

# Beacon Lights

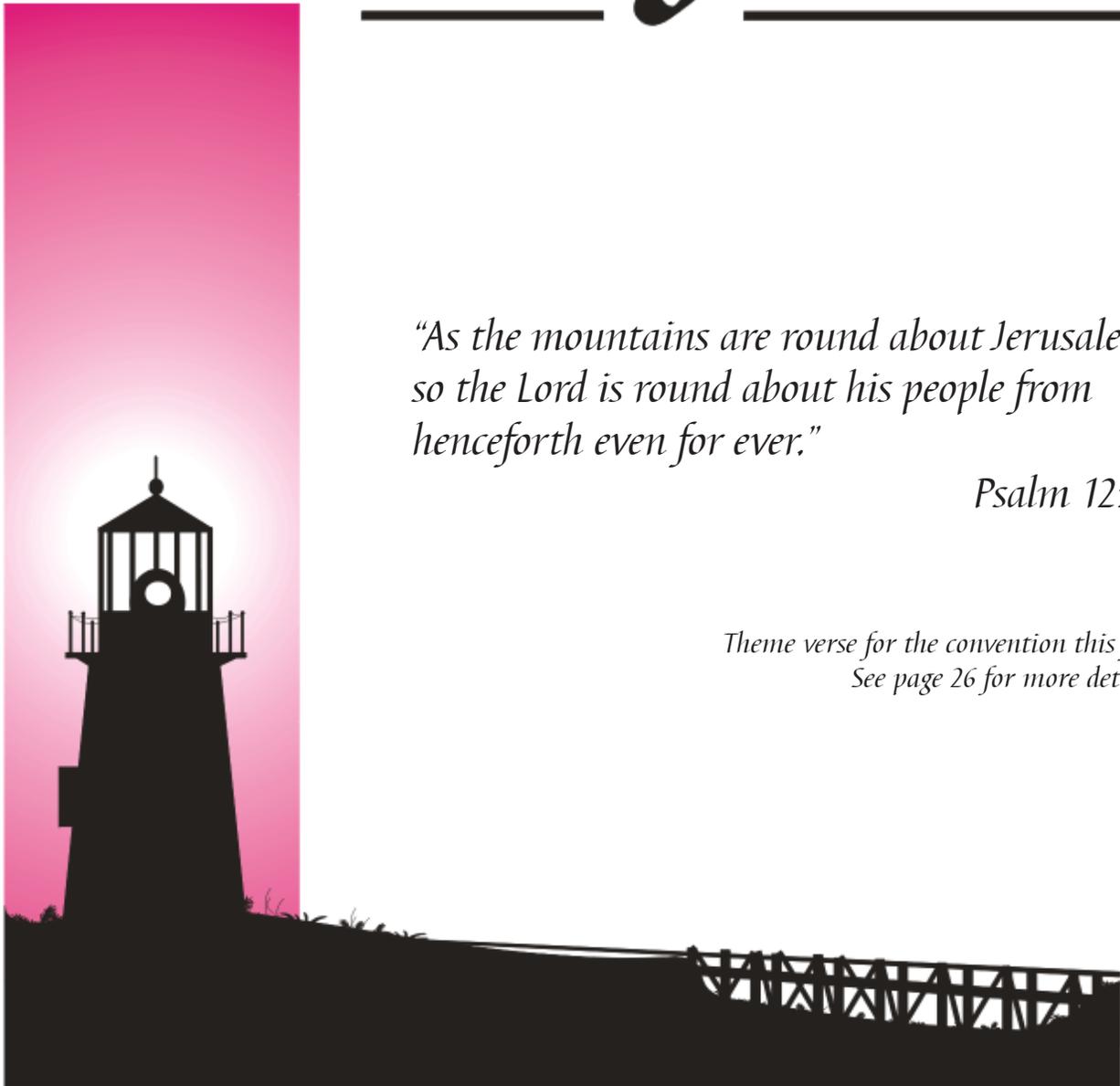
March  
2003

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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*

*Theme verse for the convention this fall.  
See page 26 for more details.*



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# A Beautiful Situation

by James Regnerus



Something in my high school and college experience made me suspect of people having a favorite Bible text. It smacked with pop Christianity and brought up images of Chicago Bear Walter Payton writing John 3:16 beneath his signature as he traipsed off to desecrate another Sabbath. Or classmates in college saying, “Well, such and such is *my* favorite text because to *me* it says....” and then they would continue with some litany detailing how they had contorted the text to make it fit their cozy shallowness.

However, after having taught a few years, I have an admission to make. I have a favorite. I pray I am not guilty of trying to make the text speak what I want it to say, but rather find that the truths of the text are often before me. In Psalm 48:9-14 we read, “We have thought of thy loving-kindness, O God, in the midst of thy temple. According to thy name, O God, so is thy praise unto the ends of the earth: thy right hand is full of righteousness. Let mount Zion rejoice, let the daughters of Judah be glad, because of thy judgments. Walk about Zion, and go round about her: tell the towers thereof. Mark ye well her bulwarks, consider her palaces; that ye may tell it to the generation following. For this God is our God for ever and ever: he will be our guide even unto death.”

Psalm 48:9-14 speaks loud. It makes us look at God’s goodness to us and see indeed how God has blessed us. The command is *not* to go about Zion as “nattering nee-bobs of negativism” (remember Spiro Agnew?) looking for the sins and foibles in others so that we can teach our children how to be respecters of persons. Oh no. The command is to mark or recognize the strengths and beauty of the towers, bulwarks, and palaces. That is what we show about Zion.

I’ve mentioned before that as a teacher, I sometimes have special opportunity to see this strength and beauty in the school setting. I share three.

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## “Why are none of the Protestant Reformed churches called Berean?”

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In Bible class (last year) we were studying the many churches Paul visited in the various missionary journeys. As we learn the names of the different churches, Lystra, Iconium, Derby, etc., the name Berea struck a note of recognition in some of the students. They had heard the name Berea, or Berean, before. It was seen on a church sign somewhere. So the question arose, “Why are none of the Protestant Reformed churches called Berean? We have Faith, Hope, Covenant, Emmanuel, Trinity, and so on, so why not Berean?” Good question, I thought. It deserves an answer. After all, the Bereans receive special mention in the Bible as being those who searched the Scriptures daily. Maybe that would be a nice church name. As a tactic to buy myself

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some thinking time, I asked the students what they thought about the matter. As is typical, most were reluctant to venture an opinion on so weighty a matter. However, one brave soul volunteered, (and I paraphrase as well as memory serves me,) “I don’t know if it would be right or wrong to name a church Berean Protestant Reformed, but all the names we use seem to point to God, and Berean seems to make it sound like the people are the main thing.” Gulp. Talk about “out of the mouth of babes.” (Ps.8:2a) See the tower of our children already seeing that worship centers on God, not us.

\* \* \* \* \*

In math we struggle with the concept of things that don’t end. For instance, divide 10 by 3 and you get 3.33, except the 3’s keep going. ( $3.\overline{33}$ ) Is that infinity? Or, when learning about rays and lines, the textbook tells us that rays have one endpoint and continue forever in the other direction; and that lines continue in both directions forever. Of course we are limited by the size of our paper as to how long we can actually draw the line, but we put arrows at the end(s) of the line or ray to represent the concept of it continuing forever. Does it? As the students mulled these questions, they came to some other considerations. Isn’t God infinity? Isn’t God forever? The students, through guided discussion, came to some sort of resolution of these struggles. The number that keeps dividing, or the line that keeps going, is not infinite in the way God is. These things are part of God’s created order which shall pass away with the coming of the new heaven and earth. Because of that it would be more proper not to use the word infinite, as that should be reserved for the incommunicable attributes of God. A better term might be “innumerable.” That is the idea the Bible uses for numbers bigger than our puny brain can handle, like the sand which is by the sea shore. (Hosea 1:10) God knows the number of grains of sand on the sea shore, the end of the number that keeps dividing, or where ‘the end of the line is; but it is innumerable to our mind. He alone is infinite. Mark the bulwark that the children can talk about and understand God in His creation.

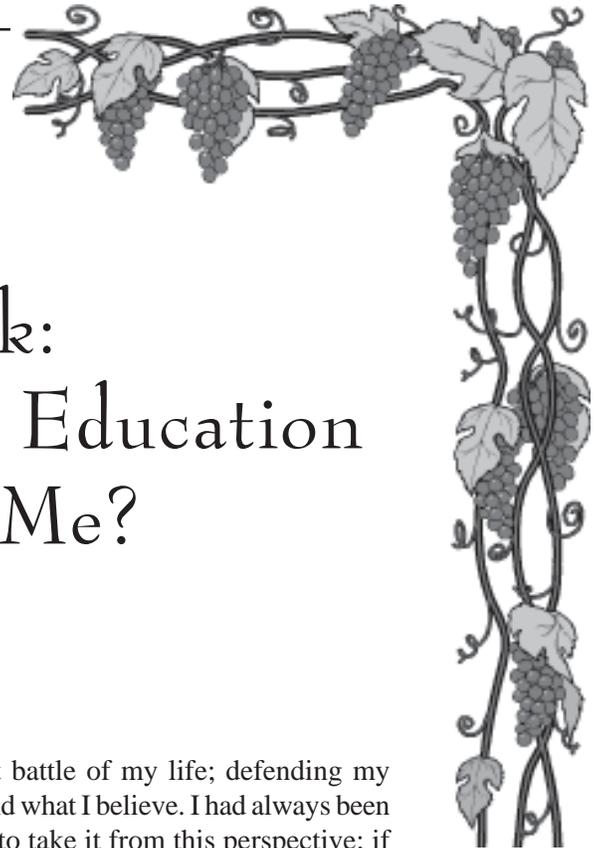
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How is electricity taught differently in our school compared to Central Lyon? Not very much, was my fear looking back over the unit in science we were winding up. There weren’t a lot of Bible passages I taught that gave the reformed slant on volts, conductors, or circuit breakers. So I didn’t know what I would get for answers to the question I put on the test to stimulate some thinking. “How is electricity a good gift from God?” was the question. The answer that won my heart was a simple, “it lets us use a microphone so we can hear the preaching of God’s Word.” It’s beautiful (and humbling) when a third grader reminds us that we experience God’s grace not in the thing itself, but in heeding the command to use electricity to His glory. Central Lyon does not teach the same electricity we do. Do you see our school as a palace?

As a teacher, I praise God for the Christian homes our students come from. As a parent, I praise God for the Christian school my children go to. Our homes and schools are “ours” for His glory. Let’s see that glory and treasure it. Tell it to the generation following. (Ps. 48:13b) ❖

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*James is a member of Doon Protestant Reformed Church in Doon, Iowa. This article was originally published in the “News and Views” from Doon.*



# Reflecting Back: Why Was My Christian Education So Important to Me?

by Faith Van Meeteren

**A**s a third year University student in a Liberal establishment I am incredibly thankful that I was given the gift of a Christian education. I can remember back as I was getting older, up towards the “big room” in our small school with a student body of sixty, how grown up I felt. I felt that I was ready for the world, ready for high school and like most of my friends, did not completely realize what I was leaving until after

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I felt that I was ready for the world, ready for high school, and, like most of my friends, did not completely realize what I was leaving until after graduation.

