He labored in Edgerton until 1982, when the Lord called him to go to Randolph, Wisconsin. In 1986, the Lord sent him to Grand Rapids, Michigan, to begin his

labors in Hope Church. He was pastor of Hope Church until 1995 when he was led by the Lord to his present charge in First Church in Grand Rapids, Michigan.

Regarding his most memorable experiences with teaching young children catechism, Rev. Slopsema remembers a reaction of a student while he was teaching the beginner's class. He was teaching them that God promised Abraham that his seed would number as many as the stars in the heavens and the sand by the seashore. He asked the students whether they could count the stars in the heavens and the sand by the seashore. No one could. Then one boy who came from a large family had a concerned look in his eyes and blurted out, "I hope we don't get that many children. We already have ten children at our house and there's no more room."

One of the most rewarding things for Rev. Slopsema to witness in the life of the church during his ministry is seeing children and young people he has taught in catechism grow up in the Lord, confess their faith, marry in the Lord and bring up their children in the fear of the Lord.

Regarding the controversies that our churches have faced during Rev. Slopsema's ministry, they have centered around baptism on the mission field, marriage and the display of a cross in the sanctuary. He was involved

in all three. He is impressed with how our churches were able to handle these matters Biblically and for the most part in a brotherly way. This brought unity to the churches instead of splitting the churches apart.

Rev. Slopsema has this advice for men who are considering the ministry to be their calling: "First, don't be afraid that you won't be able to do the work. If the Lord calls you, He will certainly equip you. Secondly, the qualifications for the ministry are above all spiritual. Intellect isn't everything. Finally, study the Bible and read theological works as much as you can. You will need this for the ministry."

Concerning the changes he would like to see in the thinking, attitudes and behavior of the young people, Rev. Slopsema says he would like to see them be more willing and ready to speak about spiritual things, especially their faith, both to each other and to those outside the household of faith.

It is encouraging for Rev. Slopsema to see that our young people for the most part are concerned about what is right and seek to do it. They are also concerned for each other. ❖

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

2002 PRYP Convention

August 12-16—Epworth Forest Conference Center—Webster Lake—North Webster, Indiana. The camp is in northern Indiana near Goshen and about 130 miles from Grand Rapids.

Theme: "Youth, Examples of Godliness"

Text: I Timothy 4:12, "Let no man despise thy youth; but be thou an example of the believers, in word, in conversation, in charity, in spirit, in faith, in purity."

Theme Song: Psalter #322 all 4 verses

Speakers: Rev. Gritters, Rev. Haak, and Rev. Terpstra

Pre-convention Singpiration: Sunday, August 11, 2002

The camp is located on Webster Lake, which is over 80 acres in size. There will be boat docks available for our use as well as some or all of the following:

Water skiing, two full courts for basketball, 60 acres of woods with hiking trails, swimming in the camp's private beach area, two courts for sand volleyball, two tennis courts, two softball fields, soccer, indoor game room, row boats & kayaks, horse shoes, frisbee golf course, low ropes course.

Here is the web site from which the young people can receive additional information.

<http://www.georgetown-prc.org/>

The Portrait of a Christian in the World

by Lisa Baldwin

“**T**he Christians...dwell in their own native land, but as strangers. They take part in all things as citizens; and suffer all things as foreigners. They marry like all others; they have children; but they do not cast away their offspring. They have the table in common, but not wives. They are flesh, but they do not live after the flesh. They live upon the earth, but are citizens of Heaven. They obey the existing laws, and excel the laws by their lives. They love all and are persecuted by all. They are unknown, and yet they are condemned. They are killed and made alive. They are poor and make many rich.... They do good and are punished as evil-doers. When punished, they rejoice, as being made alive.” Quoted from Philip Schaff, *History of the Christian Church: Volume 1*.

In the past, present, and future, Christians have been, are being, and will be persecuted. Even in persecution Christians are called to be joyful. In Heaven, Christians will be exalted for the persecution they have gone through. We also have comfort while we are on earth that we can call out to God and know that He hears and answers our prayers. Christians are also commanded to be different than the world. Christians’ differences should not be limited to just beliefs, but should extend into all areas of a Christians’ lifestyle.

