

# Beacon Lights

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*“As the mountains are round about Jerusalem,  
so the Lord is round about his people  
from henceforth even for ever.”*

*Psalm 125:2*



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# August 2003 Young People's Convention

by Jennifer Schwarz

**T**he Loveland Protestant Reformed Church in Colorado hosted the Young People's Convention this summer. It was held just outside of Estes Park, at the YMCA of the Rockies. The theme was "Surrounded by God." This theme was chosen because just as the mountains surrounded the YMCA and conventioners during the entire week at convention, so God is always around His people. The text was Psalm 125:1, 2, and the theme song was Psalter #354, a versification of Psalm 125. The convention began with registration on Thursday, August 14, and ended on Tuesday, August 19.

## Speeches and Sermons

Professor Russell Dykstra gave our first speech on Friday morning, and he spoke on "God is Our Protector." He showed us how we often forget God is there to protect us, even as some of those who live in Colorado sometimes take the mountains for granted, and don't wake up in awe of them every morning. We know how solid and secure the mountains are, and we must remember that God is even more steadfast than they are. We would never expect to wake up and find the mountains gone, and the same is true with God. He will always be there when we need Him. Prof. Dykstra closed by telling us God will always be our guard and our defense until death.

Rev. Charles Terpstra gave the Saturday morning speech, and he spoke on the "Character and Responsibility of God's People." He showed how we must be believing, trusting young people. By nature we don't enjoy the thought that God is around us. As Christians, however, our character is that we are God's people, and we must be thankful for that. We need God because we are sinners, and we are foolish to think that we could ever stand on our own, but they that trust in the Lord shall be as Mt. Zion.

This was the first convention to be held over a weekend. Sunday worship services were held in the auditorium. Rev. Eriks brought the Word of God to us in the morning, speaking on "Let Your Light So Shine." His three points were 1) The Light, 2) The Calling to Shine, and 3) God-glorifying Purpose. The text was Matthew 5:14-16. He brought out how we as Christians have a calling to be lights in the darkness of this world, and that what we do reflects on the church of Jesus Christ. We must confess the truth, and be a witness to the world so that they see we are different, and not hide the truth. The purpose in doing this is for the glory of God. The world will see our good works, and God will use that for His purpose.

Professor Dykstra preached in the afternoon. The three points of his sermon, "Resisting the Roaring Lion," were 1) Fierce Adversary, 2) Required Resistance, and 3) Unceasing Vigilance. The text was 1 Peter 5:8, 9. This adversary that we have against us is the devil, who has



*Rev. Eriks, a formidable opponent in the Cook's Race.*

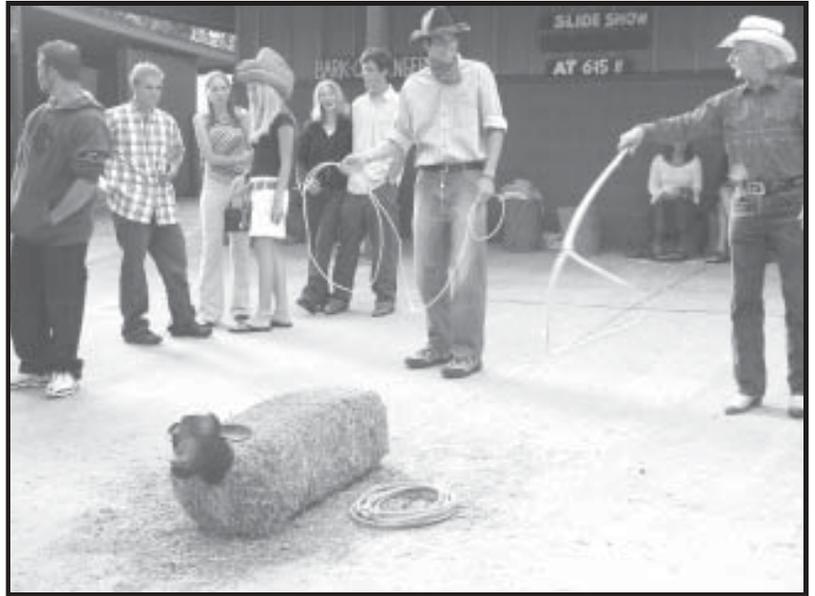
never quit working against the church, and has attacked many times using lies, worldly things, oppressions, and public opinions against the church. He is relentless, and is compared to a roaring lion, roaring in his fury against the church. We must resist this attacking and have courage. Man thinks life is all about fun, but we must not think this way. We resist the ways of the world in their parties and worldly music, etc. To resist the devil, we must not only know, but love the truth, and be steadfast and firm. Our calling is to be strong in the faith, and be sober and vigilant. We must put on the whole armor of God, so that we can stand against the wiles of the devil.

A singspiration was held on Sunday afternoon, immediately after the service. This included a number of songs sung by the Loveland Young People's, a duet sung by two young people from Iowa, and audience singing. It was awesome to hear, especially the audience numbers, with so many voices joining together giving praise to God.

Rev. Ron Hanko gave the final speech to us on Monday morning. Due to some discipline difficulties that were dealt with on Sunday, he set aside his prepared speech, and spoke to us from his heart. It was very sobering for us to hear that, because of the previous night's problems, his speech was no longer appropriate. However, his main point was not that the future of the PR churches are in jeopardy because of the behavior of a few, but that our future was promising as he witnessed the behavior of the many. This promising future is not of our own doing either, but God continues to surround His people, even young people, to protect and preserve them and His Church until Christ returns.



*Raging River.*



*Adam Bol lassoing the bull.*

### **Activities**

Every day different activities were scheduled for us, which added a lot of fun to the convention. The first activity was on Thursday night, and was held in the Longhouse, a huge gym on campus at the YMCA. It was called the "Maverick Mixer," and these games were geared so that we would meet new people. We met others with the same birthday, or birth month, as us; people with the same job we had; those who enjoyed the same sport we liked; and then we had to separate into groups according to the color of our shirts. In these groups we played a game with toilet paper. The roll was passed around and we took as many sheets as we wanted to, without knowing why. After that was done, we had to tell one thing about ourselves for every sheet we took. (Those in each group who had the most had to go up in front of everybody and tell at least 10 things about themselves.) After this we played Duck, Duck, Goose and Leapfrog.

Friday afternoon we played games in the "Rocky Top Rodeo." Ten separate games were set up, and there were 20 teams, with two teams playing at each game station. After a round of games was over, ten teams would rotate around in one direction, while the other ten rotated in the opposite direction, so that no two teams would compete against each other more than once. Some of the games included: balloon stampede; a relay race over hay bales, through tires, and under more hay bales; wheelbarrow race; "barrel" racing with bikes on cement; horse-and-rider tug of war; and a gunnysack race.

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Friday night all the conventioners split into two groups and did separate activities. Saturday night we switched places and did the activity the other group had done the previous night. One group went to the Longhouse. Activities included rollerskating, and “crab” soccer. We also played another game where half the players laid on the ground with their heads all in a circle, and the other half stood around in a circle by the feet of those lying down. The object was for those lying down to kick the cage ball over the heads of those standing up, and once this was accomplished, everybody switched places, and so on. We could also play basketball or volleyball.

The other activity was outdoors in a field west of the lodges. We played Capture the Hat, with brightly colored cowboy hats. When it started getting dark, we headed over to a campfire where Jim Huizenga and Sarah Huizenga were playing their guitars, and we sang along with them.

Saturday afternoon’s activity was called “Country Fair with a Western Flair.” Carnival-type games were brought in and set up in the open field. Some of these activities were: a climbing wall named “Climbing Longs Peak,” revolving ladders called “Raging River,” a dunk tank into which some of the chaps and ministers were dunked, and human foosball. There were some other games that were really fun too, and the whole thing was a blast.

Sunday night we played Bible Trivia. We split into 38 groups, and answered all the questions in the time we were given. After this, the two teams with the most answers correct went up to the front of the auditorium and competed for first place, while the rest of us watched. The first place team each got a T-shirt for their prize. This was an enjoyable game fit perfectly for the Sabbath.

“Spur-of-the-Moment” activities were done on Monday afternoon. We could sign up earlier to do archery, easy or moderate hikes, or horseback riding. We could also do other things around the YMCA,

such as swim, mini-golf, go to the crafts building, etc. I went on the moderate hike. The name of this trail was “Bible Point,” and was a very pretty sight, especially at the end. We hit a rainstorm on the way down, which only added to the fun.

### **Discussion Groups**

Discussion groups were held on Friday, Saturday, and Monday. After lunch we all met in the auditorium to listen to the introduction to each of these groups separately. We split into groups of about 20 with two chaps to discuss the topics.

The first discussion topic was “Is it Cool to be a Christian?” and was introduced by Rev. Charles Terpstra. We discussed Christian contemporary music, WWJD bracelets, bumper stickers, shirts, and hats, etc., that advertise Christ, and whether they were right or wrong. I think most of us concluded that there are so many other, Biblical ways to witness in the world, and by our walk people should be able to tell we are different. We don’t need to use the world’s methods to prove that we are Christians.

The second discussion group was “Taming the Tongue,” introduced by Mr. Larry Abel. We looked at many Scripture passages, and saw how the tongue affects our whole lives and shapes our character. We saw how we can use our tongues in so many different ways, both bad and good. We must control how we use our



*Inside the auditorium, where we had speeches, church and our singspiration.*



*Prof. Dykstra timing the bull riding.*

tongue, because what we say to someone may affect him for the rest of his life. We must always be on our guard about what we say, and not just speak without thinking. We cannot do this without God's grace working in us, and must pray for strength to control our speech.

"Modesty" was the topic of the third discussion group, introduced by Rev. Garry Eriks. The guys and girls split into groups separately to talk about this. We discussed how the fashion designers are using swimsuits to "undress America," and that wearing modest clothing is being downplayed by all fashion industries. By this we saw that we as Christians must wear modest clothing to set us apart from the world.

### **Banquet and Lock-in**

The banquet was held at the Lazy B Ranch in Estes Park on Monday evening. We were given cowboy hats as we got off the buses as a souvenir of the convention. There were many things to do at the Lazy B, including a trivia game, shuffleboard, "bowling," basketball, and volleyball. We just played or did whatever we wanted until it was

time for supper. We were served roast beef or chicken, a baked potato, biscuits, baked beans, spice cake, and lemonade, coffee or water. After we were finished eating, four cowboys came out and entertained us by singing western songs. After they were finished, prizes were given out to conventioners and chaps for many different things.

We then headed back to the YMCA, and went into the Longhouse for the night. The Y was strict on its quiet time, but they allowed us to spend the entire night in this huge gym. Most people went to sleep, but others stayed up all night and had a lot of fun. We played basketball, volleyball, and a variety of board games. In the morning we all headed for our last breakfast at the Y. We then all got ready to leave, and went to get on the buses that would take

us to where we needed to go to get home.

### **Thank You**

On behalf of all the young people who attended the convention, I'd like to thank all those people who made, even in the slightest way, this convention possible. A special thanks to those who led the speeches and discussion group introductions, assisted ones who were sick or hurt, and all the chaperones who traveled from far and near and did a great job leading devotions and discussion groups. Also thanks to the committees who worked hard for over a year planning and organizing everything. Many friends and memories were made, and I believe it is a blessing for us as young people to be able to gather together so that we may grow more in the knowledge of the truth. I really enjoyed the convention this summer, and look very much forward to it next year. ❖



*Rosanne Hanko and Grace DeJong in the wheelbarrow race.*

*Jennifer is a member of Loveland Protestant Reformed Church in Loveland, Colorado.*

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# The Convention

by Bethany and Emily Lotterman

**T**he convention. It was the event that I had looked forward to for as long as I can remember. Year after year I have watched my older siblings eagerly go off for a week of fun and fellowship, and year after year I longed for the summer when I could take my turn as a conventioner. Well, the convention this past summer was all that I had hoped for and much, much more.

The fun began on Thursday, August 14. My sister and I flew with a group of young people out of Grand Rapids, and we were met at Denver International Airport by chaperones from the Loveland congregation. We then boarded charter buses to take us up to the YMCA. For many of us young people, the trip up the mountains was a first-time experience, and we were all in awe over the beauty and majesty of the mountains.

We arrived at the camp and registered right away. We were given water bottles with the warning to “Drink plenty of water!” Also, wristbands were assigned for identification, and they gave information regarding activities throughout the week. Meal tags were distributed, room assignments given and the convention was under way!

After settling into the lodges, everyone gathered in the dining hall for a dinner of pork and gravy. We gathered at the hall three times a day for meals it became a pretty familiar place. The food was decent and filling which was a special treat.

No time was wasted in getting the ball rolling. We all met at the Longhouse Gym at 7:00 sharp for a “Maverick Mixer.” The chaperones did an excellent job in leading the games such as Duck, Duck, Goose and Leap Frog. Everybody had a great time getting to know each other. It was a great way to kick off the weekend.

We were awakened bright and early every morning for devotions. After breakfast on Friday, we all headed into the auditorium for Prof. Dykstra’s speech on “God As Our Protector.” We were reminded of how the mountains resemble God, and how God is immovable and unchanging. He always stands firm and secure, the ultimate protection from all our enemies. We were consistently reminded of this every time we took in the view of the Rockies. We were truly surrounded by God.

The traditional group picture was taken, lunch was eaten, and the afternoon was under way. We started the afternoon with group discussions on “Is it Cool to be a Christian?” This discussion was a major highlight for lots of the conventioners. The topic is so easily applied to everyone’s lives as God’s children. Many different points were brought up, things I had never even thought about before) such as how our culture today affects our mission work. This discussion really got our minds working as we examined how we as Christians in the world today must still set ourselves apart from the world.