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graduation. I always enjoyed being able to play with all of my friends at recess and the fact that I knew every one by name. We read devotions every day and had the joy of singing every morning. In fact this was my favorite part of the day, singing praises to God. We had Christian teachers of the same faith and our friends shared this same hope in God. However, like many others I took all of these wonderful things for granted and assumed that this is the way the rest of my life would be like. I was incredibly naive. I did not realize how sheltered I had been. I did not realize that all these previous years of Christian education had been preparing me for the

biggest battle of my life; defending my faith and what I believe. I had always been taught to take it from this perspective; if someone would attack your earthly father how would you react. Undoubtedly we would respond with anger and want desperately to defend our father’s name. This should be all the more true with our heavenly Father. Who else is more worth of our complete

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respect and honor? He has sacrificed His only begotten Son for us. Article 14 of the Confession of Faith explains succinctly why He deserves our utmost praise, “But being in honor he understood it not, neither knew his excellency, but willfully subjected himself to sin, and consequently to death and the curse, giving ear to the words of the devil” (lines 6b-10a).

Today in my English class, I took the last final of my junior year. Immediately after the exam we had a

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class discussion in which I shamefully stood silent. Through out the entire year, at different points, the discussion in this class led to the perverse issue of lesbianism and being gay. I, however, was the only one that felt it to be a sin or at least was the only one who voiced an opposing opinion. During one entire session my professor was talking about how wonderful it was to be so open sexually. He said the only reason that many of us are heterosexual is because that is what we limit ourselves to. This angered me incredibly because I know what a terrible sin this is. My Christian education has taught me this and also taught me to defend the truth. I mentioned then what my feelings were about this topic. I also said that I believed homosexuality to be a sin. Needless to say, it angered the entire class and my professor. I honestly can say, that is one of the few times where I did not care that I had made some one angry because of what I had said or done. However, today again, they spoke again about lesbianism and only one other girl spoke out against it. I felt sick but I remained silent because I was sick of it. Perhaps I was also afraid. I did not want to put up with it anymore. I just walked out and left the class, thankfully for the last time today.

On the first day of class my professor did something that utterly appalled me. He, for the sake of ‘making a point’ read the first part of Genesis chapter one and each time God’s name was mentioned he replaced it with a characters’ name in the book we were currently working on. Quite simply this made me very angry. I see that this is a terrible sin and I know the truth and can defend it. It made me think that it is especially at times like these that I am so thankful for my Christian education.

Another point at which I was very thankful to have such a strong Christian education was during a section in my Biology class. I am sure the reader already knows which section I am talking about—evolution. It is quite appalling to me how, at this University, these “book intelligent” people can believe this and take it for the truth. I had to hold myself back from laughing because the more I read, the more my beliefs of Creation were confirmed. Evolution, Darwin’s descent with modification, has so many holes in it that it literally would take a stronger faith to believe it than to believe in Creation. Because my Christian teachers and parents worked so hard to teach me the truth about the Creation and how everything was formed in six days by the Word of God, I have wisdom, true wisdom, not foolish knowledge as these so called professors and other scientific “geniuses” have.

“I believe in God the Father, Almighty, Maker of heaven and earth...” (LD 7, A23). If we do not have this belief then what do we have? Who can we go to? Who can we trust? The answer would be no one. How thankful I am that I have had a strong Christian education with Christian teachers to help guide me in the way that was right as in Ephesians 6:1 which states: “Train up your child in the way he should go and he will not depart from it.”

Upon becoming a teacher, I would work my hardest to instill into my young students minds the Truth of God and His ultimate sacrifice and how by His grace alone are we saved. Christian teachers are so important in our schools and they deserve our respect. They teach the future church, our ministers, elders, deacons, mothers and fathers. I feel that as a teacher in one of our Christian schools that it is vital to teach our students the reality that “God has created, and by His providence doth still uphold all things” (LD 10, Q28). Only by this can our covenant youth learn to be patient in adversity, thankful in all things, and firm in the trust of their faithful God and Father. We must realize that without His will we can not so much as move (summary of A28). Reading the Bible, Bible lessons, singing praises to God, and brotherly love or communion of the saints would be held to the utmost importance. It is good to be book smart to survive physically in this world, but to be wise and grow

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We are in a great danger of  
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human wisdom and art.

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up in the Truth of God’s word is spiritual survival. I Corinthians 3:19, “For the wisdom of this world is foolishness with God; For it is written, He taketh the wise in their own craftiness.” We are in a great danger of deceiving ourselves when we have too high an opinion on human wisdom and art. Only those who follow the true instruction of God are on the way to true and everlasting wisdom. ❖

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*Faith is a member of Hope Protestant Reformed Church in Redlands, California. This article was written for the 2002 Protestant Reformed scholarship.*

## “I Am”

by Beth De Jong

*I am the One  
Who began before time  
to fashion all life  
in My sovereign rhyme.*

*I am the Creator -  
Sun, stars, and moon,  
Earth, humans, and beasts  
all sing to My tune.*

*I am the Footsteps  
echoing Adam's in the night air,  
and even in his fall,  
I was still there.*

*I am the Promise  
filling the morning sky,  
after Noah opened the ark  
and looked up on high.*

*I am the Fire  
shining bright through the night,  
leading Israel's blind children  
with My radiant light.*

*I am the Star  
the wisemen from afar followed,  
leading to a quaint stable  
by my Son, hallowed.*

*I am the Message  
filling the whole earth  
of forgiveness of sins  
from a lowly child's birth.*

*I am the Spirit  
working in your heart today  
hearing your thoughts  
as you kneel down to pray.*

*And yet, you dare question  
My plans for your life?  
You dare to wonder  
at your pains and your strife?*

*Child of God,  
sinful, fumbling lamb,  
your life is in My care  
for “I Am the I Am”.*

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*Beth is a member of Peace Protestant  
Reformed Church in Lansing, Illinois.*

Creation Through the Spectacles of Scripture

When I In Awesome Wonder...

The Golden Coast Of Michigan

## Signs of Passing

by Deane Wassink

**D**eer tracks are the easiest to spot on the shore when I am walking on the beach. The sharp hooves cut deeply into the sand when the deer pass through. As a result the tracks last much longer than the tracks of other animals.

I think daybreak is the best time to see what animals have come to visit the shore. They visit to get a drink of the sweet fresh water or to check out what can be eaten of the things washed up on the shore by the waves. It is the mammals that come at night. The deer come to drink. The possum and the raccoons visit to scavenge. Also, the mice come out of the dunegrass and woods to check things out. Especially the hard wet sand near the edge of waves holds the evidence for the longest time—as long

as the waves are quiet. I have only rarely actually seen the deer on the shore. I have never seen the other animals. Only their distinctive tracks tell the tale of their passing.

The daylight hours belong to the fowls of the air. They rely primarily on the light to spot potential food and watch out for enemies. In fact they follow each other, often using the behavior of other birds to zero in on dinner. It is most common to see the seagulls wheeling around an area that has food. One exception to this is the vulture, which can smell carrion from over five miles away. These Turkey vultures and even hawks or eagles leave heavy claw marks in the sand. All of these birds leave confused patterns of tracks in the sand like de-

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signer prints in the sand in groups, or singly, near dead fish.

Long legged shorebirds leave a zigzag trail along the beach or estuary. Ducks and geese leave much broader webbed tracks especially around pools after a storm or near the moving paths of streams that run across the beach into Lake Michigan.

The smallest creatures leave tracks too. When conditions are just right the tracks of ants, beetles and other insects can be seen crisscrossing the beach. These harder to find tracks can only be found in the morning after an early rain and before the sun dries the sand so that it crumbles and fills in the holes.

Often we walk down the beach not understanding or even noticing the many signs of passing that are there. How many people walked down the stretch of beach today? Were the people young or old? Large or small? Were they strolling, jogging, or beach combing? Maybe the people had a dog and were throwing a stick for it to fetch. At times it may be evident that they were riding a quad or a horse (Wow, does that ever sound like fun!). Maybe, a father was holding the hand of his child so that their tracks were always parallel to each other.

What would your tracks do on the beach? I have to admit mine wander and pause a lot as I check out the different things I see. If you would look closely you would see the flat resting spots of stones and driftwood where my tracks stop and I lift my discovery out of the sand and put it in my pocket.

What do you see as you walk in the creation?

Better yet, consider the tracks you are leaving for others to see. Of course, from a physical point of view, do your tracks wander in different parts of the creation looking at its wonder? Have you ever closed your eyes to imagine the actions of the animal whose tracks you are following? We should pause now and then to view the Creator's handiwork. Hopefully, we are not too consumed with our daily cares to pay attention to God's glory revealed there.

Let's look at "signs" in a different way. Are your spiritual tracks in the same path as the pilgrim footsteps of Christ? Often we wander about "beach combing" the temptations of the world. Our steps are hesitant, pausing at the pleasures of the world rather than striding down the paths of spiritual virtues like worship, prayer, devotions and hospitality.

What can others learn about you looking at your tracks in the sand? Are you leaving tracks you would be proud to have someone follow?

## Jesus' Tracks

*Jesus left tracks as a little Lad,  
Making twin hand and knee prints on the ground,  
When He crawled from Mom to Dad,  
From their knee level looking at the world around.*

*A little older, His five toed prints we read,  
Left as He helped His Mom with chores.  
Or, wandering He saw the wonder decreed,  
By His Father in the world out of doors.*

*We see the young Teenager working with His hands.  
With the rhythm of a carpenter's steps He saws and sands.  
With His friends and family He did laugh and play.  
He babysat, studied, and did chores each day.*

*A Man, grown up, at His work He stood,  
Earning a living for His mother, working with wood.  
Till His call came from His Father true:  
Son, "My beloved Son," You've My work to do!*

*Each day His tracks paused here and there,  
As preaching and healing the lost was His care.  
Encouraging and helping with a kind word,  
From healing the sick He had not demurred.*

*Our Redeemers tracks were straight and true,  
When, unwavering, He walked to the cross for you,  
Whom His Father had given to seek and to save  
Whose sin's price by His blood He paid.*

*His feet He dragged, scrapping in the dust,  
As He carried His cross upon His torn back.  
Our heavy burden of sin, carry He must,  
That we, blessing and forgiveness, may not lack.*

*Today, beside us, He walks from day to day,  
As we bear our cross on our pilgrim's way.  
A times, two tracks, at others, one,  
As He carries us through the trials that come. ❖*

**Correction:** The December, 2002 issue inadvertently printed the last line of the poem "Sailing Home" as "Sail home where trails will be no more." It should read, as "Sail home where trials will be no more."

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

# A Warning Against Spiritual Complacency— Revelation 3:14–22

by Bruce Koole

**L**aodicea was a city of great economic importance in the days of the Apostles Paul and John. It would never need any economic assistance from any other churches, thus financially speaking it was secure. However, their spiritual condition was so appalling to the Holy Spirit, that he twice writes about their great want in the epistle of Paul to the Colossians and in the last book of John (Revelation). Our Lord Jesus Christ does not look at any outward show of religion for the sign of faithfulness to His Word but he looks at the inward condition and when he did, his diagnosis was spiritual bankruptcy for the church of Laodicea. However, they were not as of yet lost to our Lord Christ Jesus but they could remedy their errors through repentance from their sin.

Geographically and monetarily speaking, Laodicea had everything going for it and may have been if not the richest church of ancient period, then one of the top churches, as far as terms of opulence go. It was chief city of the three cities located near the center of a fertile valley made by the everflowing river Lycus. The river Lycus, with its three cities of Hierapolis, Laodicea, and Colassae, was located 40 miles southeast of the city of Philadelphia. Hierapolis was on the northwestern bank of the river Lycus. Laodicea was on the southeast side of the river Lycus about 150 to 200 miles due east of Ephesus and not more than 10 miles distant from the city of Colossae.

