

Beacon Lights

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Number 1

*“And so it was, that, while
they were there, the days were
accomplished that she should
be delivered.”*

Luke 2:6

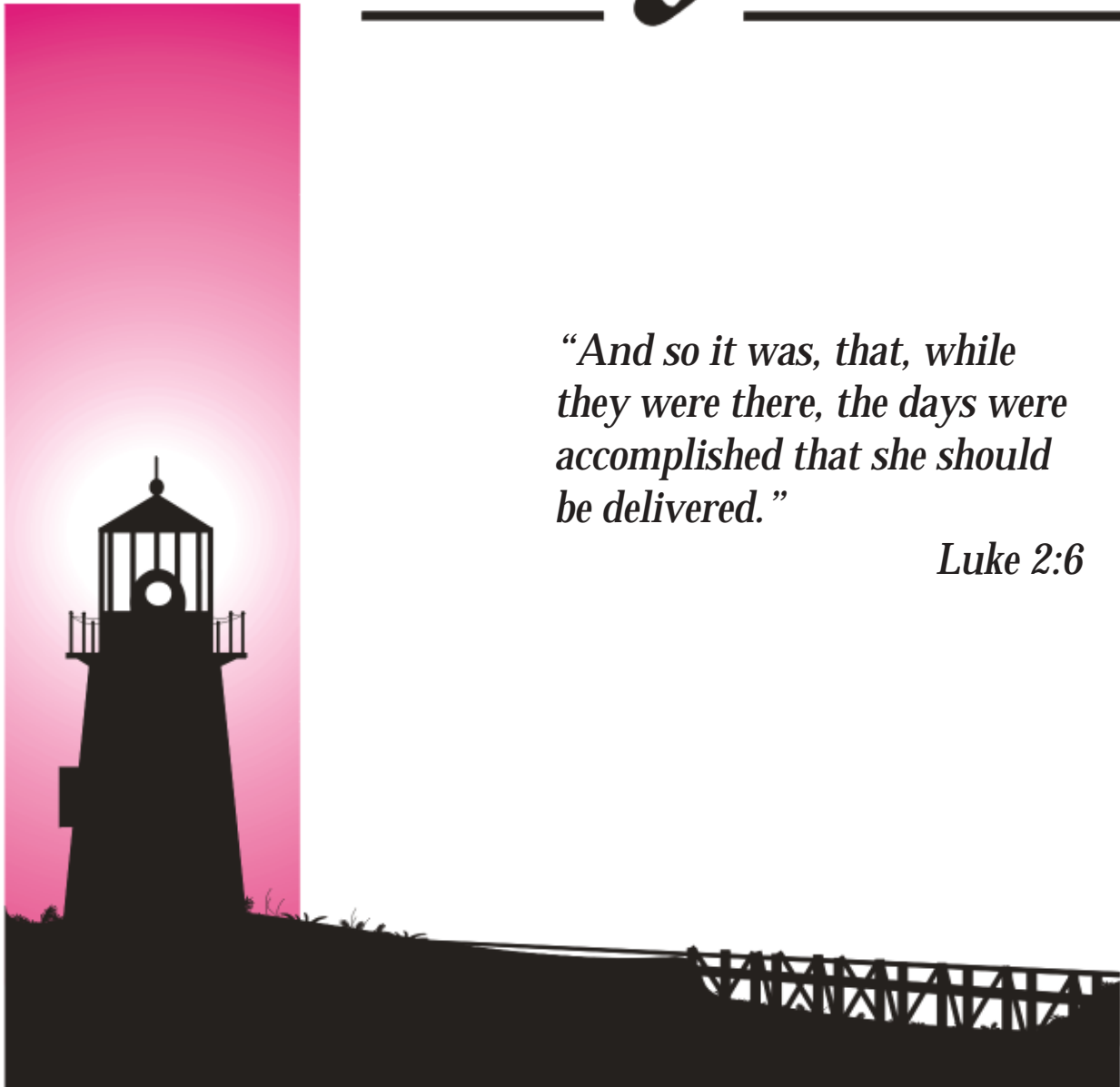


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BEACON LIGHTS

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BUSINESS OFFICE

Beacon Lights
P.O. Box 144
Randolph, WI 53956
Phone: (920) 326-6186
Email: huizenga@powercom.net

BEACON LIGHTS ON TAPE

A free service to the legally blind. Contact
Sam Copple
659 Lincoln Ave. NW
Grand Rapids, MI 49504
Phone: (616) 774-4132
Email: SamCopple@email.msn.com

CHURCH NEWS ANNOUNCEMENTS

Melinda Bleyenbergh
Email: darylme@altelco.net

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You Can Be a Beacon on a Troubled Sea

About the only thing that the sailors could be certain about was the fact that their lives would soon end unless something changed quickly. They were not sure where they were, but they knew from the depth soundings that they were getting closer to land. Without warning, the next big wave could hurdle them onto a rocky coast and smash the ship to pieces. They were exhausted from the constant struggle day and night to keep the ship upright and afloat. Whenever the ship rose to the top of a swell, they strained their eyes through the stinging spray and blackness for a light.