*Lynette Moelker battling Laurel Lotterman in “boxing.”*

After discussion groups, we all headed to the open field for a few hours of organized activities called the “Rocky Top Rodeo.” We were split into 20 teams to compete against each other in western-themed games. For example, we had barrel races with bikes around 5-gallon buckets and wheelbarrow races. We tied hangman’s knots and played tug of war. We had an obstacle course called the “Pony Express.” Despite the warm weather, everybody had a good time with lots of laughs.

That evening after supper, we were again divided into groups. Half of us went to play games in the Longhouse Gym, and the other half went to play Capture the Hat. Then on Saturday night, the groups switched. We played Capture the Hat and when it got dark there was a campfire, and Mr. Jim Huizinga led a sing-along with his guitar. It was a great way to end the night.

Saturday morning came quickly and the activities started all over again. We gathered for Rev. Terpstra’s speech on “The Character and Responsibility of God’s People.” Here we were taught our responsibility to God as our Father and our Savior. We are called to be strong in our faith, trusting not in ourselves, but depending on God’s strength and love to carry us through. Rev. Terpstra pointed out that our life is a continuous, uphill mountain hike; there are always slips and falls, bruises and tragedies but God carries us through!

After the first-ever convention satellite photo was taken and lunch was eaten, we organized into groups for a discussion on “Taming the Tongue.” We discussed how the tongue was an extension of our hearts and minds, and how important it is to remember that at all times. We also discussed how



*Rev. Hanko enjoying cotton candy.*

we sin with just our thoughts or things we don’t say. Considering the world we live in today with all its temptations, this discussion was of a very practical matter, easily applying to every one of us.

Due to the long day on Friday, Saturday’s “Country Fair” was optional. Inflatable games such as human foosball, one-on-one tug-of-war, etc. were brought in and set up in the open field. They also had a climbing wall and a bucking bull for those rodeo heroes! The dunk tank was a favorite, with the ministers and chaperones taking their turns in the hot seat!

Free time before and after supper each day was spent in many different ways. Basketballs, volleyballs, and tennis rackets could

be taken out. Also, there was a miniature golf course, a swimming pool, and a game room to fill up our free time. A favorite pastime was just playing card games on the porch of the main lodge. There was never a dull moment!

On Sunday we gathered at the auditorium for a day of worship. The morning worship service was led by Rev. Eriks, on the topic “Letting Your Light So Shine,” and Prof. Dykstra led the afternoon service on the topic “Resisting the Roaring Lion.”

After the second service, we worshiped God by way of a singspiration. The evening was spent in a challenging game of Bible Trivia, the winners of which got to ride in a limo to the banquet on Monday night.

Monday began as all the rest, with devotions, breakfast and a speech; this time by Rev. Hanko on “The Preservation of God’s People.” He showed us how strongly Psalm 125 (the theme of the convention) taught the doctrine of preservation. Just as the mountains are round about Jerusa-



*Rev. Terpstra, jailed.*

lem, so the Lord provides protection for us, preserving and keeping us as His own. The reassurance of God's abiding faithfulness was a great way to conclude the convention.

The rest of the morning was spent in free time, and after lunch we gathered for our final discussion on "Dressing Modestly." Most groups had great discussions on how much of an issue dressing modestly has become. It is sad to think that we have come to the point where it is an issue at all. With all the temptations out there, it is so important to remember that we belong to the body of Christ. We must reflect that in how we dress.

The rest of the afternoon was spent doing "Spur-of-the-Moment" activities. We could sign up for an easy or moderate hike, archery or horseback riding. The afternoon was a little rainy so some people stayed inside and played games or talked. Those who did the activities were pretty wet when they returned.

Just as we were boarding buses to head off to banquet the sun came out. Banquet was at the Lazy B Ranch. The dude ranch was perfect for the western-themed banquet. There were horseshoes and volleyball nets, a souvenir shop, punch and candy. After much talking and picture-taking, we moved into the dining hall for an authentic chuck wagon dinner of beans, biscuits, beef, chicken, and potatoes. The Ranch provided a western band for entertainment, and the hours flew by! The evening at the Ranch closed with a slide show of pictures taken throughout the weekend. We then boarded buses and headed back to the YMCA for our last night.

The original plan for after the banquet was to hold everybody in the Longhouse Gym for the entire night. Many people, however, had a long way to travel on Tues-



*Christian friendship—an important part of conventions. From left to right: Kelly Meulenburg, Bethany Lotterman, Larissa Van Putten, Anna Gustafsen, Esther Griffioen, Melissa Wassink.*

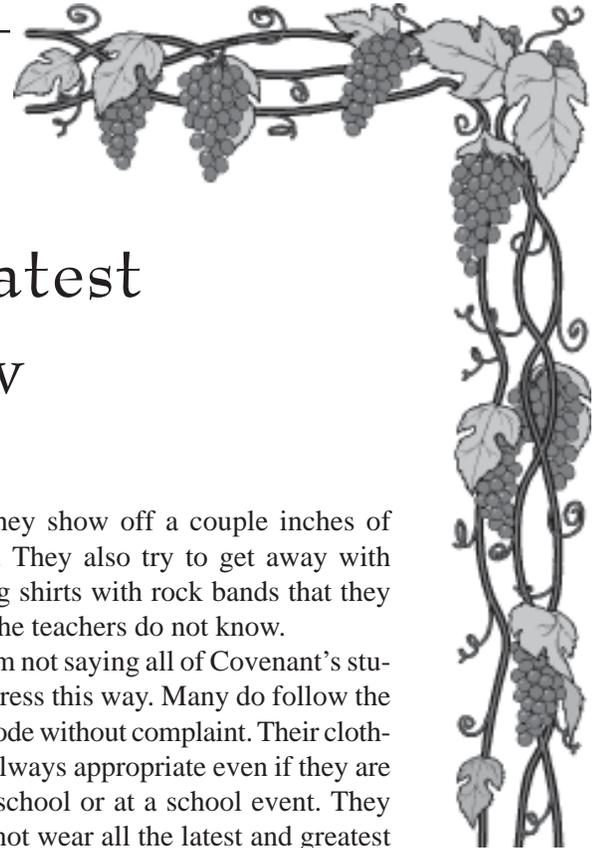
day so they allowed whoever wanted to go back to their own rooms leave at 11:30. Those who stayed at the Longhouse were locked up for the night and it was said that basketballs never once stopped bouncing!

Tuesday morning was filled with good-bye hugs, tears, picture-taking, and luggage, lots of luggage. After breakfast, we were free to do whatever last minute things we wanted and at 10:00 we began loading buses bound for the airport, train station and Loveland.

The flight back to Grand Rapids gave us lots of time to reflect on all that had happened that weekend. Everything had gone so much better than anticipated and that made the weekend much more enjoyable. This convention is truly one that will never be forgotten. For this we would like to thank the congregation of Loveland who made this convention possible. Also, we would like to thank the chaperones for the great job in leading devotions, activities, and taking care of us. Finally, we give our thanks to God for giving us the opportunity to gather as fellow saints, to interact with one another as believers, praising and glorifying His most holy name. ❖

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*Emily and Bethany are members of Byron Center Protestant Reformed Church in Byron Center, Michigan.*



# The World's Greatest Fashion Show

by Rachel Windemuller

I wake up, roll out of bed, and drag my half-awake body over to my collection of clothes that are overflowing my closet. I pull out a pair of jeans and a T-shirt and throw them onto my mess of sheets and blankets. My door flies open, and in comes my sister with dripping wet hair and wearing a tight pair of jeans with a tight tank top under a sweater. She asks me how she looks, and all I can say is to go put some real clothes on. She storms out and finishes getting ready for school without saying another word to me until we get in my car to leave. My sister and I have different opinions on dress, like many within our churches. This is obvious just by walking through the halls at Covenant Christian High. Many of the young people in the schools or at convention wear whatever they want, no matter what the rules say. They might not be showing off the skin, but the clothes are so tight they might as well be. As Christian young people, our dress should reflect what glorifies God, not the world's idea of what is fashionable.

As I walk through the halls of Covenant Christian High, I see tight designer jeans, shirts that are barely long or high enough to cover everything, T-shirts that have brand and band names right across the chest. It is a walking fashion show; students at Covenant try to get away with wearing the least amount of clothing possible without getting in trouble for it. The rules are no "chop tops," yet girls run around pulling up their shirts all day long in order to not show anything from the front. All the while, they are pulling up their low-rise jeans so that they do not to show anything from behind. The jeans run so tight that many cannot even bend their knees to tie their shoelaces. May I ask what is wrong with this picture? If we are supposed to be a Christian school, then how does this dress reflect our beliefs?

I am sorry to say that it is not just the girls who wear clothing that does not reflect what a Christian should wear. Guys wear huge baggy pants that, even when wearing a belt, hang so low that every time they lift up their

arms they show off a couple inches of boxers. They also try to get away with wearing shirts with rock bands that they know the teachers do not know.

I am not saying all of Covenant's students dress this way. Many do follow the dress code without complaint. Their clothing is always appropriate even if they are not in school or at a school event. They might not wear all the latest and greatest fashions or brand names, but they are wearing apparel that glorifies God.

It is those who do not follow the dress code that make the lives of those who do miserable. The calling to be in the world but not of the world still stands. Why then do we feel the need to dress like the world? I am not saying we need to wear T-shirts with Christian views plastered all over them, but we should be wearing clothes that fit and that are not a size too small or too big. We are not supposed to look like the latest "in" girl or guy from Hollywood. We are supposed to look the part of a Christian as a light in a world full of lusts and corruptions. We were not meant to blend into the American melting pot.

When Christian young people dress in the way of the world, they do not recognize the message that they are sending the world. Many girls do not realize that the attention they get from many guys is not the attention that they want. In Matthew 5:28 it says, "But I say unto you, that whosoever looketh on a woman to lust after her hath committed adultery with her already in his heart." If these girls want guys to like them for who they are and not for how sexy they look, they must not appear so revealing.

In 1 Peter 3:3-4 it states, "Whose adorning let it not be that outward adorning of plaiting (braiding) the hair, and of wearing of gold, or of putting on of apparel; But let it be the hidden man of the heart, in that which is not corruptible, even the ornament of a meek and quiet spirit,

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which is in the sight of God of great price.” If these young people do not want people to judge them by the way they dress, do not dress that way. Ralph Waldo Emerson once said, “what you do speaks so loudly I cannot hear what you say.” It really is not that complicated: dress appropriately to make a statement of your own and be a beacon to the Lord’s fashion statement, not the world’s.

We must follow 1 John 2:15-17: “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 for ever.” Therefore, as Christian young people, our dress should reflect the Father’s love in us. Let us “walk worthy of the Lord” (Col. 1:10) rather than to blend in with the world. ❖

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*Rachel is a member of First Protestant Reformed Church in Holland, Michigan. This article was written as a senior writing assignment at Covenant Christian High School.*

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Story Time

# Moving: God’s Will in His Children’s Lives

by Lori Vermeer

As she sat on her bed hugging her old, love-worn teddy bear, Jordyn thought about what had just happened at the supper table. “Well,” her dad had said with a trace of regret and pride in his voice, “your mother and I have decided that it was God’s will for us to take that job offered me in Illinois. We have prayed about this for weeks, and you all know that we have asked your opinions about it.” He stopped to wipe a tear away that had somehow managed to spill down his wife’s face, and had given her a weak smile. “We will not leave until the month after school gets out, so Alex will be able to finish his year in 3rd grade.”

As she reflected on her reaction, she knew she had to apologize to her parents for jumping from the table and slamming her door to burst into tears. But why did they have to move? They had had a perfectly good life in Michigan, and her dad has an awesome job. *Why?* She angrily asked God, as she slammed her fist into the pillow. *Please make my parents see that a move is not the best thing for us right now! I am happy here!* She heard her mom tell her dad to just let her be for now; she will come out to talk later. It always amazed her how her mother could always predict her.

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A month later, Jordyn was in her room again, but this time, singing her favorite psalm, Psalm 136. Her

mother gently knocked on her door, and then went in. “Hi, Mom,” said Jordyn. “What are you doing now?”

“Oh, I just went through the kitchen and packed what we won’t need,” her mother replied, and sat on her daughter’s bed, smoothing her blue and pink bedspread. “Are you getting used to the idea of moving?”

“I have been praying about it, and have talked to my friends about it, and I think I am aware now that you really don’t have a choice, in a way,” she rushed on, trying to express her thoughts in the right way. “God led you to believe that this is the best choice you could make for your family, and it is just as hard, or harder, for you to pick up and leave as it is for me.”

“Yes,” replied her mother, “I think you have the idea. We would not be blessed here knowing that God wants us in Illinois.” She gave Jordyn a hug, and left, saying “I am going to start dinner. If you want to, you could go to the garden and get me some early tomatoes for the BLTs.”

The garden—one of Mother’s favorite pastimes. She was really going to miss it, seeing there was no room in the tiny yard they would procure with the house they would move into in Illinois. The small yard there will be a big adjustment after living on a 1½-acre plot all her life, Jordyn mused as she stood up to go get the tomatoes for her mother.

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Standing in her new yard, looking up at the big grey house that was nothing like the beautiful brick house they had in Michigan, Jordyn knew it would take a while before she would get used to her new life here. There was a lot to do yet though, so she went back inside to help her mother figure out where everything would go in the kitchen. At least she finally had a window in her big room on the top floor. She was sick of living in the basement.

Neighbors and people from their new church were taking things out of the truck in the driveway and helping Jordyn's mom and dad put everything away. She could hear Alex's laughter from out in one of the trucks. *He must be having a good time*, Jordyn thought. *I hope he isn't in anyone's way*. She started putting glasses and plates away, thinking to herself that maybe, just maybe, life here wouldn't be that bad.