Besides having fertile, farmland it also stood at the juncture of various trade routes and so it was a mercantile banking center. In fact, about 30 years prior to John's writing of Revelation, in AD 60, an earthquake had devastated the entire region. Rather than appeal to the Roman Senate for a customary subsidy, as was the Mediterranean custom, the opulent citizenry paid out of their own pockets the money necessary for the rebuilding of the city. Many of the farmers raised sheep from which the merchants of Laodicea manufactured cloth, garments,

and carpets, which were soft in texture and glossy black in color. In addition to these items it had a world famous medical school, which according to John R. Stott, "was connected with the temple of Aesculapius whose physicians prepared the Phrygian powder for the cure of ophthalmia, which was described by Aristotle."<sup>1</sup> Thus Laodicea by all earthly standards was not only wealthy but also very self-sufficient with its hospitals, universities, farms, banks, merchants, and factories.

This led the Laodiceans to even boast of their wealth as which chapter 3, verse 17 captures. They boasted "I am rich, and increased with goods, and have need of nothing." Rather than edify their fellow church members and spread the gospel witness with an ardor and zeal they directed their energies to the procurement, enjoyment, and distribution of their wealth. Quite often, they were probably more than ready to help other churches in need but their inward heart was still nauseating to Christ Jesus. This is why Christ explains their good works as neither hot nor cold, but as lukewarm (3:15-16). Christ is using the metaphorical language of a drink of water here. Christ wishes rather that they would be either hot or cold to a man's taste buds, not lukewarm. This is because on the one hand, a hot drink is pleasing to the taste and recuperating in its effect, while on the other hand a cold drink is refreshing and delicious. Lukewarm drinks, in contrast, turn the stomach of the swallower, disgusting him to the point of vomiting, which is the imagery used here by Christ Jesus when He states in verse 16, "I will spue thee out of my mouth."

This use of lukewarm attitudes would also mean something more to the Laodiceans because nearby in the city of Hierapolis, the lukewarm river Lycus had deposited a great amount of limestone, and by the hand of God it formed some impressive cliffs of limestone. Thus not only was Laodicea wealthy but it was surrounded by an impressive scenery. The luscious greenery of the valley was contrasted with the stark-white cliffs of lime-

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stone located off to the Northwest. The noises of the ever-bubbling and flowing river Lycus would relax the ears of a workman after a hard days work. The hills and mountains standing off in the distance, would rise far above the valley and stand as silent citadels of power and serenity. No doubt they also helped form some beautiful sunsets with an intermixing of purple, pink, and orange hues, reflecting off both the mountains and clouds. Living in a valley plus being situated near the Mediterranean Sea resulted in a climate that probably felt like an eternal summer. There was always enough rain to water the crops and for the sheep herds. In short, the situation of Laodicea was as close to a heaven on earth as one could get.

So the Lord rebukes them and tells them that in his eyes they “are wretched and miserable, and poor, and blind, and naked.” All their wealth, health, education, and beautiful scenery has only served to pull their eyes, minds, and hearts away from their one true teacher, Christ Jesus. His advice to them in verse 18 is “to buy gold tried in the fire, that thou mayest be rich.” That is, by the power of the Holy Spirit, they will overcome the trials of the Lord, and the temptations of the devil, and since they will become as gold purified by fire they will be rich in the Lord.

He further advises them in verse 18 to be clothed “in the white raiment” of Christ crucified, not in the luscious black wool of their valley. When they clothe themselves in the cross they will be “clothed, and the shame of thy nakedness will not appear.” Rather their sin, which was a red as scarlet, will become as white as snow. To Christ, the shame of the sin of Adam and Eve will be permanently erased from the elect citizens of Laodicea and they will be clothed with right garments for the final wedding feast of the elect with Christ Jesus.

His final piece of advice is that they “anoint thine eyes with eye salve, that thou might see.” The problem of the Laodiceans was that they were wealthy beyond compare, they were blinded to the beauty of Christ Jesus. By the eye salve of Scripture, they would again clearly see Christ crucified. Thus their eyes would focus on Christ and not on earthly goods.

But there is hope for the church of Laodicea. As Christ states in verse 19 “As many as I love, I rebuke and chasten: be zealous therefore and repent.” Although the church was naked to the eyes of Christ, nauseating to his taste, and poor in spirit, Christ rebukes them because he loves them and so that they might repent of their sins. This imagery of rebuke and reproof is further enforced by verse 20 when Christ states “Behold I stand

at the door, and knock: if any man hear my voice, and open the door, I will come in to him, and will sup with him, and he with me.” According to verse 20, the church of Laodicea has thrown Christ outside of the door and they now sup their Lord’s Supper without him. Inside of the door and in the church are his elect sheep whom he will rebuke and chasten out of an unending love for them. Christ Jesus stands at the door and calls out to his regenerated sheep to come and open the door. Their hearts have been rejuvenated and now they must heed his calling by coming to open the door and give witness of their regeneration. For when they overcome, he will come and sit with them and partake with them in an eternal covenant communion. For now their supper is lacking. Although they have all the money of the world and the best of food and drink, the presence of Christ Jesus stays away from their table. But, hark, hear the knocking at the door. It is our Lord and Master Christ Jesus, come to seek and save his sinning sheep. He cries out, “To him that overcometh will I grant to sit with me in my throne, even as I also overcame, and am set down with my Father in his throne.” Thus, although Laodicea has forgotten who gave them their wealth and health, He has not forgotten, nor will he forget them and because he will neither forget, nor forsake them, they will be rewarded with being able to sit on his throne unto eternity.

This is the situation in which the PRCA find themselves. They are wealthy beyond compare. They support about 15 grade schools and high schools, 27 churches, and Synod. They are still left with a great amount of money to spend on their own families. Yet despite all this wealth and support that we give to each other there is still a complacency, for each of us knows in his heart that we never have enough money to do what we really want. So we work longer and harder so that we might have the better vacation, the better house, the better clothes, and the better car. We think: all I need is a bit more money and I can do whatever I want. I can retire early and live like a king. Oh, we certainly do not forget the schools and churches but we do not feel the need to make sacrifices any more. We certainly give great amounts to the various collections and drives but rather than view ourselves as poor and wretched and naked we expect that the money will continue to just roll right on in and we glorify ourselves for how hard we work. We have forgotten how to sacrifice for the kingdom and rather give money like the rich man did, in the parable of the rich man and Lazarus. We give so that our conscience might be calmed and not out of love. We would rather spend our money on all the earthly entertainment

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available to us. We like our beer cold, our cigarettes warm, and our women and cars fast. We want to date and lust after babes and hunks but not godly men and women. We like to sit in a quiet theatre or in the quiet of our own home and watch those filthy, vile products of Hollywood, those movies and videos. It matters little whether they are innocent, cutesy cartoons from Disney or R-rated movies, we justify it all in the spirit of Christian Liberty, but God forbid that I should sacrifice some earthly carnal pleasure for his kingdom or that someone else should point out my faults. Then we rise up and

attack the messenger and ignore the truth of his message. Rather than admit to committing wrongdoing and repenting from it, we castigate and hurl accusations at the messenger pointing out that he is a sinner as well and he has no business judging us. Oh fellow Protestant

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We want to date and lust  
after babes and hunks but  
not godly men and women.

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Reformers, let us learn from the church of Loadicea and repent from our having grown complacent in our earthly lusts. By the grace of Christ crucified we shall. ❖

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<sup>1</sup> Stott, John R. *What Christ Thinks of the Church*. (Harold Shaw Publishers: Wheaton, 111:1990). 118.

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*Bruce is a member of Faith Protestant Reformed Church. This article was written for the 2002 Protestant Reformed Scholarship.*

Story Time

## A Writing Contest for You

**A**re you a student in school, a student in college, starting your first job, a parent, a farmer, a doctor, a teacher, secretary or a car salesman? It really does not matter what your station is in life. We are sure that you and every other reader have stories to tell which will serve to build others in our Reformed faith and give glory to God. Now is your opportunity to put your story into writing for some others to enjoy.

We know it is not easy to write, so here is some incentive. You have a good opportunity of earning a reward for your work: you could win one of six prizes. You fit in one of two categories. Writers currently in high school or younger are eligible for a \$100, \$50, or \$25 prize. Writers out of high school and older will be judged separately and are eligible for the same prizes.

God has given to each one of us many talents so let's explore them and use them for the glory of God.

This is what we are looking for. The entries must be somewhere between 800 and 2000 words. That's about two to four pages typed double space. The story needs to come from a distinctively Reformed perspective. This means, for example, that the characters or problem in the story should in some way convey our belief in a sovereign God who saves by grace alone and lives in covenant friendship with His people. We will leave the creative details up to you. The story could be historical fiction, fiction, or non-fiction. Finally, the entries must be postmarked by May 31, 2003.

Please send your entry to:

The Beacon Lights  
P.O. Box 144  
Randolph WI 53956

All entries must include your name, address, and the category for which you are writing (high school and younger or post high).

# Watching Daily At My Gates

by Cornelius Jonker

## **March 1 Read Luke 1:26-32, L.D. 11, Q&A 29**

We concentrate our attention on the first three words of the second article of the Apostles' Creed, "and in Jesus." We are making a confession that we believe in Jesus. Because each name of our Savior is of great importance, the catechism treats them separately. God Himself through the angel Gabriel said to Mary, "Thou shalt call his name Jesus." The name itself is rich in meaning: "Jehovah-Salvation." What a wonderful name! What an unspeakable gift! The mighty covenant keeping Jehovah saves His people from their sins in the person of Jesus. What does this name mean to you, dear reader? This Jesus is not for everybody. Many take this name on their lips superficially or in scorn. May this never be so with us, but may we rather be humbled and eternally grateful that by grace alone, this Jesus is our Jesus and He will be our Guide even unto death. Psalter 133:1 & 3.

## **March 2 Read Acts 4:10-12, L.D. 11, Q&A 30**

Is Jesus your complete Savior, dear reader, Who sovereignly saves you by grace alone, with no merit or works of your own? Many people believe that Jesus only made salvation possible and that man must accept this salvation himself in order to be saved. The Roman Catholic Church teaches that the one sacrifice of Christ on the cross was not sufficient to atone for our sins, but must be supplemented by a repeated sacrifice in the mass, and then others claim that there are various ways to heaven without Christ. Don't believe these terrible heresies! Our catechism rightly points out that we either believe in Jesus as our only and complete Savior, or we make ourselves guilty of denying Him. By God's grace, confess Jesus as your only Savior, children, young people, and adults, having the assurance that "he is able also to save them to the uttermost that come to God by him." Phil. 1:6a. Psalter 144:1, 4 & 6.

## **March 3 Read Romans 8:31-39, L.D. 12, Q&A 31**

Do you acknowledge that Jesus is not only your complete Savior, but that He is also Christ, the Anointed One? Jesus is His personal name. Christ is His title. He is the Anointed One from all eternity to be our Prophet, Priest and King. This affords us unspeakable comfort. As Prophet He speaks to us each Lord's Day when we hear "Thus saith the Lord." As Priest He is filled with loving devotion towards His people and intercedes for them with the Father. As King He has authority over all things and directs them in such a manner that His Church has the victory and every knee must bow and every tongue confess that He is the Lord of lords and King of kings forever and ever. Let us bow in gratitude before this Christ, our anointed

Savior, and by His grace strive to walk in humble obedience before Him. Psalter 200:1 & 3.