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Christians will always be persecuted. However, we should make it our goal that “We do good and are punished as evil-doers. When punished, we rejoice, as being made alive.” In all our persecution, whether it be verbal, physical, or emotional, we should rejoice and

continue to do good. Philippians 4:4 says, “Rejoice in the Lord always: and again I say rejoice.” When we die, we will be blessed for the trials that we have gone through. Matthew 5:11-12 says, “Blessed are ye, when men shall revile you, and persecute you, and shall say all manner of evil against you falsely for my sake. Rejoice, and be exceeding glad: for great is your reward in heaven: for so persecuted they the prophets which were before you.” When we die we will have the greatest reward. Paul realized this in jail when he was writing Philippians. Chapter 1 verses 21 and 23 say, “For to me to live is Christ and to die is gain...For I am in a strait betwixt two, having a desire to depart, and to be with Christ, which is far better.”

The church will always be persecuted. It may not be as severe as execution, as in the current situation in China, but Christians will always be despised. Even now, in the United States, Christians are persecuted by ridiculing, restrictions on our beliefs, and by being taught false religion and atheism, without the right to teach Christianity as the truth, in the public school system. Christians will always be persecuted because the world hates believers. Ultimately the world hates believers because the world hates Christ. Luke 21:16-17 says, “And ye shall be betrayed both by parents, and brethren, and kinfolks, and friends; and some of you shall they cause to be put to death. And ye shall be hated of all men for my name’s sake.”

“They live upon the earth, but are citizens of heaven.” As citizens of heaven, we have rights, privileges, and responsibilities. Christians have an amazing blessing by being able to have fellowship with God through prayer. He will always hear our requests, and only God can send us true comfort and peace. Another blessing that we have as Christians is strength from Christ. Philippians 4:13 says, “I can do all things through Christ which strengtheneth me.” As citizens of heaven our hope should not be on earth, but in Heaven. Philippians 3:20-21 says, “For our conversation is in heaven; from whence also

we look for the Saviour, the Lord Jesus Christ: “Who shall change our vile body, that it may be fashioned like unto his glorious body, according to the working whereby he is able even to subdue all things un to himself.” By looking to heaven, our life on earth should be different than that of the secular world.

“The Christians...dwell in their own native land, but as strangers.... They marry like all others; they have children: but they do not cast away their offspring. They have the table in common, but not wives. They are flesh, but they do not live after the flesh....They obey the existing laws, and excel the laws by their lives.” This observation by a non-believer about Christians should be true in our lives. Those points are part of our calling as Christians. We are charged to obey God’s commands and be separate from the world, along with other things. 1 John 2:15-17 says, “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. For all that is in the world, the lust of the flesh, and the lust of the eyes, and the

pride of life, is not of the Father, but is of the world. And the world passeth away, and the lust thereof: but he that doeth the will of God abideth forever.” As Christians, we should not be living our life for the present, but the future in heaven. We are to be separate from the world in many, many aspects, this being just one of them. The world should be able to see a difference in a Christian’s life in their actions, obedience to laws, and care for heavenly things over earthly things.

The world will always hate Christians because the world hates the Lord Jesus Christ. Christians will always be persecuted, but God gives us the strength to endure and comfort in knowledge of heaven and the things to come. Christians should be different than the world, and should separate themselves. The world should also see a difference in a Christian’s life. ❖

Lisa is an eighth grade student at Covenant Day School in Charlotte, North Carolina. She wrote this paper for Bible class.

Where We Stand

The Wonder of Christ’s Coming

by Rev. Ronald Hanko

Reprinted from the Loveland PRC newsletter.

We should never forget that the coming of Christ at the end of the world is a wonder and a miracle—indeed the last this world shall ever see. It is a work of God and therefore wonderful in our eyes and something that transcends our understanding. In fact, all that belongs to the end of the world is a wonder-work of God, a miracle.