In school that September, Jordyn was sitting at a table with her new-found friends, laughing with them in the same way she had in Michigan with her other friends. Yes, she considered herself blessed. *God sure is taking care of us*, Jordyn thought, glancing over to where her dad was sitting with the other teachers, eating their lunches and talking. *And to think that I didn't know whether I would like it here or not! The people here are so welcoming and affable!* That night after her personal devotions, Jordyn made a point of thanking God for sending them down to Illinois, the very opposite prayer she had made months ago in Michigan when her dad had told them that they were going to move. Yes, God knows what He is doing, and it is all for the best, even when His people can't see it right away. ❖

*First place winner in the Beacon Lights writing contest (high school and younger category). Lori is a member of Peace Protestant Reformed Church in Lansing, Illinois.*

*The previous article entitled "The Gift" was a fictional story.*

## Antithetical Trees

*The righteous man is likened to a tree—  
A lively tree.  
The tree produces fruit in quantity  
For all to see.*

*The fruit that man produces is a sign—  
A sign of health.  
The righteous man is given by His Lord  
A lavish wealth.*

*He learns to love God first, his neighbor too—  
His light will shine.  
The good works which by faith he can perform  
Come from the Vine.*

*The wicked man also produces fruit—  
But his are cursed.  
For Satan instigates the work he does:  
In sin he's versed.*

*A man who loves not God, no good can do:  
He cannot win.  
Philanthropy may seem benevolent  
But his is sin.*

*For like the fig tree Jesus cursed one day—  
It bore but leaves;  
So God our deeds and hearts must judge;  
O'er sin He grieves.*

*Our fruit shows forth the focus of our lives.  
Lord, make us strong  
That our desire may be the glory of Thy name,  
Thy praise our song!*

*Thelma Westra*

# Study Proverbs This Society Season

## Study for Week #9:

### The Hateful Talebearer (Gossip)

**Texts from Proverbs:** 6:16, 19; 10:12 (How do we cover sins?); 11:9, 12 (Note the opposites here!), 13; 16:27, 28; 17:9; 18:8; 20:19; 25:9, 10, 23; 26:20

**Questions** to help “the word of Christ dwell in you richly:”

1. In your own words, define gossip. (What are the biblical words for this sin?)
2. Is it OK to say something about someone else as long as it's true? Why or why not?
3. Look up and read the Heidelberg Catechism on the ninth commandment. What's the difference between backbiting and slander?
4. What are the devastating effects of gossip?
5. Why does the Lord hate gossip so much? (See 16:19.)
6. What does it take to stop gossip in yourself? What does it take to stop gossip in others? (See also 25:23.) What if they continue?

## Study for Week #10:

### Prayer

**Texts from Proverbs:** 3:5, 6; 15:8, 29; 16:3; 28:9 (Discuss!), 13 (Discuss!)

**Questions** to help “the word of Christ dwell in you richly:”

1. In your own words, define prayer.
2. How can we ever be called upright or righteous in the sense of Prov. 15:8 or 15:29? (The proper answer to this question is necessary for the answers to all the rest of the questions and discussion.)
3. What does it mean to “commit” something to the Lord? (Prov. 16:3, 3:5, 6 and Psalm 37:5)
4. How can we use our prayers to confess our sins?
5. Based on the proverbs in this study, how would you summarize what it means to pray with wisdom?
6. Think for a moment about your own prayers. How might you begin to pray more wisely?

## Study for Week #11

### Friendships

**Texts from Proverbs:** 16:28; 17:17; 18:24; 27:10, 17

**Questions** to help “the word of Christ dwell in you richly:”

1. What is friendship? (Be careful in your definition.)
2. What are the characteristics of Christ's (God's) friendship with us? (See Prov. 18:24, Jn. 15:15, Josh. 1:5. Contrast this with Mark 14:48-50.)
3. What are the qualities or characteristics of *good* friendships?  
Why are good friendships so desirable? (See also Eccl. 4:9-12.)  
What does 27:17 say about the benefits of good friends? Explain this.
4. What are the qualities or characteristics of *bad* friendships? What are the effects of bad friendships?

## Study for Week #12:

### Pride

**Texts from Proverbs:** 6:16, 17; 8:13; 11:2; 13:10; 14:3; 16:5, 18, 19; 17:19; 18:12; 21:4, 24; 25:6, 7, 27; 26:12; 28:25; 29:23; 30:32

**Questions** to help “the word of Christ dwell in you richly:”

1. Define pride. (Be careful in your definition.) (Find the NT passages that teach about pride.)
2. How does pride show itself in our lives as teens?
3. What contributes to pride in our lives? (at school? looks? brains? sports? money?)
4. What does a proud spirit do to friendships and relationships?
5. What is the only cure for pride? (Can you make yourself humble?) ❖

# Fishing Report

by Deane Wassink

It's the end of June. The steelhead have followed the alewives into the fifty foot water about a half mile from shore. I am sitting on a bluff at 5:30 in the morning overlooking the Port Sheldon harbor between Holland and Grand Haven on Michigan's west coast. I have been counting the boats that have gone out fishing. I can see fifteen to twenty out in the lake already, with several more pulling out of the harbor.

Yesterday, I heard the fishing report from the local radio station telling us that they are getting nice catches of steelhead on the "Big Lake." In response to that report or some inborn radar that avid fishermen seem to have, the boats are really coming out. It seems that a new one pulls out of the harbor every two to three minutes. The lights are on. The engines are revved up to full throttle in the race to get out to a good spot. I can hear the delayed sound of the waves slapping hard against the hulls. I also hear some thunder in the distance—I hope it doesn't spell trouble.

The fish master on the radio also said the walleyes were hitting on Lake Macatawa in Holland Harbor. Also, the bluegill and the bass are "hot" on many of the inland lakes.

I am amazed at how busy it is in this small harbor this early in the morning.

I have had the privilege of fishing the "Big Lake" many times through the years as a guest of friends and relatives in their boats. I have often been amazed that it seems you enter into a different world or culture with a life and language of its own. Men (and women, I hasten to add) who moan about getting out of bed to start a factory job at 7:00am will leap up at 4:00am, eat a hearty breakfast, tow their boat to the launch site, and be fishing before the sun is up. For the whole day they are focused on weather, water temperature, graphing fish, baits, equipment, boat radio chatter, and hopefully, catching fish. The senses are overloaded with all smells, sounds, and other sensations belonging to a boat that is bobbing up and down in the water as it is trolling for a catch. Everyone is focused, waiting for the "first hit." Talk is

of past and future trips, the merit of different poles and reels, downriggers, boats and engines. Eating from the bottomless bag of goodies and snacks washed down with a steaming cup of coffee ranks very high on the list, too. The food is strictly for medicinal purposes, of course, to help prevent seasickness.

After everyone has had a chance to doze a bit in the heat of the afternoon it is time to head into shore, pack up the gear, load the boat, head for home, store the boat, clean the fish. (In my case, I normally didn't have to spend much time cleaning fish.) Most people can't handle eating the fish they just caught, so, at a later date, they have a fish fry with their fishing buddies, where each time, they relive all the experiences of past fishing trips and plan future fishing trips.

It is now 6:30am. There are now more than forty boats on the Lake, with more heading out of the harbor. This recreational industry is really an amazing thing. Just think how many thousands of people there are on the lake at any one time.

I wonder how many of those people thank their Creator for the wonderful creation they are enjoying; for keeping them safe; for the food that, hopefully, they will be given? I wonder how many stand in awe before this great God and realize that it is their calling to serve Him with all their talents and acknowledge Him as their King? Man can and does learn many things about his Creator from the handiwork of God in the creation around him. So often all these things are ignored or buried in our minds.

The Bible says that we either thank Him as our God and Savior walking in humility and repentance before Him or we curse Him and rebel. There is no middle of the channel here. What do you do as you enjoy His beautiful creation? Do you bless Him or curse Him? What is your answer? ❖

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

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# Watching Daily At My Gates

By Mr. Wilbur Linker,  
an elder in Immanuel PRC of Lacombe, Alberta

## November 1 Read Hebrews 11:1-12

During the month of October, we had the privilege to meditate on the holiness of God. During the course of this month we shall see that the holy triune God is sovereign over all. In this connection, we are going to utilize to a large extent the work of Arthur W. Pink, in his book *The Sovereignty of God*. To see God as the Sovereign One, we must have faith. The question that comes to mind is answered in the Heidelberg Catechism, Lord's Day 7, answer 21, "True faith is not only a certain knowledge, whereby I hold for truth, all that God has revealed to us in His Word, but also an assured confidence, which the Holy Ghost works by the gospel in my heart; that not only to others, but to me also, remission of sins, everlasting righteousness, and salvation are freely given by God, merely of grace, only for the sake of Christ's merits." How unspeakable is the gift of faith. In verse 6 we read "But without faith it is impossible to please Him." Therefore it is only by faith that we understand, acknowledge and confess God, as the Sovereign One; who in His eternal counsel decreed all that should come to pass. Sing Psalter #128.

## November 2 Read Hebrews 11:13-16

"Faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen" (Heb. 11:1). To walk by faith is to live our lives in humble obedience to the Word of God, to see the unseen. By faith we confess that the unseen is much more real than the seen. All that we see with the physical eye will be destroyed, but faith, hope and love will endure to all eternity. By faith we acknowledge that we are pilgrims and strangers here below. Our citizenship is in heaven. The life we now live, we live by faith, in our Lord Jesus Christ, who has purchased us with His precious blood, having made a complete atonement for our sins. In verse 16 we read, "But now they desire a better country, that is, an heavenly: wherefore God is not ashamed to be called their God: for He hath prepared for them a city." That the sovereign eternal God is willing to attach His most holy name to us, should humble us to the core. The resulting humbleness, will certainly guide us in a life of holiness. Through such a walk of faith, we will come to see the wonder of salvation, through the sovereign work of God. Sing Psalter #132.

## November 3 Read I Chronicles 29:10-19

Wisdom is known by her children. From the heart are the issues of life. As a man thinks within himself, so he is. Our lives reflect the inner life, which evidences itself by the fruit it bears. We read in our scripture passage, that the people of Israel, had offered willingly, with a perfect heart, provisions for the house

of God. We must confess, that by nature, we are not so eager to make provisions for the cause of the Lord. On the contrary, to our shame, can it not be said, that the causes of God's kingdom have to beg and plead for our support? Wisdom would dictate that we love the Lord our God. The response of faith is—that we seek the Lord, with all our heart, mind, soul and strength. This certainly will change our priorities. God and His kingdom will come first. Our actions (fruit) will reveal this. Now read again verses 11 and 12. May that acknowledgment also arise from within us, giving God all the praise, for sovereignly He rules. Sing Psalter #259.

## November 4 Read Psalm 103

In contrast to the weakness and brevity of man, we read "But the mercy of the Lord is from everlasting to everlasting upon them that fear Him, and His righteousness unto children's children; to such as keep His covenant, and to those that remember His commandments to do them" (vss. 17, 18). Those that have received the gift of faith, receive also the mercy of the Lord, His righteousness, and His covenant and strive to keep His commandments. They do this in fear, and in awe, not willing to offend in any way the Sovereign One. Their desire is: "Bless the Lord, O my soul; and all that is within me, bless His Holy name" (vs. 1). The psalm beautifully illustrates the blessings of salvation. Our response to such mercies is to realize that our salvation is all of God. Our calling in this life is to live humbly and obediently, in thankfulness, for such a deliverance, blessing His most holy name, meaning to speak well of God, to glorify Him in thought, word and deed. Sing Psalter #283.

## November 5 Read Psalm 104

Psalm 103, clearly demonstrates, that God is merciful and glorious, to such as keep His covenant. In today's scripture passage God reveals Himself as the sovereign ruler over all. He is the one that provides for all. Not only every detail of the creation, but also every creature, whether man or beast. The point being made, that only through the gift of faith, can we respond in living hope to such a sovereign God. By faith we acknowledge and confess that God is supreme. That God is King. That God is the Most High and Lofty One, that inhabiteth eternity. That God is almighty, that all power in heaven and earth belong to Him. There is no one that can defeat His counsel, frustrate His purpose or resist His will. In confessing that God is sovereign, we mean to say, that He is the Holy One, the only Good, the Blessed and only Potentate, the King of kings and the Lord

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of lords. Such is the triune God of the Scriptures. This God is our God, for Jesus' sake. Sing Psalter #287.

### **November 6 Read Psalm 115**

Yesterday we acknowledged the truth of the sovereignty of God. Do you, dear reader believe that truth with all your being? Do you consciously live in the realization of it? No doubt, many there be, who would readily acknowledge God's sovereignty in the great events of history. Many there are, that will deny God's control in directing every little detail of life. We read to the contrary in Matthew 10:30, "But the very hairs of your head are all numbered." Any denial of God's absolute sovereignty, robs God of His glory. In verse 1 we read, "Not unto us, O Lord, not unto us, but unto Thy name give glory, for Thy mercy, and for Thy truth's sake." To be earthly minded is to seek the things of this life. This will delude us to self-dependence, and eventually to the idols described in verses 4 through 8. In contrast we read in verse 13, "He will bless them that fear the Lord, both small and great." and verse 18, "But we will bless the Lord from this time forth and for evermore. Praise the Lord." Sing Psalter #308.