## **March 4 Read I Peter 2:1-5, L.D. 12, Q&A 32**

Are you a Christian? Many people will answer in the affirmative to this question without realizing what it really means. Most likely this name was first given in contempt by the Jews to those who followed Christ. Now it can mean most anything, but to be a true Christian means to take up Christ's cross and follow Him. This is a great privilege as well as a solemn responsibility. As partakers of His anointing we also have a three-fold office. As prophets we confess His name in the midst of a wicked world. As priests we consecrate both soul and body in every sphere of life to the living God. As kings we contend for the truth, fight against the devil and sin, having the blessed assurance that the crown of glory will be ours. This is all of grace, freely given to God's elect. Are *you* a Christian, dear reader? Thank God for this gift and be eternally grateful to Him. Psalter 100:1, 2 & 4.

## **March 5 Read I John 4:6-9, L.D. 13, Q&A 33**

We have made the confession that we believe in God our Father, the almighty Creator, and in Jesus, Who is the Christ. Now we confess that this Jesus is God's only begotten Son. There are several references to sons of God in Scripture, but in distinction from any other sons of God, Jesus is the only begotten, the eternal and the natural Son. Much has been written about this mystery and mere men always have, and always will deny that Jesus is very God Himself. It is very necessary that the Church jealously guard this truth that Jesus is very God. The catechism further points out that we, as believers, are also the children of God although there is a vast difference between Christ's sonship and ours. We are sons by adoption, determined from eternity, but made sons in time. And the only right to this adoption is the sacrifice of Christ on the cross. Are we truly thankful to our Heavenly Father for this blessing, and do we conduct ourselves properly as His sons? Psalter 76:1 & 4.

## **March 6 Read Psalm 8, L.D. 13, Q&A 34**

Do you confess that Jesus, the only begotten Son of God, your Savior, is also your Lord? Not just a lord among other lords, but One Who redeemed you, One Who delivered you from the devil's grasp, One Who owns you completely and totally. This Lord is sovereign, very God and all-powerful. There are those who acknowledge Jesus as their Savior, but deny Him as Lord of their life. If He is not their Lord, then neither is He their Savior. What a privilege to confess our faith

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in this Lord Who will never forsake us because we are His own precious possession, purchased at a terrible cost, His own lifeblood. May our daily walk be consistent with this spiritual confession. Psalter 14:1, 4 & 7.

**March 7 Read Matt. 1:18-23, L.D. 14, Q&A 35**

We are dealing with an event and a wonder that is impossible for man to comprehend because it is contrary to the normal process of conception and birth. Even as the sign of a virgin who would conceive a child without the will of man was given to wicked king Ahaz hundreds of years before, this very prophecy was fulfilled by God Himself in the fullness of time. Jesus was born from a human mother, the virgin Mary, of the seed of David. Except for being sinless, He was like unto us in all things, so much in fact, that He could properly call Himself “The Son of Man.” Whereas the preceding Lord’s Day pointed out that Jesus is true and eternal God, this one emphasizes His humanity. Do you believe this seemingly impossible event, dear reader? By faith we know that with God nothing is impossible. If this great miracle had not occurred, our salvation could not be accomplished. Thanks be to God for Immanuel, God with us. Psalter 243:1 & 2.

**March 8 Read I Tim. 2:1-6, L.D. 14, Q&A 36**

Do you know what a mediator is? This is one who brings into agreement or who reconciles two parties who are at odds with each other. Our catechism asks what profit we receive by Christ’s holy conception and nativity, and the answer states that He is our Mediator Who covers our sins in the sight of God. At first glance this answer seems strange, as if we are redeemed by this event alone. However, we surely can never separate His holy conception and birth from His perfect atonement on the cross. Since He had no original sin and was free from the guilt of Adam’s fall, He could and did cover our sins before God in which we were conceived and brought forth. What amazing grace and what undeserved favor we receive because of His mediatorial work. Thanks be to God for this great deliverance. Psalter 241:1, 2 & 3.

**March 9 Read I Peter 2:21-25, L.D. 15, Q&A 37**

We are considering but two words in this meditation—“He suffered.” Two words, but how profound they are, how utterly fraught with meaning and effect. All mankind suffers to some degree, but the suffering of the Savior was so unique that words fail to describe the depths of agony into which He was plunged. He was sinless, perfectly obedient all His life, yet He was a man of sorrows facing not only the enmity of the world, but carrying upon Himself the weight of the sins of His people. All His life the specter of the awful cross loomed ahead when He must face the wrath of God for the sins of all mankind and make propitiation for them. Oh, not for every man, head for head, nor just to make salvation possible for all men, but mankind in an organic sense. He didn’t die for a few individuals, but for the redeemed world, the world of God’s love. Ponder the significance of this suffering, dear reader, and stand in awe at the love of God. Psalter 47:1, 8, 9 & 10.

**March 10 Read Acts 4:23-28, L.D. 15, Q&A 38**

Jesus suffered under Pontius Pilate. The name of this Roman governor has gone down in infamy throughout the years as a prime example of the perversion of justice. We find this is still true today for there is a department in a popular monthly magazine entitled “That’s Outrageous!” and usually it depicts examples of miscarriages of justice by worldly magistrates. The question our catechism asks is why must Jesus, Who is the very essence of innocence, be tried and condemned by this wicked judge who knew He was innocent? Our Form for the Administration of the Lord’s Supper gives us this answer: “that he was innocently condemned to death, that we might be acquitted at the judgment seat of God.” Another reason is that the world, through Pilate, is tried, condemned, and exposed as evil. This world and all its wickedness will be destroyed but for those whose sins are washed away at Calvary, God declares them vindicated and righteous in Christ. Psalter 336:1 & 2.

**March 11 Read Gal. 4:10-14, L.D. 15, Q&A 39**

“Cursed is everyone that hangeth on a tree.” This New Testament quotation is a reference to Deut. 21:23. The very thought of this makes us cringe in horror. Whether a person was hung on a cross after he was killed by other means, or whether he died by crucifixion itself, this symbolized divine curse and condemnation. Suspended between earth and heaven, he was a picture of one who had no place on earth among men and no place in heaven with God. God’s curse came upon all men through Adam’s fall and we have just read in Gal. 4:10 “Cursed is everyone that continueth not in all things which are written in the book of the law to do them.” This curse was laid upon you and me, and without the removal of that curse by Christ on the cross, we would be forever lost. He was made sin for us. He took our place on that accursed tree and bore the punishment that we deserved. Now we are justified in God’s sight for He imputes to us Christ’s righteousness. Thank God for the cross! Psalter 162:1 & 2.

**March 12 Read Phil. 2:5-8, L.D. 16, Q&A 40**

The Son of God died! Do you really believe that? How can the Son of God, Who is very really God, enter into death itself? But it is true and the catechism gives the reason. God’s justice demands satisfaction and there could be no other way. This was treated in preceding Lord’s Days, but today’s answer points particularly to the necessity of Christ’s actual death. In death, one’s earthly existence ceases. Everything is taken from him, all his fame and fortune is forever gone. Death is punishment. Punishment for sin, as Adam heard: “in the day that thou eatest thereof thou shalt surely die.” Death is not annihilation, but a beginning. For the wicked, it is a beginning of eternal desolation. That’s why man fears death. Jesus had to taste death, all His life in fact, but He did it voluntarily from the beginning to the cross itself where He died. He entered into our death, overcame it for all His elect, and paid the ultimate price for their sins. Nothing else in the world could secure our redemp-

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tion. By faith let us embrace this Redeemer with humble and believing hearts. Psalter 272:1, 2 & 4.

**March 13 Read Mark 15:43-46, L.D. 16, Q&A 41**

Not only did Christ die, but He was also buried. This brief question and answer follows the setting forth of the death of the Son of God in the preceding Lord's Day. The Catechism states that He was buried to prove that He was really dead. If it just means that His burial showed that He really died, it is not an adequate answer. Did He not voluntarily lay down His life on the cross when He said "Father into Thy hands do I commend my spirit?" And what about the spear thrust into His side which produced a stream of blood and water as further proof? But we believe that the Catechism points out that Jesus must also enter into the final humiliation, namely, the grave, the place of corruption. He accomplished every aspect of death, thereby making full satisfaction for all our sins. Do you fear the grave? Our natural reaction is that of fear and dread. But Christ conquered the grave. We rose with Him. That is blessed comfort indeed. Psalter 29:1 & 3.

**March 14 Read John 5:21-24, L.D. 16, Q&A 42**

Why must we die if Christ died for us, the catechism asks? You will notice that a direct answer is not given, but rather speaks of the seeming contradiction between the death of Christ as an atonement for sin and the death of those for whom He atoned. If we were to escape physical death and all its accompanying suffering, we would have to be taken to glory upon our regeneration. And so we must know by experience how great is our deliverance by the grace of God from the pit of our sins and depravity. We are called for a time to live in this world as a witness for the cause of Christ and a testimony against the world of unbelief. In the prayer of our Baptism Form, our life here below is called "a continual death." The power of death with all its diseases, sorrow and suffering holds us in its grasp. Our great comfort, then, is that Christ delivered us from that power, and so death no more has the victory. Its sting is removed and upon death we enter immediately into glory, a blessed hope and comfort indeed! Psalter 31:1 & 7.

**March 15 Read Romans 6:5-9, L.D. 16, Q&A 43**

Another benefit that we receive from Christ's atoning death on the cross is given in today's lesson. Our old man is dead. What is our old man and what are the implications of its death? Our old man is our sinful and corrupt human nature which fell in Adam and lives unto sin. We are not only inclined to sin, but slaves of it, and the punishment thereof is death. Because Christ's death delivered the elect from the dominion of sin, they are declared legally righteous before God, and our old man of sin is buried with Christ. Does this mean though, that sin is dead in us? Not at all, for we sin as long as we live. But in Christ Jesus we are new creatures and then we hate our sin and daily cry out for forgiveness. We do not delight in sin but seek the things above and offer ourselves a sacrifice of thanksgiving to God. Are you sorry for your sins, dear reader? Do you more and more hate the wickedness of this world and strive to walk in godliness? Then be assured that you are the recipient of God's redemptive love. Psalter 69:1, 6 & 7.

**March 16 Read Acts 2:22-27, L.D. 16, Q&A 44**

This final article on the humiliation of Christ deals with His descension into hell. The article itself is not found in older copies of the Apostles' Creed, and many diverse opinions have been offered as to what this phrase exactly means. We believe the answer given in the Catechism is correct that Christ suffered all His life long, but which climaxed in hellish agony as He hung on the cross. I believe this was the worst moment in the history of time and who can even contemplate this scene without heart-wrenching emotion? It was a terrible experience for Christ, Who, though sinless, had to bear the heavy wrath of God for our sins as He cried out, "My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?" As terrible as it was for Christ, so inexpressibly blessed it was for us as believers who are delivered from the punishment that we justly deserved. Psalter 103:1, 2 & 4.

**March 17 Read Romans 6:1-5, L.D. 17, Q&A 45**

Did you begin your week yesterday by celebrating the resurrection of Christ? You did if you attended divine worship services in commemoration of the first day of the week when Christ arose. This great and glorious event is the focus of today's lesson. It is striking that eight Lord's Days are devoted to the suffering and death of our Savior, but only one to His resurrection, and that entirely from the viewpoint of our profit. Scripture in the New Testament abounds with passages testifying to the extreme importance of Christ's resurrection. Be that as it may, this glorious wonder is of utmost value to the church of all ages. Without the resurrection, the cross spells defeat, and our faith and hope is vain. But Christ has overcome death and by virtue of that victory, we are partakers of His righteousness, are raised up to a new life, and because we died with Him, we shall also live with Him forever. What a comfort for us when by faith we embrace this truth. Then as believers we can stand by the grave of a loved one with hope and not despair. We can smile through our tears and face our own death with the assurance of eternal glory. Psalter 28:3, 4 & 5.