The signs of Christ’s coming, the resurrection of the dead, the catching up the saints to be with Christ, the destruction of the old earth and heavens by fire, the final judgment and the glorification of believers, all belong to those things which are wholly unexplainable in terms of what is natural and earthly. They all belong to the realm of the supernatural, and are therefore received only by faith.

There are various Scripture passages that make it clear that this is true of the coming of Christ. For one

thing, Revelation 1:7 testifies of the fact that “every eye shall see him, and they also which pierced him” (cf. also Matt. 24:27, 30). Not only does this indicate that the general resurrection will have already taken place when Christ returns, but it shows that the coming of Christ is a miraculous work of God.

How it will be possible for every eye to see Him when He appears it is impossible to say, but we have no doubt that the Word of God speaks truly. Indeed, every eye *must* see Him, for He comes as the revelation of God, both for salvation and judgment. Every creature, living and dead, will be judged and so saved or damned in relation to *Him!*

Another passage which makes it clear that the coming of Christ is a miraculous and wonderful work of God Almighty is II Thessalonians 2:8, which speaks of the fact that the man of sin, the Wicked One, shall be destroyed by the very brightness of the coming of Christ.

Again, it is difficult to know exactly how we are to understand this, but it nevertheless reminds us of the fact that the coming of Christ is no natural event.

The coming of Christ will be wonderful in another sense, however, that is, it will be the delight and joy of God's people (Rev. 22:20) and the terror of the wicked (Rev. 6:15-17). That it will be the fulfillment of all our hopes is marvelous, especially when we remember that we too must stand before the judgment seat and give an account of our works there. Even that can destroy the wonderful hope we have in Him. In fact, our salvation in and through the judgment is part of the miracle of grace.

It is for that coming, therefore, that we wait and watch and hope. Our whole life as believers can be described from this point of view—it all has as its goal and pur-

pose the appearing of Jesus Christ. Nothing else matters to us so much as that. Take away the hope of the coming of Christ and nothing matters any more.

What this all adds up to is that the coming of Christ is *part of the miracle and wonder of salvation*. From the beginning of history God has revealed Himself as the only Savior in that He does for us what is utterly beyond the power or even the imagination of man. He saves us by the miracle of grace in Jesus Christ. The return of Christ is the final revelation of that great miracle of grace and mercy! ❖

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

Creation Through the Spectacles of Scripture

When I In Awesome Wonder... The Golden Coast Of Michigan Peril and Hope

by Deane Wassink

The storms of the Great Lakes are legendary. It is not that they cause greater waves and winds than the great oceans of the world. Instead, the direction and strength of the wind coupled with the shape of the big lakes themselves can cause very rapid and violent changes in the behavior of the lakes. One hour they can be relatively flat and safe. The next hour, before boats can get to the safety of the harbor, the lakes can become wild and dangerous with pounding surf and gale force winds.

Lake Michigan, the focus of our discussions, is long and narrow. It is three hundred miles long from north to south. Its width is one hundred eighteen miles at its widest point, from east to west. The surface area is twenty two thousand three hundred square miles, equal to the combined areas of Maryland, Massachusetts and Delaware. The greatest depth is nine hundred twenty three feet deep. It is the third largest of the Great Lakes in surface area. I'm sure you can appreciate that this is a very large body of water.

When the wind blows from the north or northwest, as it often does in this part of the country, it can cause incredible wave action. The winds can literally stack water on the south end of the lake. This is called a storm surge. On top of the surge, huge waves pound the shore.

There are several times that I have been on the shore during these storms. When the waves hit obstructions in the water, like breakwaters around harbors, they burst into foaming monsters, thirty to forty feet into the air. As a result of these storms, there have been very many shipwrecks over the last two centuries. Scuba diving clubs have plenty of wrecks to study. Even today, with modern technology, small boats can get into serious trouble, and even founder. Every year there are lives lost by being swept off piers and breakwaters.

This danger is the reason why the United States Coast Guard has built dozens of lighthouses on the shores, islands and harbors of Lake Michigan. They surround the lake from top to bottom. These beacons of hope indicate

by their rotating lights and low sounding foghorns that there is safety from the storms at sea.