### **November 7 Read Isaiah 55**

Please reread verses 6 and 7, upon which follows: "For my thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways my ways, saith the Lord. For as the heavens are higher than the earth, so are my ways higher than your ways, and my thoughts than your thoughts" (vss. 8, 9). We are commanded to seek the Lord. How? Through His Word, as that is proclaimed in the preaching, through Bible study, through family and private devotions. We need to read it, study it, and be instructed, for therein is the way of salvation. Now, notice that God's Word shall not return to Him void, no, it will accomplish that which He pleases and prosper in the way He sent it. In Acts 2:23 we read, "Him, being delivered by the determinate counsel and foreknowledge of God, ye have taken, and by wicked hands have crucified and slain." Scripture here and in many other passages, shows us that the sovereignty of God and the responsibility of man, are to our finite understanding, two sides of the same coin. All God has eternally decreed, shall come to pass in such a way, that His purposes are fulfilled even through the wicked deeds of men, which men without any interference or injustice on the part of God, freely will desire to perform. How truly unsearchable are His ways. Sing Psalter #86.

### **November 8 Read Genesis 1:1-18**

"Thou art worthy, O Lord, to receive glory and honour and power: for Thou hast created all things, and for Thy pleasure they are and were created" (Rev. 4:11). Before Genesis 1:1 the universe was unborn, and creation existed only in the mind of the Creator. Yet at that moment, God was the Sovereign One. According to His eternal good pleasure, He could create or not create. He was sovereign in what to create, for who was there to resist His will? It was His sovereign right to create all things, as they do appear. "The heavens declare the glory of God; and the firmament sheweth His handiwork" (Psa. 19:1). Now notice what we read in I Corinthians 15:41, "There is one glory of the sun, and another of the moon, and another glory of the stars: for one star differeth from another star in glory." Why should the heav-

enly bodies differ so much? The answer of faith is, for Thy pleasure they are and were created so. Sing Psalter #37.

### **November 9 Read Genesis 1:20-25**

In our scripture passage we see the power of God in the creation of fish, birds and animal. How does God create these creatures? We read in verse 20, "And God saith" therefore it is through His *Word*. We read in the Gospel according to John chapter 1:1-3, "In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. The same was in the beginning with God. All things were made by Him; and without Him was not any thing made that was made." And in Genesis 1:23 we read, "And the Spirit of God moved upon the face of the waters." The work of the creation is sovereignly brought forth by the triune God. When we look at the animal kingdom we stand amazed by the variety. Variety in strength and beauty, compare a lion and a lamb, a bear and a goat, an elephant and a mouse. Some, like a horse, and a dog are gifted with great intelligence, while others like sheep or pigs are almost devoid of it. What is true of animals is also true of fish and birds. It is God's good pleasure to make them so. He is sovereign. Sing Psalter #400.

### **November 10 Read Genesis 1:26-31**

In the passage we have just read, we have an account of the creation of man, and that in God's own image. To be created in God's image means, to have true knowledge, righteousness and holiness. In Genesis 2:7 we receive greater detail in how we were created, "And the Lord God formed man of the dust of the ground, and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life; and man became a living soul." Man is to "have dominion over the fish of the sea, and over the fowl of the air, and over every living thing that moveth upon the earth" (vs. 26b). Do we sufficiently think and act upon our calling to govern all things as those will have to give account of our stewardship here below? May we search out God's will for us in the physical realm as we are commanded in the spiritual realm—to first seek His kingdom and its righteousness, knowing that God will grant us all things necessary. Sing Psalter #14.

### **November 11 Read I Corinthians 4:1-7**

"For who maketh thee to differ from another? And what hast thou that thou didst not receive?" (vs. 7a). All that we are and have we owe to God. May we be found faithful in our calling here below, in whatever station of life this may be. We have seen the sovereignty of God displayed throughout His creation. In the human family also God's sovereign work is revealed. To one, God grants five talents, to another, one talent. In the same family one is born with a robust constitution and another is frail and sickly. Some are born black, others white. Some are born with a temperament that is selfish, fiery, egotistical; others are naturally self-sacrificing, submissive and meek. There are those who are qualified to lead and rule, while others are only suited to follow and serve. Why are there these variations and inequalities? Why are we today in a church where the truth of scripture is proclaimed faithfully, week after week? In all things, it is God who makes us to differ one from another. Our reply must be, "Even so, Father, for so it seemed good in Thy sight" (Matt. 11:26). Sing Psalter #332.

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## November 12 Read Genesis 6:17-22

On today's meditation we shall concern ourselves with God's sovereignty, as this relates to irrational creatures. A few days ago we saw how man received dominion, also over the irrational creatures. *God brought* each creature unto Adam to see what he would call them, (see Gen. 2:19) and whatsoever Adam called every creature, that was the name thereof. Again in our passage we read of the wondrous power of God in bringing to Noah, all kinds of animals, two of a kind, male and female. All were beneath God's sovereign control. The lion, the elephant, the bear, the ferocious panther, the untameable wolf, the fierce tiger, the high soaring eagle, the creeping crocodile, and many others—see them all in their native fierceness, yet, quietly submitting to the will of their Creator, as they enter in to the ark. Now read I Kings 17:2-4 where the natural instinct of these birds of prey was held in subjection, and instead of consuming the food, they carried it to Jehovah's servant in his solitary place. This we acknowledge as the sovereign work of God. Sing Psalter #15.

## November 13 Read Proverbs 16:1-9

"In Him we live, and move, and have our being" (Acts 17:28). These words are addressed to a heathen audience, to those who worshiped "the unknown God" and who "mocked" when they heard of the resurrection of the dead. And yet the apostle Paul did not hesitate to affirm that they lived and moved and had their being in God, which signified not only that they owed their existence and preservation, to the One who made the world and all things therein, but also that their very actions were encompassed and therefore controlled by the Lord of heaven and earth. In Proverbs 19:21 we read, "There are many devices in a man's heart; nevertheless the counsel of the Lord, that shall stand" (Prov. 21:1), "The king's heart is in the hand of the Lord, as the rivers of water: He turneth it whithersoever He will." Can anything be more explicit? Out of the heart are "the issues of life" (Prov. 4:23), for as a man "thinketh in his heart, so is he" (Prov. 3:27). Since the heart of man is in the hand of the Lord, all men are completely beneath the governmental control of the Almighty. Sing Psalter #270.

## November 14 Read Matthew 24:29-31

Angels are God's servants and messengers. They ever hearken to the word of His mouth, fulfilling His commands. Please look up the following Scripture passages: I Chronicles 21:15, 27, Acts 12:11, Revelation 22:6, Matthew 13:41, and verse 31 in our passage. God sovereignty controls them to do His will. This sovereign control is true of evil spirits also, they also fulfil His decrees. Read the following Scripture passages: Judges 9:23, I Kings 22:23, I Samuel 16:14, Matthew 8:31. All these verses clearly show that evil spirits are under the sovereign control of God. Yes, Satan himself is absolutely subject to God's control. When arraigned in Eden, he listened to the awful sentence, but answered not a word. He was unable to touch Job until God granted him leave. He had to receive the Lord's consent before he could "sift" Peter. When Christ commanded him to depart "Get thee hence Satan," we read, "Then the devil leaveth Him" (Matt. 4:11). At the end of time, he will be cast into the lake of fire, which has been prepared for him and his angels. Sing Psalter #92.

## November 15 Read Revelation 19:1-16

The Lord God omnipotent reigneth. His government is exercised over all inanimate matter, over all animate, including the fish of the sea, the fowl of the air, the beast of the field, over all creatures great and small, over the children of man, over angels good and evil, and over Satan himself. Dear reader, reflect on this truth for a moment, there would be no revolving world, no shining of the sun, moon or stars, no weather, no movement of any creature, no actions of man, no errands of angels, no deeds of the devil—in fact, nothing in all the vast universe can come to pass unless God has eternally purposed it. Here is the confidence of faith. Here is an anchor for the soul, both sure and steadfast. God omnipotent reigneth. It is not blind fate, unbridled evil, man or devil, but the Lord Almighty who is ruling the world—ruling it according to His own good pleasure, and for His own eternal glory. Sing Psalter #279.

## November 16 Read Jonah 2

"Salvation is of the Lord" (vs. 9b), but the Lord does not save all. How are we to receive this? Is it because they are too sinful and depraved? This cannot be, for the apostle Paul in I Timothy 1:15 writes, "This is a faithful saying, and worthy of all acceptance, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners, of whom I am chief." God saving the chief of sinners, certainly has to mean that none are excluded because of their depravity. Are some too stony-hearted? No, this cannot be, we read in Ezekiel 11:19b "and I will take the stony heart out of their flesh, and will give them a heart of flesh." God, through the Holy Spirit, sovereignly applies the work of His Son to each and every one that has been ordained unto eternal life. Please read Articles 11 and 12, Heads 3 and 4, of the Canons. These are the blessings of all those who are called according to the election of grace. Of His own it is written in I John 5:20, "And we know that the Son of God is come, and hath given us an understanding, that we may know Him that is true." Faith is God's gift, and "all men have not faith" (II Thes. 3:2b). Sing Psalter #277.

## November 17 Read Acts 13:42-52

Before the foundation of the world God made a choice, a selection, an election. From the whole of Adam's race, He singled out a people and predestined them "unto the adoption of children," to be conformed to the image of His Son, "ordained" them to eternal life. In verse 48b we read, "As many as were ordained to eternal life believed." Here we learn four things. First, that believing is the consequence and not the cause of God's decree. Second, that a limited number only are "ordained to eternal life," as understood by the phrase "as many as," not all men. Third, that the "ordination" of God is not to mere external privileges, but to "eternal life," not to service, but to salvation itself. Fourth, that all, "as many as," not one less, who are so ordained by God to eternal life, will most certainly believe. Election by God the Father is applied to us through the appropriate use of the means of grace. Sing Psalter #170.

## November 18 Read Romans 3:10-20

Yesterday we confessed that God from eternity "ordained" a people unto Himself. Today we are going to take another look at the subjects of God's predestinating grace. There are those, that

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refuse to acknowledge that truth of "Election," they will invariably seek to find some cause outside God's own will, which moves Him to bestow salvation on the sinner, something attributed to the creature which entitles him to receive mercy, at the hand of his Creator. What was there in the elect themselves which attracted God to them? Was it because they were "good" that God chose them? No; for our Lord said, "There is none good but one, that is God" (Matt. 19:17). Was it because of any good works they would perform? No, for it is written, "There is none that doeth good, no, not one" (Rom. 3:12). Was it because they would evidence an earnest zeal in inquiring after God? No, for it is written "There is none that seeketh after God" (Rom. 3:11). All of Adam's race are dead in their trespasses and sins (see Eph. 2:1). The elect are "quickened" and believe through grace (see Acts 18:27). Sing Psalter #373.

### **November 19 Read Hebrews 10:1-17**

For whom did Christ die? God, through His prophet, in Isaiah 53:10 and 11, says in part, "When Thou shalt make His soul an offering for sin, He shall see His seed," and that "He shall see of the travail of His soul and shall be satisfied," and that God's righteous servant "should justify many". Here we NEED to pause a moment! How could it be certain that Christ should "see His seed" and "see of the travail of His soul and be satisfied," unless the salvation of certain members of the human race had been divinely decreed, and therefore was sure? How could it be certain that Christ should "justify many," if no effectual provision was made that any should receive Him as their Saviour? Therefore, as far as the pre-determined purpose of His death is concerned, Christ died for the elect only. Christ died not merely to make possible the salvation of all mankind, but to make certain the salvation of all that the Father had given Him. Christ died to put away sin by the sacrifice of Himself (Heb. 9:26b). Ever and only for the elect, the world of John 1:29, the world of God's people. Sing Psalter #94.

### **November 20 Read John 6:32-44**

Limited atonement, of necessity flows from the eternal choice of God the Father, of certain ones unto salvation. Of our Saviour, before He became incarnate, it is written in Hebrews 10:7, "Then said He, Lo, I come (in the volume of the book it is written of me) to do Thy will, O God." And after He had become incarnate He declared, "For I come down from heaven, not to do mine own will, but the will of Him that sent Me." Christ's will was in perfect harmony with the will of the Father. Again and again our Saviour refers to those whom the Father had given Him, those for whom He would shed His precious blood as a one and complete sacrifice for sin. In verse 40 we read, "And this is the will of Him that sent Me, that every one which seeth the Son and believeth on Him, may have everlasting life: and I will raise him up at the last day." How precious is this truth to us, may it evidence itself in a humble godly walk. Sing Psalter #217.

### **November 21 Read Isaiah 53**

The Lord Jesus Christ is the sin bearing servant of Jehovah. On Calvary's cross He sustained in body and soul the wrath of God against the sins of His people. In I Peter 2:24 we read, "Who His own self bore our sins in His own body on the tree,

that we, being dead to sins, should live unto righteousness: by whose stripes we are healed." Also see again verse 12 in our scripture passage. Therefore, God looked upon Christ's sacrifice as propitiation, an appeasing of divine wrath, a satisfaction to divine justice and holiness. And that it was accepted by God was attested by the open grave three days later. We, as God's people rejoice and acknowledge that Christ's sacrifice on Calvary's cross was a substitutionary atonement. The innocent taking the place of the guilty, the just dying for the unjust; that He might redeem us body and soul from everlasting damnation, and obtain for us the favour of God, in righteousness and holiness unto eternal life. Sing Psalter #47.

### **November 22 Read John 17**

Shortly before His betrayal in the garden of Gethsemane, His suffering at the hands of Pilate, His crucifixion on Calvary's cross, Christ prays for His own. Read that prayer often, for a source of comfort and strength. Christ having fulfilled all righteousness, is seated at the Father's right hand, as the only great High Priest. As we read in Hebrews 9:24, "For Christ is not entered into the holy places made with hands, which are the figures of the true; but into heaven itself, now to appear in the presence of God for us." That there may be no confusion to whom the "us" belong, we read in Hebrews 3:1 in part who are "partakers of the heavenly calling." And again in Romans 8:33 and 34, "Who shall lay anything to the charge of God's elect? It is God that justifieth. Who is he that condemneth? It is Christ that died, yea rather, that is risen again, who is even at the right hand of God, who also maketh intercession for us." Sing Psalter #319.