**March 18 Read Romans 8:31-34, L.D. 18, Q&A 46**

Even as the resurrection of Christ was a wonder, so also was His ascension into heaven. Scripture tells us that as Jesus was blessing His disciples on the Mount of Olives, He began to ascend before their very eyes. Then a cloud appeared which enveloped Him and they saw Him no more. Scripture records nine appearances of Christ to His disciples after His resurrection only to suddenly disappear again. This time though they realized He was actually leaving them. As they looked up, two angels stood by them to confirm Jesus' departure with the promise that one day He would come again in like manner. The ascension of Christ into heaven affords us great comfort. He sits at His Father's right hand as our advocate and constantly intercedes for us. We are great sinners and every moment bring upon us the wrath of a Holy God, but He no longer sees us as we are in ourselves, but as we are in Christ, clothed in His righteousness. David even prophesied of this wonder in Psalm 69:18, "Thou hast ascended on high, thou hast led captivity

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captive....” A beautiful promise, a sure fulfillment, a wonderful Savior. Psalter 183:1 & 2.

**March 19 Read Matt. 28:16-20, L.D. 18, Q&A 47**

Yesterday’s lesson stressed the fact that Jesus entered bodily into heaven before the eyes of His disciples. In today’s question and answer, Christ’s ascension is treated in the light of His promise in Matt. 28:20 “and lo, I am with you always, even unto the end of the world.” Tomorrow the matter of the two natures of Christ is considered. There was a controversy between Lutheran and Reformed theologians regarding the natures of Christ at the time the Catechism was written. The catechism emphasizes, and rightly so, that in His human nature, Christ departed from the earth and went body and soul into heaven. In this respect He is no longer on earth, but with respect to His Godhead, which is His divine nature, He is never absent from us. That is almost too much to comprehend, that our Savior Himself, Who is majestic and very God, is ever with us by His grace and Spirit and makes us partakers of all the blessings, which He merited for us. We may and do falter and stumble into the paths of sin, but He never leaves us nor forsakes us. Rather, He brings us back to His blessed fellowship for His promises cannot fail. Psalter 249:1, 5 & 6.

**March 20 Read John 17:6-11, L.D. 18, Q&A 48**

Our lesson today treats the relationship of the divine and human natures of Christ. The question arises in connection with yesterday’s answer that if Christ’s human nature is not present whenever His Godhead is, doesn’t that mean that these two natures are separate from each other? The Catechism answers accordingly that since the divine nature is omnipresent, the human nature can never be separated from it no matter how it moves or where it goes. It also states that it is a personal union. In the Person of the Son of God, the two natures in Christ are inseparately united. When the Lord lived on earth His human nature was not separated from the divine, nor was there a separation when He ascended into heaven though there was a change of place. The Creed of Chalcedon, an important part of our ecumenical heritage, confessionally established the truth concerning the person and natures of Christ. We encourage you to read it and how they amplify this important statement: “to be acknowledged in two natures, without confusion, without change, without division, without separation....” Psalter 112:1 & 2.

**March 21 Read Hebrews 9:24-28, L.D. 18, Q&A 49**

The benefits of Christ’s ascension into heaven are multiple and glorious for believers. In the first place we have an advocate before the Father who pleads on our behalf, defends us, and obtains our justification based on His righteousness. Secondly we have our flesh in heaven, our entire human nature as to body and soul. Christ assumed that human nature and glorified it by His resurrection. By His own word He gave us this pledge: “And I, if I be lifted up from the earth, will draw all men unto me” (John 12:32). Thirdly, He sends His Spirit as an earnest. An earnest is a promise or assurance of what is to follow, or an advance on the full salvation that awaits us in heaven. That Spirit abides in us to quicken and transform us

from children of darkness to children of light. Then by the power of that faith worked in us, we say with the apostle Paul: “I am crucified with Christ: nevertheless I live; yet not I, but Christ liveth in me” (Gal. 2:20). These benefits are great and wondrous. May God grant that they are important and wonderful for you. Psalter 377:1, 2 & 6.

**March 22 Read Eph. 1:19-23, L.D. 19, Q&A 50**

What a great day for Christ and His church when after His ascension into heaven He was crowned King of kings and Lord of lords. Scripture speaks often of this high exaltation of Christ. Many psalms in the Old Testament pointed to this moment as well as passages in Isaiah, Daniel and Zechariah. The Lord Himself testified of this during His mock trial before the high priest, and the Pentecost sermon of Peter confirmed it. All power was given to Christ by the Father, and the catechism emphasizes the fact that He exercises this power as the Head of His church. He is seated at the right hand of God. This of course is a figurative expression because God has no right hand in the material sense of the word, but it signifies a position of majesty, authority and might. What a blessed day in heaven for the angels and the saints who awaited their Redeemer’s entrance. What a terrible day for the devils and the wicked in hell. The church is vindicated and divine justice prevails in the condemnation of the wicked. Our Lord is glorified and exalted. Let us also rejoice and give thanks! Psalter 303:1 & 3.

**March 23 Read John 10:27-29, L.D. 19, Q&A 51**

Not only is Christ exalted in heavenly glory as our Head, but also He exercises for our profit a twofold blessing. He pours out heavenly graces upon us His members, and defends and preserves us against all enemies by His power. Those are priceless blessings indeed! Without them the church could not exist. As members of His church, by nature we are slaves of sin and it has dominion over us. But when God by His Spirit enters our hearts and calls us through the Word of the gospel, we become willing to acknowledge Him as our Lord and walk in obedience and faith. Because of that antithetical walk, we become enemies of the world. They seek to destroy the church and use all means within their power to accomplish this task. The world is powerful and uses all their earthly wisdom, riches and resources to that end. Are we fearful sometimes when we face that persecution? Young people, are you ever ashamed to stand up for your faith when the world ridicules you? Parents, do you fear for your children or grandchildren as they face a hostile world? Then listen as Christ says to us: “Fear not, little flock; for it is the Father’s good pleasure to give you the kingdom.” Luke 12:32. Psalter 71:1, 4 & 5.

**March 24 Read Revelation 22:12-14, L.D. 19, Q&A 52**

Is this really a comfort to you today that with uplifted head you await the coming of Christ as judge? Most of us live quite comfortably from day to day. The world doesn’t bother us so badly, and don’t we often avoid confrontation with them and even go along with some of their practices to avoid reproach and criticism? Do we really long for, and look for Christ’s return? We must face this soul-searching question and look in our inmost heart for the answer. Even though sin lives in our

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members and we are attracted to this world, yet according to the new life within us that arises from a regenerated heart, we can answer this question in the affirmative most heartily. We do look for His coming then, not with terror, but with hopeful anticipation. And when Christ comes in like manner as He departed, He will cast all the wicked into hell, but take us to heaven to be united with all the elect saints who ever lived, there to be in His presence and experience joy and glory that we cannot even begin to imagine. Yes, we look for that day and pray: "Come Lord Jesus, yea come quickly." Psalter 58:1, 2 & 3.

**March 25 Read John 14:15-17, L.D. 20, Q&A 53**

I believe in the Holy Spirit! This is a simple statement, yet how profound and deep with great implications. Scripture abounds with references to the Spirit telling us Who He is and what He does. The catechism rightly points out that, first, the Holy Spirit is true and co-eternal God with the Father and the Son. Many names are given Him such as the Spirit of the Father and the Spirit of the Son, the Spirit of Life and Truth, the Comforter, and even more names. Secondly, we are told that as the Spirit of Christ, He is given to us in a very personal way so that we may partake of benefits that are indispensable to us as believers. He works faith in our hearts and dwells within us. He gives us comfort and assurance that He will never leave us nor forsake us. He takes our prayers, which are often weak and sinful, and perfects them "making intercession for us with groanings that cannot be uttered" (Romans 8:26). He was poured out upon the church at Pentecost as the Spirit of the exalted Christ. Let us thank God for this precious gift, and confess with heartfelt conviction: "I believe in the Holy Spirit." Psalter 287:1 & 3.

**March 26 Read Acts 13:44-48, L.D. 21, Q&A 54**

You will notice when we recite the Apostles' Creed that we say "I believe *an* holy catholic church." It is important that we believe *in* God and *in* Christ and *in* the Holy Spirit, but we do not believe *in* the church itself. For then we would place all our trust and confidence in a church for our salvation. But we surely believe and confess that a holy and catholic church exists, and that church is God's church, all the elect that He chose in Christ from eternity. Because He loves that church, He gathers it, defends it, and preserves it by His Spirit and Word. That church is redeemed by the precious blood of the Son of God. It is a holy church, not because the members are sinless, but because they are sanctified in Christ. It is a catholic church that means it is universal. It is one organic whole, from Jew and Gentile, male and female, bond and free. Every elect believer has a place in that church and remains a living member of it. It is founded upon the truth of God's Word and although it remains small and despised in the world, yet it is most precious in God's sight. May we count it a privilege to be living members of that church. Psalter 239:1 & 2.

**March 27 Read I Cor. 12:18-27, L.D. 21, Q&A 55**

Yesterday we described the meaning and concept of the holy catholic church. Today's lesson deals with that body as a communion of saints. It describes the members' bonds with each

other and their duty to use their gifts for the advantage of others that God may be glorified. To reflect that glory in their actions and words is the communal purpose of all the saints. Just as there is diversity of members in our physical bodies, so is there diversity of gifts in the communion of saints. God in His wisdom determined each person's place in the world and gave to each their own peculiar characteristics and talents. In the church there is a basic unity, but also diversity. Our bodies could not function if some of its members were isolated from the others. So also it is in the Body of Christ. We need each other. We are called to use our gifts in the service of fellow members. Are you doing that children, young people, and adults? It is not only your duty, but it is a privilege as well. Psalter 369:1-3.

**March 28 Read II Cor. 5:17-21, L.D. 21, Q&A 56**

Can you think of anything more fundamentally blessed and necessary than forgiveness of sins? Sin is an ugly little word but it encompasses a multitude of evil thoughts, words, deeds and desires. Sin is a cruel master that holds us in its grasp, and apart from regenerating grace and the convicting work of the Holy Spirit, we would stand eternally condemned and lost. But God, who is rich in mercy for the sake of Christ's sacrifice on the cross, imputes to us His righteousness. In Psalm 103:12 we read: "As far as the east is from the west, so far hath he removed our transgressions from us." This is amazing when you stop and consider: *How far is the east from the west?* If you continually go east, you can never reach west. That's how far our sins are removed from us. Does this mean then that our battle against sin is over in this life? Not at all, for sin constantly cleaves to us and will as long as we live. Let us then daily confess our sins with heartfelt sorrow, and experience the joy of forgiveness. Psalter 83:1 & 2.

**March 29 Read I Cor. 15:51-58, L.D. 22, Q&A 57**

Young people, as you are busy in the prime of your life, do you ever stop and think about death and the grave? And to put it more pointedly, do you think about your death? To be sure, those who are older naturally consider this event more frequently than the young, but we do not know for certain when the time of our death is at hand. Do you quickly put it out of your mind, or can you face it without dread and with a certain expectation? The Heidelberg Catechism is unique among our confessions with its emphasis on our experiential and personal comfort that we derive from our faith. Today's question and answer is another example of this perspective. We do not have to fear the grave for we are convinced upon the veracity of Scripture that immediately after our death we shall be with Christ and that our bodies shall be reunited with our souls. This is a glorious prospect! Live your life each day then in readiness to meet your Maker and be assured of your own resurrection unto eternal life because of Christ's atoning death and resurrection. Psalter 311:1-3.