The sailors can tell by the color and shape of the lighthouse as well as the timing sequence of the light exactly which light, and therefore which port, they are near. Also, because the lighthouses are built on a high elevation and have very powerful lenses, many of them can be seen by the sailors twelve to fifteen miles out from the shore. The lights originally burned oil. The light was amplified through beautiful lenses called “fresnel” lenses. One of the jobs of the keeper was to polish the lens on a regular basis. I have had the opportunity to see and admire two of these lenses. Now the lighthouses are automated with electricity.

We can only imagine the hope and encouragement of the confused and storm tossed boatmen when they saw the beacons of hope shining during the storm.

I had the rare privilege of touring the Dutch style lighthouse on the breakwater of the harbor in Holland, Michigan. Since it was painted red in the middle of the last century it has been named affectionately “Big Red” by the locals. I was able to feel the heavy steel plates that were hand riveted together nearly a hundred years ago. It’s surface was rough from the many coats of paint it has received through the years to protect it from the weather. I climbed steep flights of steps to the top of the tower where the fresnel lens had brilliantly reflected the oil flame. I stood in the rooms where the keeper had lived and kept vigil during the storms. Much of the old furniture was still there, never removed after the light was electrified. The ceilings still had the beautiful tin patterns in place. I paused to contemplate what a difficult and often melancholy job—no, calling—this must have been. Though this was not as remote of an outpost as some, it was still a lonesome and difficult task.

No wonder the figure of the lighthouse and the storm is often used to picture the spiritual danger and hope of mankind. Christ, the Light of Life, gives us hope when the storms of life are raging. He gives us guidance when we are lost on the waves of trials and troubles that threaten to overwhelm us. And yet, so much more than the earthly example, He actually saves and delivers us. He not only points the way to safety, He sovereignly and efficaciously draws us out of the power of darkness and brings us into the harbor of salvation. He moors us unbreakably with ropes of love to the quay of life. There we find hope. There we find rest and peace. There we find safety in time and eternity. Look to The Lighthouse, The Lord Jesus Christ.

Light of Hope

*When on life’s seas we venture,
At first our ship seems strong.
The sails with wind are measured.
Hoping to arrive in port ere long.*

*Soon the storms of life beset us,
Dashing all our hopes and dreams.
The winds blow in tremendous gusts.
Our boat soon breaks at the seams.*

*But, the lighthouse stands a sentinel strong,
Though battered by wind and wave.
It stands as a beacon to those that long
For refuge from the storms that rage.*

*Ships that sail in peril of storm
See her light through the foaming seas,
Threatening to send them battered and torn
Against the shoals where the pounding wave leaps.*

*Her fresnel lens, hand wrought with care,
Brightens and reflects the lamp within.
It pierces the darkness of night that is there.
A light of direction and hope again.*

*The keeper dwells nearly alone there,
Making the tending of the lamp his care.
With gentle touch the lens he makes clean,
That neither spot nor grime weaken the beam.*

*In her port the ships do lie,
Anchored row by row they sleep.
Closely bound, rail to rail they’re tied.
Moored, they rest against the quay.*

*May the keepers continue to fuel the flame.
So the light in the darkness may burn so bright.*

*Loved by those led home again,
For whom the light dispelled the night.*

*May she stand firm in the years to come.
Her beacon, so bright, guiding the way.*

*A ray of hope to the wandering ones
Who desperately for deliverance pray. ❖*

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

The Church of Mark

by J.P. deKlerk

One of the less famous churches in the old city center of Jerusalem is this humble “Church of Mark” of the old Syrian Orthodox congregation. The ministers have a traditional fear that one day they will no longer be tolerated by the Jews and they are only seen on Sundays, but the building is open for visitors during the workdays of the week. If you meet any of the ministers, you will notice that they have 12 tiny crosses on their headgear, reminding them of the twelve apostles.