### **November 23 Read John 15:18-27**

Having completed His work on earth, Christ is received into heaven, as the Head of His church, by Whom the Father governs all things. Take note that it is through Christ that all things are governed. This grants us peace and contentment, amid all the troubles and cares of this present life. He is our Saviour and Lord. What an unspeakable joy it is to know, that as a member of His body, we have a sure pledge, that where He is as our Head, we as members of His body shall be also. But, in the meantime our Saviour does not leave us comfortless, notice what we read in John 14:26, "But the Comforter, which is the Holy Ghost, whom the Father will send in My Name, He shall teach you all things, and bring all things to your remembrance, whatsoever I have said unto you." Sing Psalter #76.

### **November 24 Read John 3:1-22**

It is the Holy Spirit that quickens (Eph. 2:1). Nicodemus, a ruler of the Jews, is taught a fundamental truth concerning the kingdom of God. We read in verse 3b, "Except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God." Also in verse 5b, "Except a man be born of water and of the Spirit, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God." In our Reformed terminology, regeneration is the term applied to the quickening of the Spirit, making us alive to spiritual things. Having been made alive, we need the cleansing power of the Holy Spirit, to apply the finished and completed work of Christ to us. How does the Holy Spirit apply this work to us? Readily it is acknowledged, through

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the inspired, infallible, Word of God, the Scriptures; and as we read in verse 8, sovereignly and mysteriously. Sing Psalter #140.

### **November 25 Read John 6:25-51**

What is it that makes us to differ? Why are we able to respond to the gospel, with joy and gladness, while many become angry and openly reject this same gospel? In the context of our scripture passage, the day before, Jesus had miraculously fed the five thousand. Having given thanks, our Lord, took the five barley loaves and two small fishes, nourishing all. The remaining fragments filled twelve baskets. They sought the Lord for His physical provisions. When Christ explains that He is the true bread, which gives life to the world, and its implications, the Jews murmured at Him, in unbelief. Now back to our original questions. In verse 36 we read “But I said unto you, that ye also have seen me and believe not.” The following verse provides the answer, “All that the Father giveth Me shall come to Me; and him that cometh to Me I will in no wise cast out” (vs. 37). All those whom the Father has not given to the Son will not, and cannot come. We humbly acknowledge and bow before the sovereignty of God. Sing Psalter #260.

### **November 26 Read Acts 17:22-34**

What is man’s responsibility before God? God created man good, in His own image, in true righteousness and holiness, through which man was able to rightly know God, his Creator, to love Him, and live in covenant fellowship with Him. But, in Genesis 3, we read that through the disobedience of Adam, original sin is extended to all mankind. Through this disobedience man’s whole nature is corrupted, having become totally depraved, incapable of doing any good and dead spiritually. Not only are we guilty in Adam, but we increase our guilt daily. God’s justice stands. He has not lowered His standards, due to our inability, because of our disobedience. God’s revealed will is plain: “repent and believe.” And all who do truly repent and believe are saved. Therefore, God does no injustice to the sinner. The obligation of Adam’s posterity is to love God, and to walk in obedience before Him. Man’s disobedience certainly did not remove his obligation or responsibility. Sing Psalter #338.

### **November 27 Read Psalm 92**

“It is a good thing to give thanks unto the Lord, and to sing praises unto Thy Name, O Most High: To show forth Thy lovingkindness in the morning, and Thy faithfulness every night” (vss. 1, 2). It is Thanksgiving Day in the United States today. What a privilege it is, to go up to God’s house, to thank and praise Him for all His blessings. An opportunity to gather with family and friends, to partake of the good things of this earth. These are all blessings, to be received with thanksgiving. Often during this time, we reflect upon the material blessings God has granted. But as we learned earlier this month, it is the unseen, our spiritual treasure, that should engulf our praise and thanksgiving. May we by faith confess, what we read in Habakkuk 3:17 and 18, “Although the fig tree shall not blossom, neither shall fruit be in the vines; the labour of the olive shall not fail, and the fields shall yield no meat; the flock shall be cut off from the fold, and there shall be no herd in the stalls: Yet I will rejoice in the Lord, I will joy in the God of my salvation.” Sing Psalter #250.

### **November 28 Read Romans 14**

This past Wednesday we came to see that our responsibility does not change before God, due to our disobedience. We readily acknowledge that God had made us capable of performing His will perfectly. But, we willingly and wilfully deprived ourselves of God’s fellowship and communion. We placed our lot with the deceiver, and became his willing slaves. Still God’s command comes to each of us, love Me, with all your heart, mind, soul and strength. In verse 11 and 12 we read, “For it is written, As I live, saith the Lord, every knee shall bow to me, and every tongue shall confess to God. So then every one of us shall give account of himself to God.” God will have His justice satisfied. The soul that has sinned shall die. But, thanks be to God, who Himself in Christ has become our salvation. “And the Spirit and the bride say, Come. And let him that heareth say, Come. And let him that is athirst come. And whosoever will, let him take of the water of life freely.” Revelation 22:17. Sing Psalter #90.

### **November 29 Read Jeremiah 29:1-14**

“For I know the thoughts that I think toward you, saith the Lord, thoughts of peace, and not of evil, to give you an expected end. Then shall ye call upon me, and ye shall go and pray unto me, and I will hearken unto you” (vss. 11, 12). This is a most wonderful promise to each one of us. God will accomplish *all* His good pleasure, as eternally decreed. Take a moment to read Isaiah 55. We are commanded to drink deeply of the wells of salvation—namely, to use the means of grace, so richly provided. Then we will call upon the name of the Lord in prayer, seeking His honour and glory, confessing our own sin and unworthiness, pleading upon His mercy, for forgiveness, thanking Him for all His temporal and eternal blessings, and seeking Him for all our needs, ever and only in harmony with and in subjection to His Word and will. Therein is the sovereignty of God confessed and acknowledged. Not my will, but Thy will be done. Sing Psalter #235.

### **November 30 Read Romans 8:28-39**

In these verses God grants to His people, the comfort and assurance of eternal security. Who are we, that such blessings should be ours? Yet they are freely bestowed upon us, through Christ’s atoning work. That it was God’s good, pleasure, to illuminate us, that we should be saved, while others are blinded, that they might perish, cannot but humble us to the dust. May we ever praise, honour and glorify our Lord and Saviour in our daily walk, knowing and experiencing the comfort of Lord’s Day 1, “That I with body and soul, both in life and death, am not my own, but belong unto my faithful Saviour Jesus Christ; who, with His precious blood, hath fully satisfied for all my sins, and delivered me from all the power of the devil; and so preserves me that without the will of my heavenly Father, not a hair can fall from my head; yea, that all things must be subservient to my salvation, and therefore, by His Holy Spirit, He also assures me of eternal life, and makes me sincerely willing and ready, henceforth, to live unto Him.” Sing Psalter #35.

# Arminianism (9)

## Man: Sick or Dead?

by Aaron J. Cleveland

**W**e have already considered the Arminian corruption of the truths of predestination and the atonement. Now we will move on to the Third and Fourth Heads of Doctrine of the Canons which deal with the corruption of man, his conversion to God, and the manner of his conversion. Since this head of the Canons covers both the “T” and “I” of TULIP, we will limit ourselves in this article to a discussion of total depravity. Next time, Lord willing, our topic will be irresistible grace.

Unlike the Arminian statements concerning predestination and the atonement, which are clearly heretical, the Arminian article concerning the total depravity of man, as found in the third article of the Remonstrance of 1610, if considered by itself, is a tolerable statement. While it is not distinctive, it does not contain blatant heresy. It reads as follows.

3. that man does not have saving faith of himself nor by the power of his own free will, since he in the state of apostasy and sin cannot of and through himself think, will or do any good which is truly good (such as is especially saving faith); but that it is necessary that he be regenerated by God, in Christ, through his Holy Spirit, and renewed in understanding, affections or will, and all powers, in order that he may rightly understand, meditate upon, will, and perform that which is truly good, according to the word of Christ, John 13:5, “Without me ye can do nothing.” (*Essays in Commemoration of the Synod of Dort (1618-’19)*, p. 208)

However, when this article is put into the context of the other Remonstrant articles, obvious contradictions become apparent. Remember, it is the Remonstrants who argued in their first article that man, of himself, has the ability to believe and the ability to fulfill certain conditions in order to be elected. God, according to the Arminians, took into consideration in His election, both the “faith and perseverance in the true faith, as a condition prerequisite for electing” (The Opinions of the Remonstrants, A.7., as found on p. 223 of *Essays in Commemoration of the Synod of Dort 1618-’19*).

As one reads more of the Opinion of the Remonstrants regarding man’s conversion it becomes apparent that they teach a conversion that is accomplished by a cooperation between God and man. In article C.2. of the Opinion of the Remonstrants we find that the Arminians maintain a “cooperating grace” of God. How does this relate to the truth of total depravity? If it is the case that man’s conversion is accomplished in part by God’s cooperating grace, there still must be some good in man with which God’s grace can cooperate. If man is dead in his sins, there is nothing for that cooperating grace to work with. Therefore, in order for cooperating grace to work, man cannot be completely dead in his sins, is not totally depraved, and is of himself capable of performing spiritual good. While the Arminians claim to teach the total depravity of man, they actually teach a partially depraved man capable of cooperating with God in conversion and fulfilling conditions to salvation.

We can see why this exaltation of man makes sense in the Arminian scheme. In previous articles we have seen how the Arminians have dethroned God as the sovereign of salvation. If God is pulled down, man inevitably is exalted. This is exactly what the Arminians do.

The Reformed position concerning the spiritual condition of man in response to the Arminian corruption is clearly set forth in the Third and Fourth Heads of the Canons. Concerning what man lost at the fall, Article 1 reads,

Man was originally formed after the image of God. His understanding was adorned with a true and saving knowledge of his Creator, and of spiritual things; his heart and will were upright; all his affections pure; and the whole man was holy; but revolting from God by the instigation of the devil, and abusing the freedom of his own will, he forfeited these excellent gifts; and on the contrary entailed on himself blindness of mind, horrible darkness, vanity and perverseness of judgment, became wicked, rebellious, and obdurate in heart and will, and impure in his affections.

Prof. H. Hoeksema in his commentary on this article makes an important point concerning what man re-

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tained at the fall and how what man retained was affected. He writes,

While he retained his intellect, that intellect was no more characterized by a true and blessed knowledge of God in spiritual things. While he retained his will, his will and heart were no more characterized by uprightness. While he retained his emotions and affections, he was no more pure in his affections. (*The Voice of Our Fathers*, p. 435)

Article 2 speaks of the corruption of man's nature and hits at the heart of the Arminian error. In this article the heresy of Pelagianism is again condemned. In order for us to better understand the Arminian error, it is useful for us to briefly review Pelagianism. Pelagius (ca. 354-420) was a British monk who combated Augustine's doctrine of man's depravity as a result of Adam's sin. Pelagius taught that man's nature is inclined to do good. Every child is born into the world good, without sin. "But some people sin. And they sin because of the fact that they pick up from their fellow men bad habits. Sin therefore, in the view of Pelagius, is a habit" (*The Five Points of Calvinism*, p. 11). Because most in the church at that time were not willing to accept this outrageous a heresy, neither did they want the truth as Augustine had explained it, Semi-pelagianism became the prevailing view. In the Semi-pelagian scheme of things, man is not totally depraved. He is sick. Even though he is sick unto death, he is yet able to accomplish good and he is able by the exercise of his will to accept or reject the "balm of healing grace" offered to him by the "Great Physician" (*Five Points of Calvinism*, p. 12). Whether or not he is cured depends upon the choice of his own will.

This Semi-pelagian explanation of man's condition sounds very familiar to what the Arminian is forced to admit about his view of man. The Arminians deny, as Articles 2 and 3 (3rd and 4th Heads) maintain, that man is born with a depraved *nature*. Man is *dead* in his sins from the time of his conception. Man can and will do nothing towards his salvation. The Arminian preacher likens natural man to a person floundering in the water about to drown. Along comes God in his rescue boat willing to throw a lifeline to the poor sinner. If only the sinner will take hold of the offered line, he will be saved. However, this is not the picture of man that the Canons paint. The Canons put man in his spiritual casket. Dead men will not and can not do any spiritual good, much less desire to be saved.

Article 4 goes on to further explain the condition of man after the fall. In this article the much abused phrase "glimmerings of natural light" is found. The Arminians taught that by means of this "natural light," man is able to come to a saving knowledge of God and is able to convert himself to God. By means of this natural light man is capable of performing spiritual good. It is interesting to note that the Christian Reformed Synod of 1924 used this article of the Canons to maintain that natural man is capable of performing civil good. However, both of these possibilities are excluded as one reads the entire article and understands it properly.

What are these "glimmerings of natural light"? Prof. H. Hoeksema gives the following explanation.

As far as the idea and the contents of this light of nature are concerned, we may say, first of all, that it is by virtue of this remnant of natural light that man remains a rational, moral being even after the fall. He is a creature who can still think and will. He remains a man. His natural, human gifts, the light that he had by virtue of the fact that his nature as a creature was a human nature—that light did not remain unaffected by the fall. But it was not lost either: he retained a residue of it. If he did not have that residue, he would not be able to act as a responsible, rational, moral creature in relation to God and man... Man did not become through the fall an irrational beast. (*V.O.O.F.*, p. 457).

The second half of Article 4 clearly shows that the glimmerings of natural light which remain in natural man after the fall do not enable him to perform spiritual good as the Arminians maintain. Rather, states the article, man "is incapable of using it aright even in things natural and civil. Nay further, this light, such as it is, man in various ways renders wholly polluted, and holds it in unrighteousness, by doing which he becomes inexcusable before God."