**March 30 Read II Cor. 5:1-6, L.D. 22, Q&A 58**

Who of us can even begin to understand the concept of everlasting life? We are earthly creatures, we think earthly thoughts and we are bound by time itself. Faced with the idea of eternal

life, we can only stammer as we try to explain it, for our earthly minds cannot fathom it. Our answer in the catechism today gives us a glimmer of it though, that it will be glorious beyond our fondest imaginations. What really is life? God is Life! Anything else is darkness and death. Life is energy and action. It is harmony between God and His creatures. Eternal life is resurrection life and cannot possibly be realized except through the death and resurrection of the Son of God. Since it is based on the righteousness of Christ, it is everlasting. It can never be lost therefore. We as believers, then, even now in principle, enjoy the beginning of everlasting life. Our experience of this is not always one of perfect confidence, but its reality cannot and must not be doubted. Pray for that assurance and be comforted in that wonderful promise of glory in heaven. Psalter 405:1, 6 & 7.

**March 31 Read Romans 4:1-5, L.D. 23, Q&A 59**

The catechism has treated each article of the Apostles' Creed in the foregoing questions and answers, and now, looking back

as it were, asks us the question: "What profit is it to you that you believe all that?" The answer rings out from the Tribunal of God: "Not guilty!" How can that possibly be? Not only are we partakers of original sin in Adam, but we constantly sin in thought, word and deed. Before the Judge of all the earth we stand condemned. But amazingly, we are declared righteous before God and heirs of eternal life. This could only be possible because of the righteousness of Christ. He took upon Himself our sins and so legally before God we are pronounced innocent. This is Justification, a wonder of grace, whereby the corrupt and damn worthy sinner is pronounced righteous and worthy of eternal life. Even though our conscience accuses us daily of transgressing the law of God, yet we have the blessed testimony in our hearts that faith has the victory. Let us thank God for this great benefit each day, and look forward to praising Him in all eternity for that great salvation in Christ. Psalter 81:1-4.

The Reader Asks



## New Rubric Title: "The Reader Asks"

Do 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. *Beacon Lights* invites you to try out our new rubric called "The Reader Asks." 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).

# No Other Gods

by Melissa Van Baren

It would be interesting to analyze music (whether worldly or church) in the light of the Ten Commandments. The Commandments are the rule of life that God has set before us and are applicable to every part of our life. In my next few articles I intend to do just that, and I would like to ask you to look at music in the light of the Ten Commandments as well. Since there is so much music out there I will only be able to make a generalization, but hopefully it will give a bit of insight.

The first commandment we all know well. “Thou shalt have no other gods before me.” (Numbers 20:3) The second is closely tied with the first so we shall consider them together. The second reads as such, “Thou shalt not make unto thee any graven image...” (Numbers 20:4a) It is quite amazing how deep this is. To most of us who live in a nominally Christian world, it seemingly is quite an easy commandment to follow. It’s easy enough to say, “well, I don’t fall into that category, I don’t worship images made by stone or wood.” I must admit—most of us don’t. Have we considered the deeper side of this commandment though? What does our Catechism say about this?

“What doth God enjoin in the first commandment? That I, as sincerely as I desire the salvation of my own soul, avoid and flee from all idolatry, sorcery, soothsaying, superstition, invocation of saints, or any other creatures: and learn rightly to know the only true God, trust in Him alone; with humility and patience submit to Him; expect all good things from Him only; love, fear, and glorify Him with my whole heart; so that I renounce and forsake all creatures, rather than commit even the least thing contrary to His will.

What is idolatry? Idolatry is, instead of, or besides that one true God who has manifested Himself in His word, to contrive, or have any other object, in which men place their trust” (Lord’s Day 34: Q&A 94 & 95).

What an interesting article to consider! We forsake ALL things that have to do with anything else other than God. This means in music as well. We must desire to flee all things that do not glorify our God. How do we violate this commandment in music? Let us take a closer look.

There are many, many songs out there that are out and out wrong. We all know this. Those who listen to this type of music know this, but what about the other “questionable” ones? Where can we go wrong with some of this “other” type of music? Yes, this means the soft rock, country, hymns, etc. Have you looked at this music to the light of scripture? Where do we go wrong in listening to some of this music? Tell me, where does it glorify God? Should we be listening then?

What about the music where people are pledging there love one to another and say “oh all we NEED is love?” Does that sound correct? Should we be listening to the type of music telling us that all people need is love? Does not God fit into their lives? I thought God was the one who filled ALL our needs! What about those songs that swear by this thing and by that item? Do we need to be listening to that type of music?

Let us look deeper yet. When looking at the catechism we notice a few prominent things that God warns us about. One of the main things is idolatry. This is the reason those who wrote the catechism spend another question and answer on this subject. We are not to place

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with them.

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our trust in anything BUT God! What do you and I do when we look at the musicians of the world? This holds for ALL types of music. It ranges from classical, to rock, to country, and Christian music. We IDOLIZE them! What marvelous players and singers they are! What talent they have! Where does God fit into this whole picture? Nowhere, we are putting them up on a pedestal and praising *their* work. Not God. We are all guilty of this; it is human nature.

Idolatry in music is something that surrounds us on all sides no matter the age or preference of music. How often don't we see the worldly children say "I would do ANYTHING to go to a Brittany Spears concert or to go and see the Back Street Boys." We see this in the age groups all the way up. If we take it one step up, we see that age group saying "If only I could see the group Chicago or go and see Garth Brooks." How about all of you that are one step up from that yet? Those who have paid for Beach Boys concerts and went to go and see the Beatles. How about it grandparents? (no you are not excluded either) Remember good ole Buddy Hallie and Elvis? Admit it, there is something drawing and attractive to this worldly music. We LIKE their music. We idolize them and look up too them. We dress like them, act like them, and sing along with them.

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How many of us have said, "I will do ANYTHING to go to church and to sing the songs of Zion that God has composed"?

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All of these music artists, and many more, were idolized by the world and to some degree by that of the church world as well. Don't we and didn't we love their music? Yet, how many of us have said, "I will do ANYTHING to go to church and to sing the songs of Zion that God has composed"? We could all probably all count on one hand the times we have said that (at least I could!). It's a bit of a troublesome thought if you ask me. It is especially hard hitting when we look at how many times we idolize the world's music verses at times when we have God's.

Let us consider this issue a bit farther. How about that of the "Christian Rock" (which seems a bit of an oxymoron if you think about it)? How many times have

we looked up to these singers and glorified their voices? We praise them and their talents and we look up to them. Is God really in the picture then? Do we express the same feelings for the praises of the congregations as we do for these singers? Can we really say that this singer is that much more glorious than the sinner in the pew singing out of thankfulness to God? Are we to idolize them? NO it is to God that we turn.

We enjoy the worldly music and hymns written by others but what happens when it comes to the music that GOD has composed? Sit and really think about it once. God has given us a blessed book with which to sing praise to Him. What more could we possibly need? Do people make better composers than God? How could God be

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Young people, do you listen to the praises of God in your car and room? Or is it too stuffy for you?

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more glorified by songs written by man? Our God is a "jealous" God. Young people, do you listen to the praises of God in your car and room? Or is it too stuffy for you?

Every reader has to admit that he has transgressed the first and second commandment many times in the area of music. I am thankful that our God forgives us and we do have His psalms with which to praise Him. Sing to the Lord in His rich mercy and loving kindness. Yell His praises from the house top. Be excited to go to Church to sing God's Songs that He has lovingly composed for us. What a Great God we have!

"I will sing of the mercies of the Lord for ever: with my mouth will I make known thy faithfulness to all generations" (Psalm 89:1).

"With joy I heard my friends exclaim, Come, let us in God's temple meet; Within thy gates, O Zion blest, Shall ever stand our willing feet" (Psalter 350 vs. 1). ❖

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# Arminianism (2)

## A Biography of Arminius' Life

### from 1560 to 1593

by Aaron J. Cleveland

We ended last time with Arminius preaching in Amsterdam on Romans chapter 9. His preaching brought to light the fact that two parties existed within the church of Amsterdam. There were the Calvinists and the sympathizers of Arminius. In the year 1593, the consistory had smoothed matters over to the point where both parties could live peaceably together.

Much was also taking place within Arminius' household during these years. In June of 1593, a daughter, Engeltje, was born. This was the first of his children to survive into childhood. In December of 1594, a son, Harmen, was born. In October of 1596, another son, Pieter, was added. In August of 1598, another son, Jan, was born. Laurens (a son) was born in May of 1600. However, he died in December of the same year. In September of 1601 another son was born, and again the name Laurens was used.

It is during his later years as a minister in Amsterdam that Arminius began to come to a clearer position in his views. He wrote, for example, the *Examination of Perkins' Pamphlet* (not published until after his death), in which he took many positions contrary to the Calvinistic view of God's grace and man's will. On these subjects Arminius wrote that "grace is present with all men, by which their free will may be actually bent to good; but that there is in all men such a will as is flexible to either side upon accession of grace" (*The Works of Arminius*, Vol. 3, pp. 470-71). Further, he writes:

It is unavoidable that the free will should concur in preserving the grace bestowed, assisted, however, by subsequent grace, and it always remains within the power of the free will to reject the grace bestowed and to refuse subsequent grace, because grace is not an omnipotent action of God which cannot be resisted by man's free will (Ibid., p. 470).

It is clear from the positions that Arminius was setting forth in both his preaching and writing, that while he claimed to be Reformed in every respect, he taught doctrines which were contrary to the Belgic Confession and the Heidelberg Catechism. He was beginning to earn a name for himself throughout all of the Lowlands.

In the years 1601-02, the plague took thousands of lives. Among those who died was Lucas Trelcatius, a professor of theology at Leiden. Junius, another professor at Leiden, died a short time later. This left two vacancies at Leiden which urgently needed to be filled. Arminius' name came up almost immediately. Gomarus, already a professor at Leiden, fiercely protested the idea of Arminius teaching at Leiden. The curators, after hearing many opinions both for and against Arminius, decided to go ahead with calling Arminius.

One problem with calling Arminius was convincing both the burgomasters and the consistory of Amsterdam to release him from his duties there. No doubt many in the consistory of Amsterdam were opposed to Arminius instilling his views into the minds of the future ministers of the Reformed churches. Finally, both agreed to release him from his duties. However, before Arminius was to take up his labors in Leiden, he was to have a conference with Gomarus to go over any differences they might have. This they did to the satisfaction of Gomarus. He later regretted his decision.

Arminius was appointed to be a professor of theology at Leiden on May 8, 1603. In June, he moved his family to Leiden. The same month, another son, Jacob, was born into his family. Willem, another son and his seventh living child was born in May of 1605. Daniel was born in November of 1606. Finally his daughter, Geertruyd, was born in September of 1608. Arminius and his wife had twelve children, nine who survived past infancy.

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It was shortly after Arminius moved to Leiden, that he began to experience many bouts of sickness, some which lasted for weeks at a time. It is suspected that he was beginning to suffer from tuberculosis. He describes his illness in a letter he wrote to an Amsterdam burgo-master after the death of one of his colleagues in Amsterdam. He writes

But justly do you remark that he has gone before: we shall every one of us follow, each in his own order,—the thought if which is constantly impressed upon my mind by a catarrh which now assails me at no rare intervals, affecting sometimes the chest, sometimes the bowels, sometimes the stomach. He who is ready to administer final judgment on all mortals has sent this as a warning; and thereby he orders me to moderate the grief I feel for the decease of my friends, whom, perhaps, after not many years I shall follow (Bangs, p. 251).