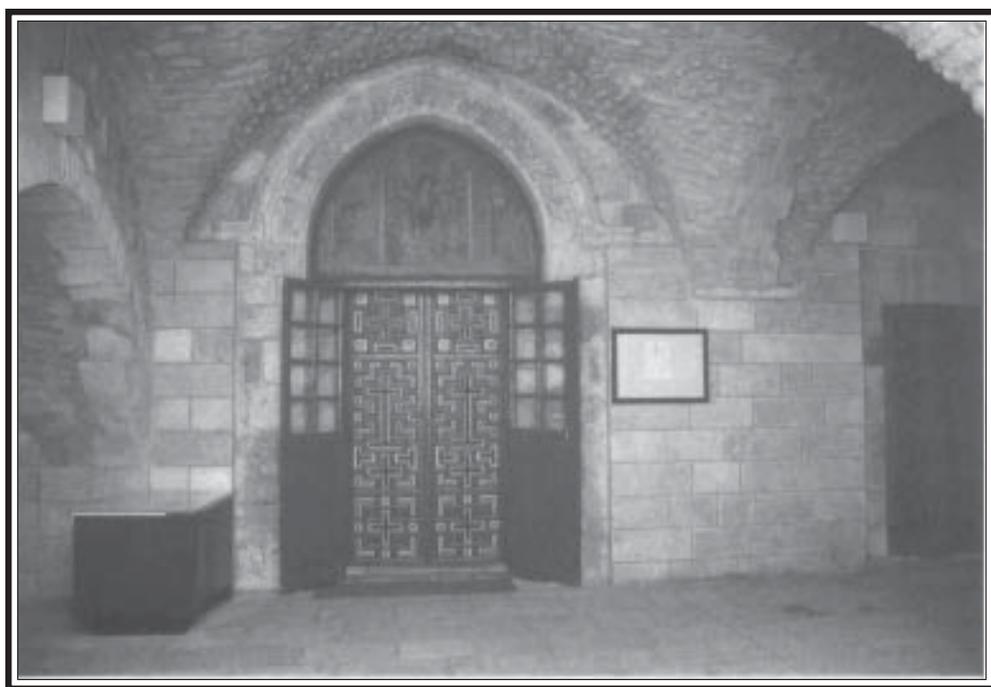
Visitors are told that at the place of this church once stood the house to which the apostle Peter fled after an angel had liberated him from the prison of king Herod (see Acts 12:1-16). The house was destroyed when Jerusalem was taken by the Roman army (in the year 70 after Christ), but local historians presume that the entrance doors survived and are now part of this Church. True, during restorations in 1940 an important sixth century Aramaic inscription was uncovered on the site which says “This is the house of the mother of John called Mark...It was rebuilt by Titus the king in the year 73.”

We have to keep in mind that all the buildings which you see now in old Jerusalem have been built on at least three meters of ruins; that is how often the city has been destroyed.

The Church of Mark is a so-called Crusader structure built over Byzantine ruins. The Syrian Orthodox community, to which the ancient church belongs, is one of the very earliest Christian churches. Although they have never known Protestantism, they are independent and

strict; they have nothing to do with the Roman Catholics. They only look a bit like monks in their appearance and behavior, but they prefer the Confession of Cyrillus Lukaris. They presume that the house that stood here in the past was the upper room where Jesus had the Last Supper with His disciples (Luke 22:12-13). Visitors of the church are often amazed by how dark it is inside; a very dim eastern atmosphere, because only one window over the entrance lets in a bit of light. That is because the place is closed off from a monastery next door. The tiny community does not want to change anything of what was made in the year 73. The Church of Mark does not want much attention from outside either. ❖

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



April 1524



“I pronounce you man and wife...”

The statement was barely above a whisper. The small room was lit with only the necessary candles. There were no flowers. No grand processions. Just the minister, some trusted friends, and the bride and groom. It was a strange and secret wedding. But these were strange and difficult times.

The Reformed faith was coming to Switzerland. Priests in the Roman Catholic Church may not marry. They must remain single all their lives. No wives. No children. No covenant joys of family and home. How sad. But a preacher in Switzerland saw how sad this is. Sad, mostly, because this rule is not found in Scripture; it was invented by men. It is, in fact, contrary to Scripture. Ulrich Zwingli saw this, so he found a godly wife and married her—in secret. The Reformed faith was coming, but it was not fully and freely in Switzerland yet.