In Paragraph 4 of the Rejection of Errors another serious aspect of the Arminian error is exposed and rejected. While the Arminians speak out of one side of their mouth about a man who is totally depraved, out of the other side they speak of a man who can yet "hunger and thirst after righteousness and life" and is able to offer the "sacrifice of a contrite and broken spirit, which is pleasing to God." The question immediately comes to mind, "How can a dead man desire life?" Just as one must be physically alive in order to desire food and drink, so must one be spiritually alive in order to desire righteousness and life. Yet the Arminians are forced to admit the absurdity that a dead man can actually desire to

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be alive. Paragraph 4 is careful to point out that in order for one to repent and hunger and thirst after righteousness, he must first be regenerated and made alive. This is the Reformed position.

Before we end our look at the Arminian view concerning the depravity of man, we notice one more serious flaw regarding the Arminian conception of sin itself. For this we go back to Paragraph 1 of the Rejection of Errors. Here it is pointed out that the Arminians taught that original sin “in itself” was not enough to condemn the human race. Rather, they taught that *original plus actual* sin were needed to condemn. This is a serious error. Because the Arminian teaches that original sin is not a sufficient ground for God to condemn man, he really denies original sin, for sin is that which makes man guilty before God and worthy of His just judgment (Heidelberg Catechism, Q & A 10). And if he denies original sin, “he must deny that sin is in any real sense a matter of man’s nature, and must maintain that sin is solely a matter of the sinful act” (*V.O.O.F.*, p. 571). The Arminian then, has a very superficial view of the severity of sin and the corruption of man.

After putting all of the various elements of the Arminian heresy concerning total depravity together, we can see what kind of man they are left with. We find a man capable not only of repentance, but a man who desires righteousness and life of himself. Sure, he may be sickly, but he is still able to cooperate with God in work-

ing out his conversion. Further, he is able to fulfill the conditions of faith and perseverance.

Having touched upon various elements of the Reformed position concerning total depravity as we have examined the Arminian position, we now briefly summarize how the Reformed view natural man. Adam sinned, and for this sin God killed Adam. And because Adam sinned as the head of the human race, all men are guilty of Adam’s sin. The punishment for sin is spiritual death. That a man is totally depraved means that he is spiritually dead, and incapable of performing any spiritual good. His nature is depraved. His heart, mind, will, and affections are all given completely over to the service of sin. In every part of his being he chooses evil. He willingly is a slave to sin. Further, he is not willing or able to return to God. He willingly serves the devil, whose image he bears.

This is indeed a very pitiful assessment of man. He is dead and completely unable to perform any spiritual good. But, this is the truth of Scripture as summarized in the Canons, and it is this truth concerning the hopeless condition of man which makes the truth of God’s irresistible grace and man’s conversion all the more wonderful. ❖

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Church Family

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## God As Our Protector

by Prof. Russell Dykstra

*Young People’s Convention Speech, Loveland, CO, August 15, 2003.*

I wish to begin by expressing my sincere appreciation to the Loveland congregation and the Young People’s Society. On behalf of us who visit your fair state, I thank you for the countless hours of hard work you put into this convention. We truly appreciate all you have done. Be assured that the value for us—in Christian fellowship and spiritual enrichment—is worth all your hard work.

I heartily thank the Young People’s Society for asking me to speak. I count it not only an honor, but it is a

joy to address the covenant youth of the Protestant Reformed Churches and friends from other churches. I also express my enthusiasm for this most fitting theme for the convention set in the Rockies.

This speech is based on Psalm 125:2. Psalms are inspired poetry that come out of the heart of a believer. Poetry has a unique power to it. It is not a detailed description such as we would want if we had to drive to Loveland Church. Nor is poetry carefully-worded instruction, such as Paul wrote on justification by faith to the Romans. Poetry is short on words, and long on im-



*“Jerusalem, the mountains around her... So Jehovah to His people.”*

agery. It gives us snapshots—colorful, breathtaking—and allows us to contemplate the word pictures.

That is what we have in Psalm 125:2. As literally translated, the inspired Psalmist began, “Jerusalem, the mountains around her.” That paints the picture of a city surrounded by mountains. Then he added the stark comparison, “So Jehovah to His people.”

Keep in mind, too, that since this is poetry, it arises out of the life of the Psalmist. Yes, the Holy Spirit gave him the words, so that they are God’s words to us. That means we can trust these words, and believe them. But at the same time, the Psalmist wrote this verse out of his own experience. If you had lived at the time of the Psalmist, and could have asked him “How do you know that Jehovah is around his people like the mountains around Jerusalem?” he would have described events from the history of Israel, and his own life, that demonstrated this truth.

Thus our purpose this morning is twofold. First, we must consider the striking photograph that the Spirit gives us, so that we understand it, and grow in knowledge. Secondly, we must come to see for ourselves that this is true for us—that we already in our lives have experienced the fact that God is our Protector.

### **What does this mean?**

Mountains! How can we adequately describe them! “Awesome” comes to mind. Beautiful! Surely humungous! And, solid!

Jerusalem was a city both built on, and surrounded, by mountains. The favored city was built on a sort of plateau of mountains, which included Mt. Moriah, where Abraham had offered Isaac, and where, much later, God

appeared to David on the threshing floor at the end of the three days of plague. Upon this mountain Solomon would build the temple.

Mt. Zion was another of the mountains upon which Jerusalem was founded. Mt. Zion was a high and rocky fortress, and the last height to be taken by Israel in Jerusalem. It was not until the days of David, that the Jebusites were finally driven out, and there David built his palace. It is called the city of David, but sometimes Scripture uses this name to refer to all of Jerusalem.

Jerusalem was also surrounded by mountains. On the one hand the range of mountains, labeled the Judean mountains, enclosed much of Jerusalem. The imposing Mount of Olives flanked the city’s other side.

The situation of Jerusalem was enviable from many points of view. It sat atop steep cliffs that dropped down into the valleys surrounding her. That, and the mountains about her, created a natural defense for Jerusalem. It also contributed to the striking beauty of Jerusalem. This lovely city was built on high hills and yet was hidden by the mountains around her. Travelers coming to Jerusalem would first see her when they came over these mountains, when, quite suddenly, the whole city would emerge—the city nestled in the mountains. It was, we are told, a very lovely sight.

We must remember that God created that spot for Jerusalem. Jerusalem would be a city like unto none other—the place where God would put His name. Jerusalem is the city of God, and His house would be established there.

Thus Zion, or Jerusalem, is a picture of the church of God. Many apt comparisons can be made between Jerusalem and the church. God would dwell with His people in Jerusalem as the covenant God, even as He dwells eternally with and in His church. Consider that the church is made spiritually lovely, even as Jerusalem was. The church, like Jerusalem, is glorious (Glorious things are spoken of thee, O city of God. Ps. 87:3). The church is the chief joy of the believers, as the captives also sang of Jerusalem in Psalm 137. We should note also that the glorified church in Revelation 21 is called the “new Jerusalem,” a city with streets of gold and gates of pearls. Yes, as a type of the church, Jerusalem on the mountains had beauty and strength.

But God also ordained that Jerusalem be surrounded by mountains for defense.

The Bible has much to say about mountains. Certainly the Bible emphasizes that they are solid and immovable. Mountains are a symbol of timelessness

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(Hab. 3:6: the everlasting mountains). Mountains are also a symbol of steadfastness, so much so that God illustrates His faithfulness using mountains—*“The mountains may depart, but my kindness shall not depart from thee”* (Isa. 54:10).

We can add that the mountains symbolize immovable strength. What in all this creation can overcome mountains? They have stood for centuries: beaten by rain and hail; their rocky cliffs swept by driving winds in winter and summer. They are trodden by countless beasts of the forests as well as man. Yet they abide, changeless and immovable for centuries. Man, with all his inventions, and all the ability that God has given him to subdue the earth, yet rightly stands in awe of the mountains.

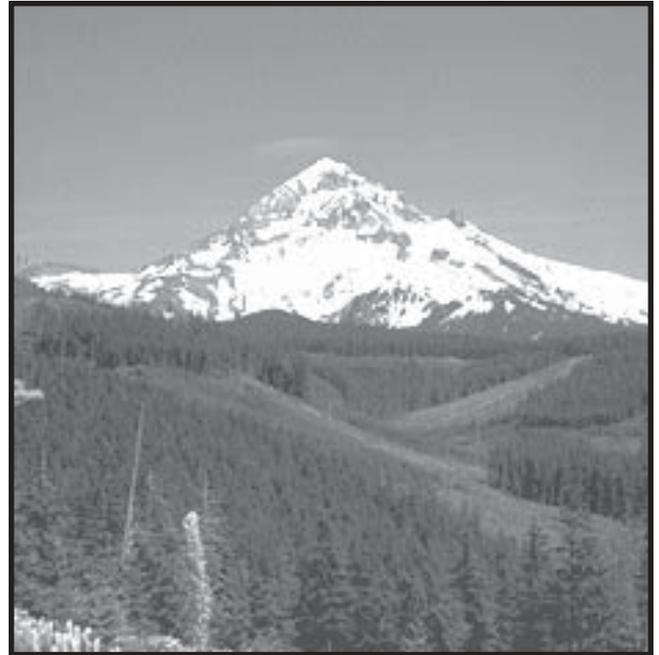
We pointed out that these mountains were a natural defense for Jerusalem. When enemy armies marched on Jerusalem, they would need to bring men, horses, and wagons over the mountains, down into the valley, and then yet stand before the cliffs on which Jerusalem was established, with her walls and fortresses. From a human point of view, one could hardly ask for a better defense than Jerusalem had. Every night, the people of Jerusalem could go to bed knowing that the mountains surrounded them, protecting them from invading foes. Every morning they could rise up and behold that the mountains were still there—immovable barriers, granite sentinels for the city of God.

As striking as this glimpse of Jerusalem is, it is but the picture of something far more wonderful, namely, that as Jerusalem is surrounded by mountains for defense, so the LORD is to his people.

It is fitting that these mountains picture the protecting presence of God, for they point to some of the perfections of God that make Him the supreme and only defender of His people. If the mountains point to unchanging steadfastness, Jehovah is the reality. He Himself said, I am the LORD, I change not; therefore ye sons of Jacob are not consumed (Mal. 3:6).

If mountains symbolize timelessness, God *is* timeless—*“Before the mountains were brought forth, ... even from everlasting to everlasting, thou are God”* (Psalm 90:2). God abides, steadfast, unchanging, and immovable.

Do the mountains dominate the land with their immenseness and rugged power? God is far greater than mountains in every way. God is everywhere present. He upholds heaven and earth. All creatures exist because He created and upholds them. *All* power is His.



*Mountains are also a symbol of steadfastness, so much so that God illustrates His faithfulness using mountains.*

If the foes of Israel had trouble approaching Jerusalem, and a nearly impossible task in overcoming the city, then keep in mind that that is only a dim picture of the reality, namely, that the enemies of the church *cannot* get past Jehovah to destroy His church.

God *is* the defense of His people. Every morning, His own people waken to the knowledge that God is with them and surrounds them as mountains of defense. Every night, they can sleep in peace, for Jehovah only makes them to rest in safely.

God is the defense of His people. The Psalmist knew that the mountains were natural defenses, pointing to the true defense of Jerusalem, Jehovah alone.

God is that for the individual believer also. Psalm 121 promises that Jehovah is thy keeper (notice the singular “thy”). A keeper is a guard. As soldier guards a prisoner, so with watchful eye Jehovah guards and preserves each of His own.

It should be plain that this is true only because of the kind of God that Jehovah is. He is sovereign over all—the devil and his host, all men women and children, including the wicked who oppose God, and God controls all diseases, floods, earthquakes, and death itself. If God is not sovereign over all, then this Psalm is wrong—the mountains are no defense. If God does not control death, or the raging of the ungodly, or the devil’s temptations, then He is no defense. But those who know

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the God of the Bible as their sovereign Lord have assurance that He is their defense.

### **Against what does God protect us?**

But why is this so important, that the church is protected? And, against what does God protect us? The importance of good protection is due to the fact that we are very vulnerable. We can be hurt; we can be attacked. At a very young age we discovered that a fall could result in skinned up knees, or perhaps even a broken arm. We came upon vicious dogs that could bite. We were warned of evil men lurking, who kidnap, even kill.

Dangers still threaten us, and some of these dangers are far more devastating than a skinned knee or a broken arm. There are “accidents” in which people are killed daily. Thieves and rapists live in our land. Death in diverse ways can rob us of a friend, or a father or a mother, a brother or sister.

The reality is that danger surrounds us. In the face of that reality, the Bible’s testimony is this: God is our defense. Our Divine Keeper protects and cares for us, so that we are shielded from most of the dangers of this life. They do not come near us. Just consider that over 400 conventioners and chaperones traveled from far-flung places in the continent and arrived safely here in Colorado. That is no coincidence; God was our mountain of defense.

But there are far worse dangers than these physical catastrophes, as bad as they can be, namely, spiritual threats. These are real dangers, sometimes deadly, and the devastation can be far worse than the physical injuries.

Spiritual dangers are not totally separate from the physical trials, nor are they unrelated to them. Spiritual threats ordinarily follow on the heels of the physical troubles. That is, when we are afflicted, smitten in this life, our *faith* recoils as well, and we can find ourselves spiritually very low. When death snatches someone close to a believer, from his family or friends, the pain of separation can be overwhelming. And the devil works very hard to make that sorrow to be angry and bitter, so that the believer rebels against God, His will and way. We need a sure defense against these attacks.

It happens that a youthful believer lies on a hospital bed, racked with pain, facing surgery perhaps, or filled with cancer. Life seems to be passing him by. All the world enjoys fun and laughter as he suffers. He is tempted to cry out, “This is not fair.” The devil stokes up his natural feelings, seeking to turn that youth against God completely. We need a defense against this.