Then a new shout cut through the shriek of the wind as it screamed through the rigging. This was a shout of hope, and not the shout of commands and warning. Everyone's eyes strained for another glimpse, and the brief flash was unmistakable. With renewed strength, the sailors battled the storm. The light pierced the raging storm, and with its guidance, the sailors were able to bring the ship into a harbor that was sheltered from the huge waves and relentless winds. Here was peace at last.

God reveals to us in His word that any life apart from the law of God, life in the world as man walks in his own sinful pride and rebellion against God, is like an ocean troubled by a fierce storm. In Psalm 18:4 we read that "The sorrows of death compassed me, and the floods of ungodly men made me afraid." In the book of Revelation, the great whore sat upon the waters and God explained that "The waters which thou sawest, where the whore sitteth, are peoples, and multitudes, and nations, and tongues" (Rev. 17:15). This truth is quite clear as we look around with our own eyes at the world. The scandals, troubles, murders, pain and suffering never seem to end. Even so, there are many who see no real danger, and imagine that they can enjoy the wild ride. Although they may recognize the physical and emotional danger, the real danger is spiritual; and unless God has opened one's eyes, he does not believe the danger is real. The ungodly ride the waves in a drunken mayhem and are destroyed on the rocks right at the very foot of the lighthouse.

God has been pleased to place His people in the midst of this world. We experience the troubles, sense the awful destruction that is sure to come. And then by grace alone, God plucks us from eternal hell and gives us a taste of the peace that can only come from covenant fellowship with God. We taste that peace as we live in thankful obedience to God. We taste the misery, sorrow and grief of hell as our old man of sin continues to blunder into the storm tossed sea of self-seeking proud rebellion.

The ups and downs, the waves of this life, are very real to each one of us every day. Children often begin with their fights and squabbles in the home. In school they suffer the rejection of peers, the reality that they are not as smart or attractive to others as they had imagined, and the shame and guilt of disobedience. As we grow older, we experience more frustrations with dating relationships, our place in this world, conflict with parents and other authorities, and emotional struggles of one sort or another. We are tossed about with false doctrine, temptations, and new moral dilemmas in medical ethics. As life in the church continues, we begin to see more clearly just how sinful we are and all the sorrow and grief that

comes from that sin. We look about and see endless bickering, people of God who refuse to talk to one another, gross sin exposed, and sorrow. We realize how caught up we are in the riches of this world. We also see how vain earthly treasures are, and life begins to look very dark. How thrilling it is to spot the beacons of light that guide us toward the enjoyment of peace; the peace that passes all understanding and exposes the folly of the thrills that deceive the ungodly into a false sense of peace.

God has been pleased to send us into the terrors of this life of sin, but he does not leave us in the dark storm tossed sea without guiding lights. The first light that the child of God comes to know is the word of God that his parents bring. Not only do they bring God's word in their instruction, they demonstrate the peace, contentment, and joy that comes with diligent prayer and a willingness to submit to the cross of Christ. They demonstrate in the time they spend with their children that the pursuit of riches and a "fulfilling" career are vain imaginations. They gladly give of the first fruits to the church and teach their children to be content with what is left.