Zwingli was a man who was working to bring reformation to this land. He was working at about the same time Martin Luther worked for reformation in Germany. Zwingli was a priest in Zurich, but he was not an ordinary priest. He preached the Word of God, pure and true—and covenantal. And the Word was having its effect. Things were changing in the churches of the Swiss Cantons of Europe.

Even the teaching of the truth of the covenant was having its effect. When the covenant—the friendship and fellowship that God has with His people—is taught, it also must be lived. It must be lived especially in the home, where God’s fellowship with us is pictured by parents fellowshiping with their children, and by husbands fellowshiping with their wives. It is a beautiful picture to behold!

Now, two years after this secret wedding, the council of Zurich ruled that the priests in their churches were allowed to marry. Ulrich and his wife Anna did not have to hide their marriage anymore! In April of 1524, they were able to celebrate their union in public. Now, in the majestic Cathedral Church of Zurich, they could exchange their vows. Now, amid the budding flowers of April, they could invite guests in plenty to sing and re-

"LITTLE LIGHTS"

... *let it shine!*

by Connie Meyer

joice with them in their love for each other and for God. It was a joyous occasion indeed.

Ulrich and Anna Zwingli showed the world that there are covenant joys not only to be taught and preached—but also to be lived.

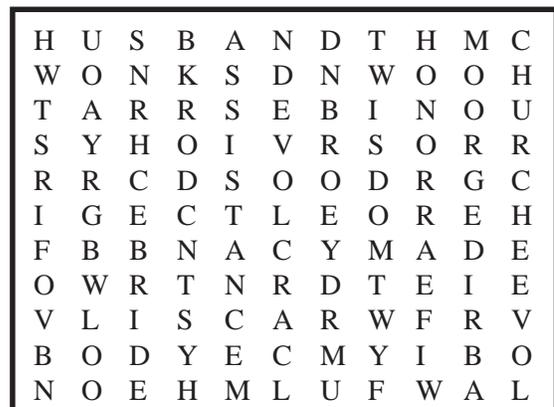
“The Lord our God replenish you with his grace, and grant that ye may long live together in all godliness and holiness. Amen.” ❖

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

The above story ends with the final words of the Marriage Form in the back of *The Psalter*. Following are more words quoted from the Marriage Form. (Can you see how these words picture the covenant that God has made with us?) Find the underlined words in the puzzle below:

“First. You, who are the bridegroom, must know, that God hath set you to be the head of your wife...as Christ is the head, wisdom, consolation and assistance to his Church....to love your wife...as Christ hath loved his Church....

In like manner, must you, who are the bride, know how you are to carry yourself towards your husband...to love your lawful husband, to honor and fear him...to be obedient unto him...as the body is obedient to the head, and the Church to Christ....”



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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:
Hannah Jean, daughter of Mr. & Mrs. Jeff Baker—Doon,
IA
Lincoln John, son of Mr. & Mrs. Rex Waldner—Doon, IA
Riley Anne, daughter of Mr. & Mrs. Chris Dykstra—
Holland, MI
Derek Anthony, son of Mr. & Mrs. James Haveman—
Hull, IA
Nathan Michael, son of Mr. & Mrs. Paul Linker—
Lacombe, Canada
Kristen Reanne, daughter of Mr. & Mrs. Jason
Scritchfield—Loveland, CO
Noah Christopher, son of Mr. & Mrs. Chris Bauer—
Peace, IL
Nicholas John, son of Mr. & Mrs. John Ophoff—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:
Mike Jankovic Jr.—Bethel, IL
Rodney Bleyenbergh—Edgerton, MN
Tim VanTil—Grandville, MI
Jordan Schipper—Grandville, MI
Bryant Van Overloop—Hudsonville, MI
Rebecca DeJong—South Holland, MI
Peter Hanemaayer—South Holland, MI