Every sorrow, every blow in this life leaves us reeling, staggering, and open to the temptation of the devil. But God is our strength. He is our defense.

This very text has been brought into many a grieving home and hospital room, when sickness, death, or grievous trouble had struck. Through the afflictions God’s people come to know from experience that while it seemed as though they were left unprotected, they never were. For there is another similarity between God’s ever-present defense and the mountains about Jerusalem, namely, both can easily be overlooked. I dare say that none of us from the plains or the cities would ever imagine that the mountains would cease to astound us and press upon us daily their testimony of beauty and strength. But the people from Redlands, from Lynden, and from Loveland become so accustomed to having mountains nearby that they forget that the mountains are there.

So it is with us and God. We can forget that He is ever near as our constant defense. Do we get up every morning conscious that He is surrounding us? Do we think of how He surrounds the car when we drive? Do we remember that he is ever guarding us from innumerable evil influences? We forget. We become accustomed to God’s solid, immovable, and steadfast protection. That, until God allows, for our good, a blow to smite us—those evils of life that come upon us. First, perhaps, we may despair, asking, How can I go on? How could God do this to me? Where *is* He when I need Him? But he is there; He never left us. It is only that we were not conscious of Him. Through it all, His power sustains us; His Spirit comforts us; He gives us wisdom to see the troubles and disasters in a new light, and realize that everything works together for our good. And the devil’s dagger is broken off, harmless against us.

There are still more dangers, more direct attacks from our spiritual foes (the devil and the ungodly). Satan comes with temptation, and often, with a smile. He would entice you and me by making sin appear to be attractive. He makes evil to appear good, and the corrupt waters of sin which yield sorrow and death to look like the fountain of life and joy.

And we are so vulnerable! For we have an old man of sin that agrees totally with the ungodly of this world. This old man of the flesh hates God. He loathes talk of sin and repentance. He has no interest in the joys of heaven. He loves the earthly, the carnal, and the vile. Thus this attack of Satan is, indeed, deadly.

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But against this attack, too, you have a defense. God is there, surrounding you, as really as the mountains protect Jerusalem.

Oh, there are times that God allows us to fall. He does this in justice because we hanker so intensely after sin, imagining sin to be beautiful and fun. So God will teach us how deceitful sin is, and that though it promises laughter, it brings death and sorrow.

Yet in it all, He remains nigh. Even it should be said, that God remains especially near to us when we fall into sin. Else, all would be lost. The fiery darts of Satan wound, but never destroy the Lord's people. And the only reason is this: God preserves us infallibly.

Surely you have experienced that, covenant youth. But allow me to demonstrate it to make you conscious of God's defense of you. You, like your parents, conceived and born in sin, have fallen into sins, perhaps even grievous sins—sins of fornication, of stealing, of drunkenness, or rebellion.

Understand the power of that attack! These are sins that, for the youths of this world of unbelief, set them on the path of destruction from which they never escape! Some begin to steal in their youth, and they never leave that sin. They are dishonest all their lives—they cheat on their income taxes, or are dishonest businessmen, or they rob people at gunpoint. Their end is destruction.

Some youths begin to drink in their youth. They get drunk at an early age. Soon they cannot do anything without beer—nothing is fun without it. They become drunkards who end their lives in the gutter.

Others begin at an early age to commit fornication. It becomes a way of life, a snare from which they never escape. They live as adulterers and adulteresses, going from one marriage to another, or one partner to another, unto their destruction.

However, with you it is different even when you fall into sin! To be sure, there are consequences that God visits upon us for our sins. One consequence is that after we have committed a sin, it is easier to do it again. In this way our struggles against that sin become more difficult. And, God sends hardships—for David it meant that the sword never departed from his house. Yet God does not LEAVE you in the sin. He does not give you over into the sins, so that you perish in them, and spend eternity in hell.

Even in the lamentable falls of David and Peter, God did not utterly remove His Spirit from them. He cannot, because He is around His own like the mountains around Jerusalem. He convicts us of our sins. He gives us re-

pentant hearts, and, a hatred of those sins. God by His sovereign grace not only upholds us, He gives us the power to fight temptation. The mountains keep us from total destruction—God is our defense!

We must point out one more attack. We are vulnerable to the violence of persecution at the hand of the wicked. For what is the church but a little handful out of the billions in this world. The world is mighty—think of the instruments of war developed and displayed in the latest war in Iraq. It always has been that way. That raises the question: Why then has not the world of the ungodly simply extinguished the church and utterly removed her from the earth?

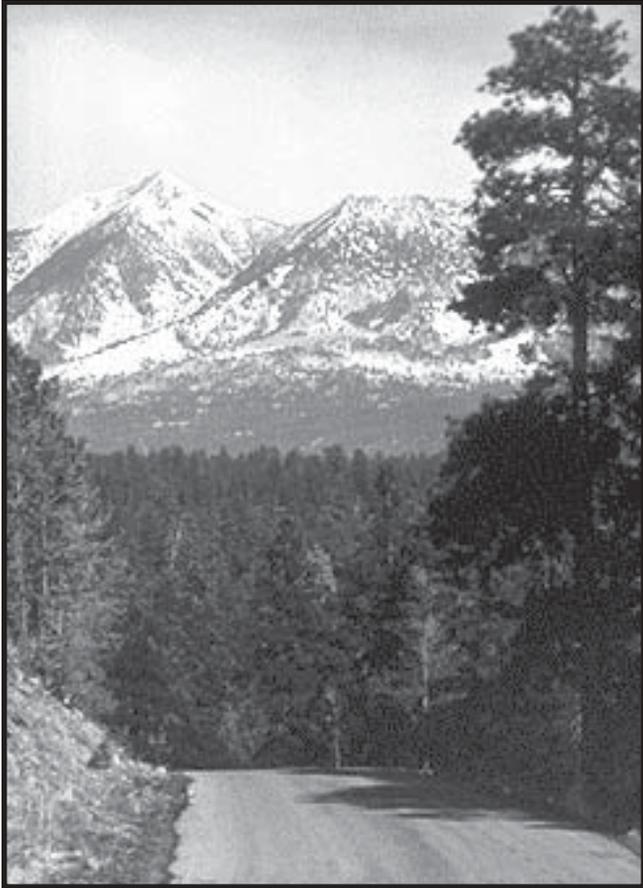
They have tried! In the dawn of history, Cain rose up and slew his brother, Abel. Enoch was encircled by evil men seeking his life. The church was reduced to but eight souls in the days before the flood. After Pentecost, imperial Rome rose up to snuff out the life of the fledgling church. In the day of the great Reformation, the false church joined with wicked rulers to put to death millions by the sword, by fire, and through torture.

### **What confidence does this truth give us?**

Yet the church abides. And she abides without taking the sword to defend herself, and without establishing an earthly kingdom of might. Why? The only explanation is that Jehovah was ever as mountains of defense about the church.

The same will be true to the end of the world when all the forces of evil unite and seek to purge the followers of God from the earth. This persecution will be worse than anything heretofore experienced by the church. But this I know: God will still be there—a wall of granite, a sure defense. He will be, in fact, using the great tribulation for His own purposes—on the one hand, purifying His church, and on the other, allowing the cup of iniquity to fill up. At the same time, according to God's own counsel, Christ will be rushing to save His church. The gates of hell cannot prevail against His church.

What a blessed comfort we have as God's people! We are comforted now in the harsh adversities of life that we encounter, and that some of you endure today, including loneliness, divorce of parents, breakup of friendship, and disease. There are times that we want to give up in despair because the burdens are too heavy to bear. You face, as covenant youths, temptations almost unbearable, sometimes aggravated by the fact that friends or classmates give in to the temptation, and you feel as though you stand alone. You experience persecution—enduring the sneers and ridicule for your faith and godly



*God is far greater than mountains in every way.*

walk. And that will only increase, for you and I will probably be the objects of the last, bitter persecution.

In all this, we need to know that God is about us. He IS with us. You do know that He is not far removed, sitting way off in heaven, disinterested in your troubles. In fact He is willing to come down to us in the squalor of this life, and even to abide with us.

He did this in Jesus Christ. God became flesh and dwelt among His own, and that in order to deliver them from death, hell, and Satan's stranglehold. That is why His defense of us is sure—the victory is won in Jesus. Christ is the Rock of defense and refuge. Christ is ever near—He abides in us by His Spirit. He is strength, and imparts to us His strength so that we can never be removed. The power of Jesus is all about us so that the devil and all his host cannot not so much as move, apart from the will of Jehovah.

Now, and unto eternity God is our defense, even into the new heavens and earth! Again, this is a needed reassurance for our burdened souls. We look to the next world for full deliverance from all that now oppresses us. But

what assurance do we have that we will arrive there? This: God is our protector, and will guard us even from eternal death. And what assurance do we have that in heaven, neither we nor any other saint will fall again, and plunge the whole life of heaven into corruption and hell? This assurance: God will be our defense *for ever!*

Cling to that truth. Through all the adversities of life *we* learn from experience what the Psalmist testifies. Jehovah is round about us, protecting us. Precious covenant youth, learn to put your trust in Him alone. He will not forsake you. This week, every time you look at the mountains think of what it would be like to have *mountains* for your defense. Then think of that fact that *your* Protector is far, far greater than these mountains. For this God is our God, He will be our guide even unto death. ❖

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*Prof. Dykstra is professor of Church History and New Testament in the Protestant Reformed Seminary.*

## The Reader Asks

# Question Request

by Rev. James Laning

**D**o you have a question that has been on your mind? Something that came up at school or during a discussion with friends or co-workers? You can be sure that there are many more people reading these words who have had the same question and are looking for answers just like you. Rev. Laning of Hope Protestant Reformed Church in Grand Rapids, Michigan is waiting to answer them. Don't worry, if you would rather your name was not published with your question, we will honor your request. We do, however, ask that your name and either your home or email address be included so that Rev. Laning can respond privately if need be.

Please send your question to:

Rev. James Laning

1550 Ferndale S.W.

Walker, MI 49544

E-mail: [jlaning@msn.com](mailto:jlaning@msn.com)

# George M. Ophoff (12)

## Minister of Hope Christian Reformed Church

by Prof. Herman Hanko

**W**hat were the years like that Rev. Ophoff spent in Hope Church?

They were those decisive years when the common grace controversy came to its head. However, before we enter into the controversy itself, it is well to sketch briefly the ministry of Rev. Ophoff before the break of 1924 actually came. This is not because of the fact that the reverberations of the common grace controversy were not heard all the way into the quiet rural community of Riverbend; but this is because the early work of Rev. Ophoff seemed to be far removed from the battlefield.

His family life was, in many respects, the normal family life of a parsonage. To Rev. and Mrs. Ophoff sons were born. The oldest, Fred, now deceased, was born on July 27, 1922. This was a year and a half after Rev. Ophoff assumed his labors in Hope Church. Three years later on August 23 George was born; this was in the year 1925, after the common grace controversy had reached its climax at the synod of Kalamazoo in 1924. George is now also in the company of just men made perfect. In the course of the years, two more sons were given to the family; Herm, now a member in Byron Center, was born July 26, 1927; and Ed, a member of Southeast, was born September 20, 1930.

As was so often the case in those days, women from the congregation came into the home to help Mrs. Ophoff with the work. The parsonage can still be seen if one wants to take the time to drive into the beautiful Riverbend area. Coming west on Riverbend Drive, the old parsonage is the second house from the corner of Riverbend and Kenowa on the south side of the street. From the picture included with this article, it is evident that the area was still a farming community. The church was immediately to the west

of the parsonage. The house now standing on the corner rests on the foundation of the old church building.

Rev. Ophoff's work was, however, the work of shepherd of the flock. This involved many different labors. Although there are few living today who were members of Hope during Rev. Ophoff's ministry, I knew a number of these people when I myself pastored Hope Protestant Reformed Church. I frequently talked with them about those years and their memories of him were vivid.

Rev. Ophoff's work involved, first of all, catechetical instruction. His instruction was, in itself, excellent. He was able to communicate to the children and young people the truth of Scripture in a forcible and unforgettable manner. But even in the instruction of the children of the church, his character became evident. He never managed to learn the names of more than a half dozen of his catechumens and he would constantly get their names all mixed up when he would call on them to recite. The ability to remember names and associate names with definite children were beyond him in most cases.

The children were also able to fool him into thinking they knew their lessons while all the while they would read the answers from their books propped up on their knees. He never caught them at this and it became a very common practice, especially among his older catechumens. These characteristics of his instruction were partly due to the fact that Rev. Ophoff always found it difficult to believe anything bad about a person—even though he held firmly to the truth of total depravity and understood its meaning. But it was also partly because he never had given any thought to the possibility that children might have taken their books along to catechism just for the purpose of reading their answer. In spite of these things, his instruction was forceful and successful, and he had



*Rev. Ophoff at the Hope parsonage.*

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little or no problem with discipline in the class.

His attitude toward his catechumens was always one of deep concern for their well-being and he would sometimes go to great lengths to give them instruction in things which he thought they needed. One example lived vividly in the memory of his catechumens, probably in part because it was for them somewhat embarrassing. Some time after the split came in 1924, the minister of the Christian Reformed Church of Hope, Rev. Vander Kieft, attempted to get some of Rev. Ophoff's catechumens into his catechism classes. When Rev. Ophoff learned of this, he took his class from his own catechism classroom with him to the home of Rev. Vander Kieft; and, in the presence of these catechumens, he proceeded not only to point out to Rev. Vander Kieft the error of such "proselytizing," but also the error of the whole common grace doctrine. Rev. Ophoff was convinced that his catechumens should witness this encounter to learn from it concerning the issues which divided the two churches.