Arminius was examined and approved by Gomarus and two other professors on June 19, 1603. On July 10, the title of Doctor of Theology was conferred upon him. In September he took up his teaching. Almost immediately he was at odds with Gomarus on the doctrine of predestination. Plancius, Arminius' colleague in Amsterdam, was also behind the scenes, trying to get Arminius' views out in the open.

On February 8, 1606, Arminius' term as *Rector Magnificus* ended. It was customary at this time for the professor stepping down to give an address, and Arminius did so on the topic, "On Reconciling Religious Dissensions Among Christians." In it he called for a national synod to solve the theological problems that existed among the Reformed. However, the national synod that Arminius desired would be both called and controlled by the magistrates. Arminius, throughout his life, held to the view that the civil government had the power to both rule and carry out discipline in church affairs. Whether Arminius believed this as a matter of conviction, or whether he had reason to believe that those in power were sympathetic to his views, is hard to tell. Whatever the answer is, Arminius was able throughout his whole life to avoid the judgment of any ecclesiastical assembly on his errant teachings.

Another significant event in these unsettling years, both politically and religiously, was Arminius' conference with Gomarus. This was yet another attempt by the two to settle their differences. They appeared before the High Court (a civil court), and after they debated, both men were instructed to put their opinions into writing.

This they did, and on October 30 Arminius presented his "Declaration of Sentiments" before the assembly of the States of Holland and West Friesland in the Hague.

In his "Declaration" he sets forth his positions regarding predestination, God's grace (it is resistible he says), man's will, the perseverance of the saints, and many other doctrines. About the Belgic Confession he said, "let it be attempted to make the confession contain as few articles as possible." He added, "Let all the more ample explanations, proofs, digressions, redundancies, amplifications and exclamations, be omitted" (*The Works of Arminius*, Vol. I, pg. 724). Gomarus presented his views later that year, on December 12.

In early 1609, Arminius had a very serious attack of his illness. It is during this time, that Arminius was reminded by the synodical deputies that he had not yet given them his criticisms of the Catechism and the Confession, as he had promised. Arminius said that he would have done so in writing, but that the States requested that he send his opinions to the States, sealed.

The States now tried to avoid a synod and wanted the two Leiden professors to come to a settlement at a conference. On August 13, 1609, in The Hague, at the request of the States of Holland, Arminius and Gomarus met in conference. The goal of the conference was to determine their doctrinal differences so that they could be put before a national synod. Each of them was allowed four advisers. Among Arminius' advisers was Uitenbogaert. Among Gomarus' advisers was Festus Hommius. Both of these men would play important roles later in the controversy leading to the Synod of Dort 1618-19.

Discussed at the conference were the doctrinal issues of justification, predestination, (ir)resistible grace, free will, and perseverance. Also discussed was the relation between the synods and the magistrates. The conference ended after a few days when Arminius became sick. Both sets of advisers were then called to give their opinions on the issues discussed. The advisers of Gomarus saw the only solution to be a provincial or national synod to come to a conclusion in the matters. Uitenbogaert insisted upon church discipline being carried out by the magistrates. Arminius was unable to submit his views in writing, as instructed, because of the severity of what would be his final illness. Gomarus submitted his.

Arminius was now confined to his sickbed at home. Many friends visited during the next month, including one of his adoring students Simon Episcopius,

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the leader of the Arminian party at the Synod of Dort. Uitenbogaert was also with him during his last days. On Monday, October 19, around noon, Arminius died at about 50 years of age.

Now that we have completed a brief sketch of Arminius' life, we intend in the next article to examine Arminius' character and personality. Related to this, we will from various passages in the Bible, see the picture that is painted of false teachers. Having God's definition of a false teacher before our minds, we can then proceed to examine the doctrines which the Arminian party taught and the tactics they employed.

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Biographical facts concerning Arminius' life have been taken from the book: *Arminius: A Study in the Dutch Reformation*, by Carl Bangs. The Zondervan Corporation, Grand Rapids, MI. 1985.

Arminius writings have been taken from *The Works of James Arminius, The London Edition*, translated by James Nichols and William Nichols. Reprinted 1999 by Baker Book House Company from the London edition.

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## Church History

# George M. Ophoff (5)\*

by Prof. Herman Hanko

### The Grand Rapids of George Ophoff's Youth

In the last decade of the 1800's Grand Rapids was quite a different city from what it is now. It was of course, not nearly as large. It had none of the fruits of modern advances in technology which we take so much for granted today. Many of the roads were dirt covered - rutted and rough when wet or frozen, dusty and hot in the summer months. The economy of the city centered in furniture manufacturing which made Grand Rapids famous throughout the country as the furniture capitol of the world. Private transportation was by means of horse and carriage, for Henry Ford had not yet made his Model T the possession of thousands. Public transportation was chiefly by streetcars which ran on tracks in the middle of brick-paved main thoroughfares. Electricity was, in most houses, a luxury for the future. Water was still pumped out of wells or collected in cisterns in many places. Toilets were outhouses which had periodically to be emptied by "honey wagons." Peddlers, pushing carts or riding wagons pulled by a tired and scraggly horse, sold everything from bananas to needles and bought for a few cents paper, rags, and bits of metal.

But Grand Rapids was then also the center of Dutch Reformed church life. Although the population was mixed, and although many nationalities were represented

in the polyglot citizenry, the Dutch and particularly the Dutch Reformed, (for there were few Dutchmen of any other kind) occupied an important place in the affairs of the city. At that time already the Dutch had pretty much taken over the Southeast and Southwest half of the city. These were people who had followed the first immigrants from the Netherlands, pioneers who had settled the marshy wastelands which later were to become Holland. Overijssel, Drenthe, Zeeland and other places which still bear the names given to them by their Dutch forebears. The Reformed Church of America had a large representation in the city; but also the Christian Reformed Church had become in the 34 years of her existence, a large denomination with Grand Rapids as its center. Here also was Calvin College and Seminary, located at that time on the corner of Franklin and Madison where a Christian High School was also built. Later the campus occupied the area between Franklin and Bates, and still later was moved to its present location on the Knollcrest Campus. Grand Rapids was known throughout the United States as "Jerusalem."

In these large and growing Dutch communities there was a constant influx of Dutch immigrants. These were men and women of the *Afsheiding*. In 1834 their forebears had left the State church in Netherlands under the

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leadership of VanRaalte, Brummelkamp, Scholte and others. They had left their mother church because of the apostasy and corruption of the State Church and had fought valiantly to preserve the truth which was the heritage of the Reformation. They had left a State Church which had the protection of the State: and in doing so, they had incurred the hatred and the wrath of the civil authorities. Their early church struggles were filled with trouble and harassment, with overt persecutions and untold hardship. The people who had been part of the *Afsheiding* were, for the most part, common folk of the lower classes. Their life in the Netherlands was hard and bitter. Not only were they harassed for their faith, but their economic lot was difficult. It was almost impossible to feed their families and to gain the bare necessities of life.

These things, among others, had prompted many of them to leave their fatherland and seek refuge in the new world. The reports had come back from America that in this country they would be able to serve their God without interference and without having to brave the hostilities of a government which hated their cause. They had heard too, that it was easier in the new world to earn one's living, for America was the land of promise, and the new country beckoned many to come to the "Canaan" flowing with milk and honey.

They were a stalwart lot. They were Calvinists, and Calvinism had steeled their souls and put iron in their spines. They loved the truth of the Scriptures more than anything else. And no sacrifice was too great to live a life in which they could serve the God of their fathers. But they were also children of the *Afsheiding*. And this meant a number of things. This meant that they were a simple folk. They were not, for the most part, educated. They were not profound theologians. They were not deeply learned in the subtleties of theological distinction. But they knew what they believed, and this truth they loved. That they were part of the *Afsheiding* meant also that they were a deeply pious folk. Their faith, though simple, was profoundly spiritual. Their religion was not a Sunday and church-religion, but a way of life. They did not know how to separate their life from their faith, and in fact, they had never even given any thought to the possibility of doing this. It was natural to them. Religion was a part of living in the home, of growing potatoes in the fields, of talking with the neighbors, of buying groceries in the store, of milking their cows. Religion was their way of life. This piety however, could even on occasion be the more mystical piety which always remained

a thread running through church life in the Netherlands. And this deep-seated mysticism which characterized many of them was not always of the healthiest kind. Nevertheless, they knew whom they had believed....

But they did not leave their fatherland because they had lost their love for the Netherlands—for its lowlands torn from the cruel and clutching fingers of the seas; for its fog and damp, its rain and penetrating cold; for its language, and customs, its manner of dress and way of life; for its tulips and cows, its dikes and windmills, its close-knit society and gossipy marketplaces. And all these things they attempted to preserve carefully in the new land they had chosen for their home. Southeastern Grand Rapids was, in so far as that was possible, a bit of transplanted Netherlands.

But it was of sufficient importance in the city so that events in these areas were still events which made the daily newspapers, and affairs in these Dutch settlements within the city were of interest to the city as a whole.

In many respects religion dominated life in Grand Rapids, and the Dutch were firmly convinced that life in the city ought to conform to their standards of right and wrong. When the city proposed extending the Franklin St. trolley line and began laying the tracks, the Dutchmen from the *Groningen Beurt* (neighborhood of people from Groninger) tore up the tracks as fast as they could be laid and were ready to protect Eastern Ave. with pitchforks if necessary. And all because the track ran past Eastern Avenue Christian Reformed Church and would make such noise and would disturb the worship services.<sup>1</sup>

Into this kind of an environment George M. Ophoff was born on January 25, 1891.

It is necessary to have a knowledge of this background in order for us to understand the kind of environment in which George Ophoff was born and raised, for the effects of this environment were to remain with him throughout his life.

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<sup>1</sup> This was the church in which Rev. Herman Hoeksema was pastor at the time of the beginning of the Protestant Reformed Churches.

\* Article numbers three and four in the original printing were combined in the previous issue.

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# On Homosexuality

by Paul De Jong

I can clearly recall that fall day two years ago. We were juniors at Dordt College, and Rick had come back to visit us. Our group of guys had been friends since our freshman year when we all lived on the same wing of North Hall. We weren't as close of a group anymore, but back then we had been close like family. We all knew each other quite well, the way that a group of thirty guys get after having lived together in tight quarters during a long Northwest Iowa winter.

At least we *thought* we knew each other well. Rick had come back to tell us that he was gay. "Gay?" we asked. "You mean you're homosexual?" "Yep, I now have a boyfriend. I thought I should come back and tell you guys."

I'm not sure what we said to Rick. It came as a shock to us. I for one didn't really know what to say. I think we said something like, "Oh, well thanks for coming clean." And then we left.

Some of us got together that night to talk about what Rick had told us. We thought back to all of our memories of North Hall. Those memories seemed changed after Rick's confession. We talked about how we felt sort of betrayed. What used to seem like a close union and camaraderie between a group of guys now seemed changed and broken.

But after we had struggled through our mixed feelings, we began to talk about Rick. He was our friend. How were we to treat him? Why hadn't we said anything to him? Rick had been like a brother to us. What was our Christian responsibility as to how we were to respond to Rick . . . and how we were to help him?



Perhaps some of you readers have a story similar to this one. This story is not unique. Most of you probably know someone who is homosexual, either through

school, work, or through a friend or acquaintance. Even if you don't personally know someone who is homosexual, the growing face of homosexuality in the media and in politics has made an impact upon us. For Christian young people in today's society, the question is not whether or not one will be personally challenged with how to respond to homosexuality; the question is when and in what circumstances. And, perhaps more importantly, the question is *how* one will respond.