Preaching is the chief task of a minister of the gospel of Jesus Christ. Rev. Ophoff took this part of his calling seriously.

There were weaknesses in his preaching, weaknesses which were in some measure unique to him. But there were astonishing strengths.

To mention some of these weakness first of all, one thing especially stands out. He was frequently late for the church services. One of those with whom I spoke, at the time a young person, recalls arriving at church in the morning with horse and carriage, and seeing Rev. Ophoff, in his pants with suspenders draped over his hips and undershirt, heading for the outdoor privy. This would assure them that once again their "dominee" was going to be late for the service.

In some instances, the consistory would wait for him in the consistory room until he came to lead the services. But at other times, concerned to get the services started on time, an elder would begin the preliminary parts of worship. This displeased Rev. Ophoff, and he was generally on time for a few weeks after such an event.

Other times, Rev. Ophoff would become involved with his consistory over some matter, and he and the members of the Consistory would forget about the time. If this happened, one of the members of the congregation, about five minutes after the services should have started, would go to the consistory room, knock on the door and shout: "'t is tidd broeders" ("It's time, brothers"). With that the consistory would solemnly file into the auditorium and the service would begin.

One reason for this tardiness (a tardiness which remained throughout his life and characterized many of his engagements) was no doubt his total preoccupation with his work. He was extraordinarily oblivious to the passing of time and did not seem to have much regard for the movements of the hands on the clock. He could become so completely engrossed in his sermon prior to the services that the time would slip by without his knowing where it went. Not even his wife could get through to him that he must hurry to be in church on time.

His late arrival at seminary on the days he taught classes was legendary. On occasion, aware that he was late, he would violate the speed laws in his haste and would have to pay the penalty of a traffic fine.

He often used the pulpit to reprimand individual members of the congregation for sins of which he knew they were guilty. This characteristic was also to cause him a great deal of trouble. Some of our older members will remember that years ago, when the members of the church were predominantly immigrants or children of immigrants, the position which the church occupied in the community was far different from today. It is hard for us to appreciate this. But especially in a rural community, the church was far more important than now. The church was at the center of all the life of the people. Often members of the church were community leaders and officials. The community had to police itself and was capable of doing this only because the majority belonged to the same congregation. But the result was that the consistory was thrust into a position where it was obligated to handle many of the problems which arose in the community. To the consistory the members would come with all their grievances against their neighbors. Mr. \_\_\_ charged me too much for a load of hay. Mr. \_\_\_ sold me a pig which turned out to be sick. Mr. \_\_\_ sold me a cow which gives half as much milk as he said it did and he will not reimburse me for the amount I think I have coming. Etc., etc. To these problems, even when they involved one or two members of the congregation, Rev. Ophoff would address himself in his preaching. It must be remembered, however, that although this was in a way making the "preekstool en steekstool" (the pulpit a whipping post), it nevertheless took a great deal of courage on the part of Rev. Ophoff to reprimand the congregation for sins of which he knew they were guilty. Nor did he care how important their place was in the community; the important thing to him was that they had sinned.

And yet, his preaching was powerful. It was unique. There were few who preached as he did. His tendency to

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be disorganized sometimes carried over into his preaching so that his sermons were not always the masterpieces of homiletics which one would tend to expect from a professor in the seminary. Nor were his sermons carefully and in detail worked out. Caught up in the preaching and excited by the Word of God which he was called to bring, he could often be so carried along by his preaching that the sermon on which he was preaching was never finished.

For all that, it was powerful preaching. It was powerful, first of all, because it was completely exegetical. Even in those days when the church was relatively strong, real exegetical preaching was not as common as we often think. Rev. Ophoff expounded the Scriptures. And the people heard him gladly, for through him the Scriptures spoke. It was powerful also because even then he showed his love for the Old Testament not only, but he showed his deep understanding of the character of the times in which the Old Testament saints lived. He could appreciate the Old Testament as few can. He could put himself into the life of the saints whose lives are described by the Scriptures as few preachers could then or can now. There were few then and are few now who could make the Old Testament come alive for the congregation as he could. Jacob was his favorite character and even those who were children in those days have vivid memories to this day of his sermons on Jacob.

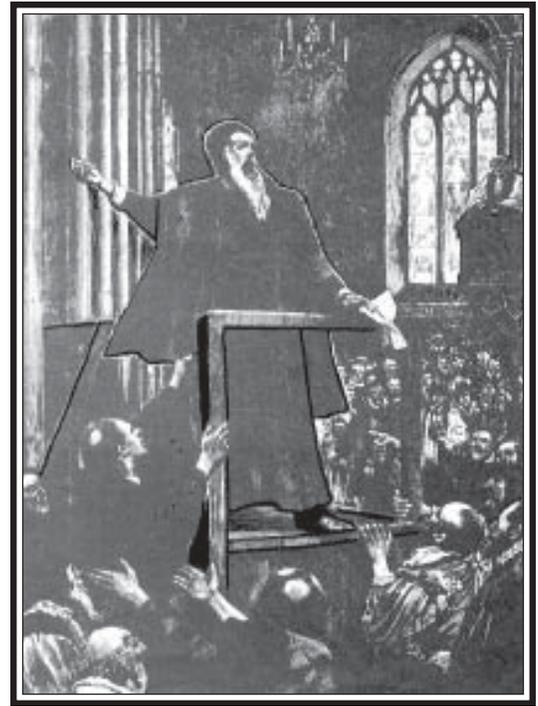
His preaching was also powerful because it was reformed. The glorious reformed faith shone through every sermon in such a way that the people, from the oldest to the youngest, could understand it. But this ability to make his sermons understandable was partly due to the fact that his preaching was down to earth, homely, filled with illustrations from everyday life, and carefully adapted to the needs of the congregation. Added to this was the fact that his language was sharp and forthright, clear and concise, utterly frank and open. I myself heard him preach rather frequently and some of his sermons have remained fixed in my memory. How well I recall his warning to girls not to try to buy their beauty at the corner drug store.

There was no question that his preaching was his power. Other things he had difficulty getting straight. In those days there were no bulletins and the minister was handed a list of announcements to read from the pulpit. But Rev. Ophoff's pockets were so jammed with old lists of announcements that sometimes he read three or four wrong lists and went through four or five pockets before the correct list of announcements was found.

Nevertheless, under such preaching and instruction the congregation grew. Then came the split. ❖

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



## Thomas Cranmer

by J. P. deKlerk

In this old engraving you see the English reformer Thomas Cranmer in the Cathedral of Canterbury, opposite the Roman Catholic Bishop of Dover, preaching against the mass, after the death of the reformed King Edward VI (on July 5, 1553), whose sister Maria was a fanatic follower of the Pope. Cranmer went a long way from priest (even Archbishop), via advisor of two kings, to reformer, with the help of friends of Calvin and Zwingli, fighting against mistakes and injustices, searching to find his way in times of much unrest all over Europe until he finally was condemned to death at the stake on March 21, 1556. He confessed openly that he had often stumbled and sometimes made wrong decisions, but he was a pillar of the Reformation in England, a defender of the faith. ❖

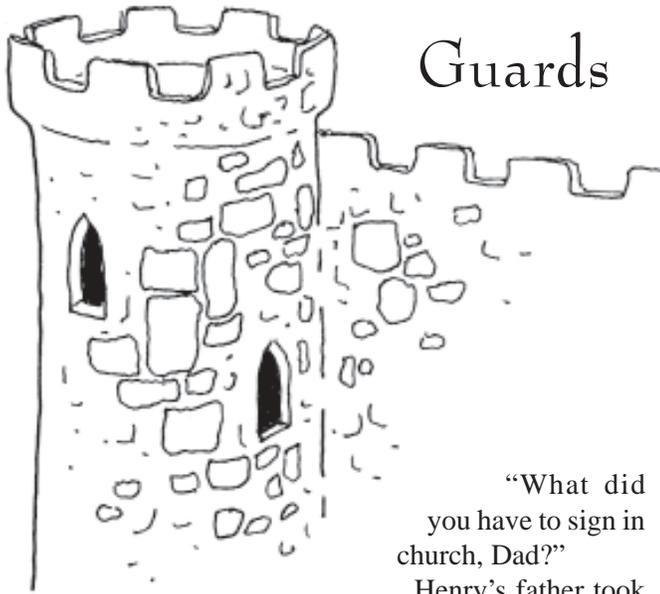
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*J. P. deKlerk is an author and journalist from Ashhurst, New Zealand.*

# "LITTLE LIGHTS"

*... let it shine!*

by Connie Meyer



Guards

“What did you have to sign in church, Dad?”

Henry’s father took his hand while they walked

back home from their Sunday worship service. The air was cold, but the sun felt warm on their faces as they went.

“It was the Formula of Subscription. Every new office bearer must sign it when he is installed.”

“But why?” Henry was curious about something that was obviously so important.

“It means that as an office bearer I promise to uphold and defend our Reformed doctrines and creeds. And you know what? It’s just as important now as it was hundreds of years ago when those creeds were written.”

Henry had to take quick steps to keep up with his father. “Why is it so important?”

“The same false doctrines and errors that attacked the church then, still threaten us today. Do you remember we talked about the Canons of Dordt?”

Henry nodded. He remembered something about them.

“At the Synod of Dordt our church fathers wrote down their defense of the truth of Scripture. That’s what we call the Canons of Dordt. What a battle of words and wills it was! It’s especially the errors that this Synod fought against and condemned that we have to watch out for as well,” his father said. “It’s like being a guard in the watchtower of a castle. The enemies can come from anywhere and they often wear many disguises—but they are the same old heresies and lies underneath.”

Henry and his father were nearly home, but Henry had one more question. “Dad, can I be a guard with the Canons, too?”

Henry’s father stopped and looked down at Henry. “Oh, yes. The truth is always very clear—so clear that even a child can understand it. In fact,” he led Henry to their door, “I think you know some of it already!” ❖

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

## Find the underlined words from the following portions of the Formula of Subscription in the puzzle below:

“We...declare by this, our subscription, that we heartily believe...that all the...doctrine...of the Reformed churches, together with...the National Synod of Dordrecht...do fully agree with the Word of God...

We declare, moreover, that we not only reject all errors that militate against this doctrine, and particularly those which were condemned by the above mentioned synod, but that we are disposed to refute and contradict these, and to exert ourselves in keeping the church free from such errors...

A	N	D	E	N	O	I	T	N	E	M	N
R	S	K	C	B	E	T	S	Y	N	O	D
C	H	E	A	R	T	I	L	Y	I	J	E
Y	L	R	A	L	U	C	I	T	R	A	P
B	U	W	D	H	F	S	P	X	T	C	R
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V	W	B	E	R	A	L	C	E	D	D	S
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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:

Samuel John, son of Mr. & Mrs. Ken VanPutten—Byron Center, MI

Danielle Jay, daughter of Mr. & Mrs. Jason Gunnink—Byron Center, MI

Sierra Grace, daughter of Mr. & Mrs. Brent Lubbers—Doon, IA

Jack Christopher, son of Mr. & Mrs. Tom Bergman—Faith, MI

Jori Sue, daughter of Mr. & Mrs. Joel Holstege—Faith, MI

Aubrey Mae, daughter of Mr. & Mrs. Titus Kamps—Faith, MI

Taylor Anne, daughter of Mr. & Mrs. Mark Koole—Faith, MI

Corie Lynn, daughter of Mr. & Mrs. Doug Kaptein—Georgetown, MI

Eric David, son of Mr. & Mrs. Dave Moelker—Grace, MI

Claire Elizabeth, daughter of Mr. & Mrs. Rick DeVries—Grace, MI

Allyson Joy, daughter of Mr. & Mrs. Mike DeBoer—Grandville, MI

Joshua David, son of Mr. & Mrs. Ryan Brunsting—Hope, MI

Silas Andrew, son of Mr. & Mrs. Chad Andringa—Hull, IA

Carter Robert, son of Mr. & Mrs. Scott Van Der Griend—Peace, IL

Jenna Grace, daughter of Mr. & Mrs. Paul DeJong—Peace, IL

Brody David, son of Mr. & Mrs. Paul Buteyn—Randolph, WI

Elaina Ruth, daughter of Mr. & Mrs. Ryan Regnerus—South Holland, IL

Josephine Rae, daughter of Mr. & Mrs. George Ophoff—South Holland, IL

Brianna Renae, daughter of Mr. & Mrs. Eric Smith—Southwest, MI

Megan Elizabeth, daughter of Mr. & Mrs. Jeff DeVries—Trinity, 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:

Brad Pastoor—First, MI

Erica Hillard—First, MI

David Baldwin—First, MI

Nick Dykstra—First, MI

Bethany Slopsema—First, MI

Lauren Feenstra—Grace, MI

Jaci Hoekstra—Hull, IA

Mr. & Mrs. Keith Bauman—Pittsburgh Mission

Mr. & Mrs. Ron Bauman—Pittsburgh Mission

Mr. & Mrs. Brain Suber—Pittsburgh Mission

David Mahtani—Pittsburgh Mission

Jonathan Mahtani—Pittsburgh Mission

Michael O'Neill—Pittsburgh Mission

Edwin Brown—Pittsburgh Mission

### MARRIAGES

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

*Matthew 19:5*

United in the bond of Holy Matrimony were:

Mr. Jason Elzinga and Miss Karen DeVries—Byron Center, MI

Mr. BJ Mowery and Miss Sarah VanEgdom—Doon, IA

Mr. Doug Mingerink and Miss Larissa Bodbyl—Grandville, MI

Mr. Hib Kuiper and Miss Missy Lubbers—Hudsonville, MI

Mr. Andrew Kuiper and Miss Kim Westing—Hudsonville, MI