Homosexuality is spreading across our nation. Most recent estimates of the size of the homosexual population range anywhere from three to ten percent (Pruitt, 2002). Books and literature in abundance are being written and published in support of homosexuality. On television, sitcoms such as "Will and Grace" that portray characters as being homo or bi-sexual attract large audiences and rave reviews by the critics. On the home front, many homosexual couples now have families and raise children. It is estimated that in America three to eight million gay and lesbian parents are raising six to fourteen million children (Martin, 1993). Assuming that there are about seventy million children in America, this indicates that eight to twenty percent of children are raised by homosexual parents.

But perhaps even more disturbing than the spread of homosexuality is the change in public opinion towards it. A word that sums up our society's attitude towards homosexuality is "acceptance." Homosexuals are supposed to be accepted for who they are and what they stand for. As the public becomes more and more accepting, the Bible-believing Christian who speaks out against homosexuality becomes the minority. Saying that homosexuality is wrong and an abomination in the sight of God now invites ridicule and persecution.

Young people who are planning on attending colleges and universities, be aware that the academic world

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is spearheading this movement of acceptance. In secular colleges you will find that professors and students alike are in favor of tolerating and accepting homosexuality. Even in Christian colleges like Dordt, Trinity, and Calvin you will find many people that want to see Christianity become more lenient towards and tolerant of homosexuals. This is most evident in how many churches today refuse to place homosexuals under church discipline and instead allow them to remain upright members of their congregation.

Acceptance and tolerance become especially appealing when a friend, family member, or a Christian brother or sister falls into this sin. Our human nature hates to speak out against the sins of those that we love. But the Bible is very clear on the issue of homosexuality. It is sin in God's sight.

"Wherefore God also gave them up to uncleanness through the lusts of their own hearts, to dishonor their own bodies between themselves: Who changed the truth of God into a lie, and worshipped and served the creature more than the Creator, who is blessed for ever. Amen. For this cause God gave them up unto vile affections: for even their women did change the natural use into that which is against nature: And likewise also the men, leaving the natural use of the woman, burned in their lust one toward another; men with men working that which is unseemly, and receiving in themselves that recompence of their error which was meet. And even as they did not like to retain God in their knowledge, God gave them over to a reprobate mind, to do those things which are not convenient" (Romans 1:24-28).

This Bible passage and others set forth homosexuality as a very base and evil sin. It is a sin that society and humanity sink into when they are at their very worst. Throughout the Bible and throughout history, homosexuality has been prevalent in those times and in those civilizations that have been the most wicked.

"And Judah did evil in the sight of the Lord, and they provoked him to jealousy with their sins which they had committed, *above all that their fathers had done*. For they also built them high places, and images, and groves, on every high hill, and under every green tree. *And there were also sodomites in the land: and they did according to all the abominations of the nations which the Lord cast out before the children of Israel*" (I Kings 14:22-24).

The Bible shows us that homosexuality is sin. Therefore we cannot accept it as being allowable, especially not in the church of Christ.

So how are we to respond to homosexuality, especially if the offender is a confessing Christian, family member, or close friend? We must respond out of Christian love for the brother (or sister), and the chief means by which we do this is by showing the brother his sin. If we truly love the brother with a Christ-like love, then we care about his soul and his everlasting life. We must show him that God hates the sin of homosexuality and commands that he repent and turn away from this sin. To allow him to go on thinking that his homosexuality is okay in God's sight by accepting him and allowing him to continue in his sin would be misleading and wrong. It would be encouraging the brother in his walk down the road of sin that can only lead to everlasting hell.

As we exhort our brother to repentance, we must remember to do so in a loving manner. We must not degrade the brother because we think that homosexuality is weird or "queer." We must not ridicule or jeer or poke fun of him, especially not behind his back. In all of our dealings, we must never look down on homosexuals as though we are better than them or as if we are above this sin.

All sins are a result of our fallen, sinful nature. Homosexuality is a sin just like any other. As such, the way that we should respond to homosexuality is no different than the way that we should respond to sins like stealing, lying, or divorce and remarriage. The unrepentant sinner must be treated out of love, but never must he be allowed to think that his sin is acceptable in God's sight.

Christian young people, homosexuality is a sin that is spreading and growing in acceptance. As such it will be a challenge to our generation in ways that our parents and grandparents never imagined. Be prepared for how you will respond to homosexuality. Approach this issue with fear and trembling and with much prayer to your heavenly Father, who judges all of the sinful ways of men. ❖

Passages for further study: Gen. 18:16-22, Gen. 19:1-29, Lev. 18:22, Lev. 20:13, Deut. 23:17, Judg. 19:16-30, I Cor. 6:9, I Tim. 1:9, 10

Note: Rick's name in the opening story was changed for privacy.

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*Paul is a member of Peace Protestant Reformed Church in Lansing, Illinois.*

# 2003 YP Convention

To be held at the YMCA of the Rockies in  
Estes Park, Colorado

Hosted by the  
Loveland PRC Young People's Society

Main Theme: "Surrounded by God"

Theme Text: Psalm 125: 1 & 2

Theme Song: Psalter #354

Look for more information to follow  
in upcoming *Beacon Lights*.

# "LITTLE LIGHTS"

## The Lion

*... let it shine!*

by Connie Meyer

All beasts fear another. The fly fears the frog. The frog fears the stork. The stork fears the fox. The fox fears the lion. But the lion fears none else. Though a beast may be twice his size, yet he will not fear it. He is king of all the animals of the jungle and the plain.

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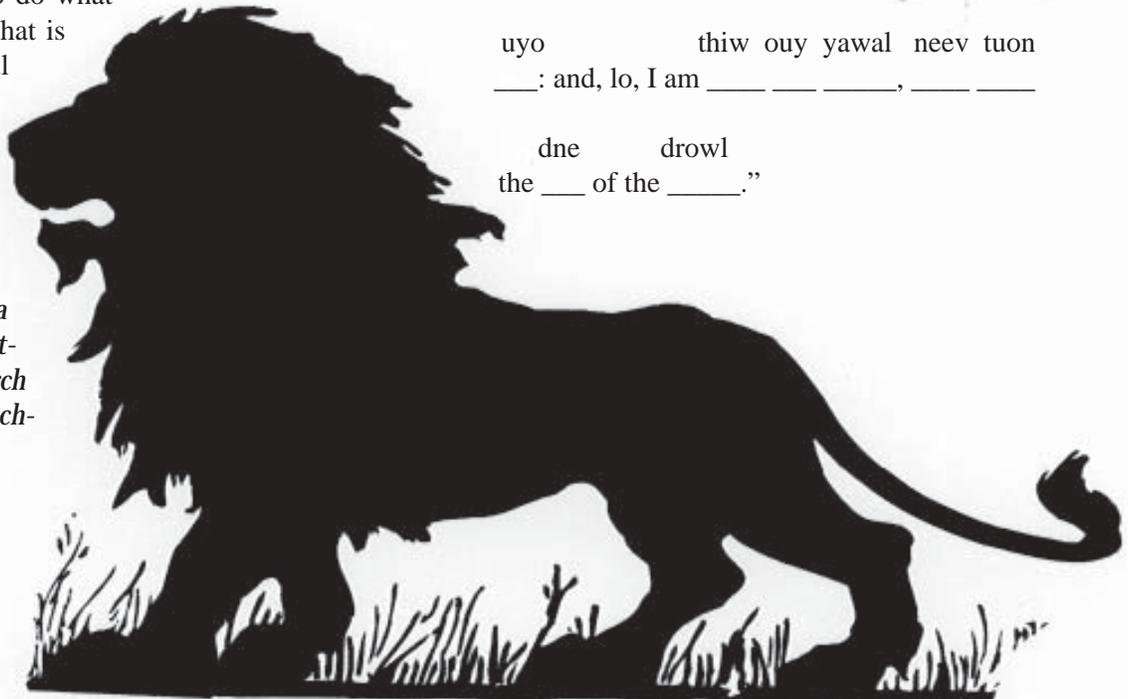
Scripture makes a point of this:

“There be three things which go well, yea, four are comely in going: A lion which is strongest among beasts, and turneth not away for any” (Proverbs 30:29-30).

The fearlessness of the lion is a comely thing. It is beautiful. He walks where he wills. He stalks his prey and kills. He is feared by all who cross his path.

But why is this so beautiful? Why must we take note of his courage and strength? The fourth comely thing that Proverbs 30:31 lists for us gives us a clue: “...and a king, against whom there is no rising up.” It is that kingliness, that power and authority, that is so remarkable. That is the picture we must see. For there is no power or authority in heaven or in earth except that which is wielded and bestowed by the Lion of Judah Himself. He it is Who has all authority over all. And over us. We must see how comely this is! We like to control things ourselves. We like to do what we want to do. But that is ugly. What is beautiful is obeying our King—and doing it willingly. ❖

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



**In Matt. 28:18 Jesus told His disciples: “All power is given unto me in heaven and in earth.” Unscramble the following words from verses 19-20 to see what He then told them (and us) to do:**

reefhetro dna hacet lal soannit  
 “Go ye \_\_\_\_\_, \_\_\_\_\_, \_\_\_\_\_,

zabintgip meht het mena  
 \_\_\_\_\_ in \_\_\_\_\_ of the Father, and of the

Caithnge ehmt  
 Son, and of the Holy Ghost: \_\_\_\_\_ to

roseveb lla ghitsn vastwoerh veah demandmoc  
 \_\_\_\_\_ I \_\_\_\_\_

uyo thiw ouy yawal neev tuon  
 \_\_\_\_\_: and, lo, I am \_\_\_\_\_, \_\_\_\_\_

dne drowl  
 the \_\_\_\_\_ of the \_\_\_\_\_.”

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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:  
Braden Bruce, son of Mr. & Mrs. Jon Lubbers—Byron  
Center, MI

Amber Lynne, daughter of Mr. & Mrs. Tom  
Mastbergen—Grace, MI

Malachi James, son of Mr. & Mrs. Erin Windemuller—  
Grace, MI

Austin Lee, son of Mr. & Mrs. Ron Koole—Hope, MI

Jaydon Matthew, son of Mr. & Mrs. Joshua Hoekstra—  
Hudsonville, MI

James Matthew, son of Mr. & Mrs. Bill Moore—  
Loveland, CO

Brooke Clara, daughter of Mr. & Mrs. Thom Moore—  
Loveland, CO

Travis Wade, son of Mr. & Mrs. Bill Pipe—Loveland, CO

Grant Allen, son of Mr. & Mrs. Greg Musch—Peace, IL

Joshua Steven, son of Mr. & Mrs. Joel Houck—Peace, IL

Brandon Michael, son of Mr. & Mrs. Scott Boverhof—  
Southwest, MI

Olivia Renee, daughter of Mr. & Mrs. George Bodbyl  
Jr.—Southwest, MI

Bradley Cole, son of Mr. & Mrs. Dean Poppema—  
Southwest, 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:

Julia Bodbyl—Holland, MI

Audra Cnossen—Hudsonville, MI

Andrew Duthler—Hudsonville, MI

Mike Fischer—Randolph, WI

### MARRIAGES

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

*Matthew 19:5*

United in the bond of Holy Matrimony were:

Mr. Curt Gritters and Miss Julianne Meulenberg—  
Hudsonville, MI

Mr. Kyle Van Baren and Miss Marisa DeVries—  
Randolph, WI