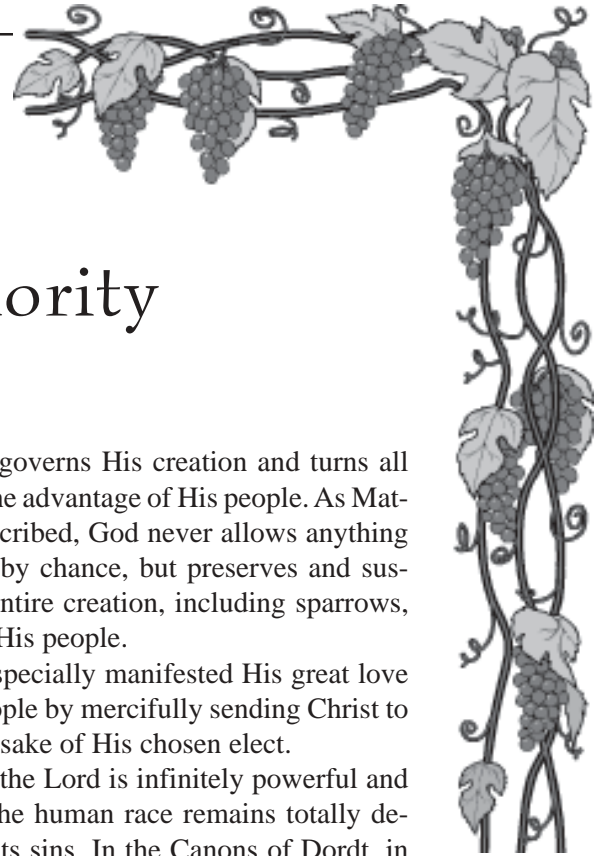
Each week parents bring their children to the house of God where they hear the voice of Christ himself as he speaks through the preaching. Only the voice of Christ has the power to still the storm. The disciples experienced this truth in the most graphic, hands on way possible. As the disciples cried out in despair during the fierce storm, Jesus said unto them "Why are ye fearful, O ye of little faith? Then he arose, and rebuked the winds and the sea; and there was a great calm" (Matt. 8:26). We here this word every Lord's Day under the faithful preaching of God's word. Gradually we learn to appreciate the quality and intensity of this light as it penetrates through the deepest despair even to the heart of every child of God.

Parents send us to Christian schools where, throughout the day, a beacon of light shines from the godly teacher who gives of herself to show the children how to read every skill in the light of God's word. As do the parents, so the teacher conducts himself in a way that the children see the peace and contentment that comes with one who walks with God. As the children flounder in their sin, the teacher does not strike out with condescending horror, but patiently shows them the guiding light of God's word. They experience the security that comes with looking to the light when they find themselves anxious, despairing, and lost in the world.

As you grow to experience the calm waters of covenant fellowship with God, we must not hide that light under a bushel. Sometimes the only light that a fellow saint is able to see in her time of trouble is the light from a peer. Don't be afraid or hesitant to say "no" to the gossip, the thrill of rebellion, or a lazy self-seeking attitude that will bring you deep into the dark restless misery of the ungodly. Don't hesitate to lay down your pride and speak a word of encouragement, befriend an outcast, or devote time to prayer and meditation. God sends you to shine as a light that will pierce through the storm to a lost and troubled soul.

One light that cannot continue to shine without your help is this very publication, the *Beacon Lights*. Many have found hope and guidance from words that have been penned by Christians like you. Think about the thousands of young people out there who might flop with a despairing sigh into the couch or bed and spot *Beacon Lights* sitting there on the end table under the television remote control. Anything you write with prayer and meditation would bring him into a peaceful harbor, but if he turns on the television, chances are it would only dull his senses to reality and deepen his sorrow in the morning.

So can they count on you: those fellow saints who every day are faced with another wave of despair? You do not need to write anything novel or spectacular. A light from a lighthouse may be a simple monotonous pulse of light, but it is joy to a believing reader. As the day of Christ's coming draws nearer, the storm only grows in intensity, the waves churn higher into a screaming foam, and Satan does all he can to obscure the vision of God's children from the guiding lights. There are never too many lights. ❖



Respect for Authority

by Sarah De Boer

“Why should I?” “Who made you the boss of me?” “I do not have to listen to you!” These responses along with many other disrespectful retorts are increasing at a disturbing rate among children and young people, especially in school. When God is no longer recognized as the authority over all things, men have no standard for authority and each individual looks to himself as the authority. Thus, individuals reason that those in positions of earthly authority, such as parents, teachers, and other adults do not deserve much respect. However, once a proper reverence toward God is developed, and God’s instruction for proper attitudes toward earthly authority is reviewed, a proper view toward earthly authority will result. Disrespect to those in positions of earthly authority develops out of a lack of respect toward God, and teachers must strive to develop a proper view toward earthly authority beginning with a proper attitude toward our Father in heaven.

Disrespect to those in positions of earthly authority develops out of a lack of respect toward God

Disrespect toward all those in positions of authority develops out of a lack of respect for our heavenly Father and the consequent development of humanism. As Christians we are called to reverence and offer our utmost praise and respect for our great and mighty God. As the Psalmist proclaimed in Psalm 33:6, the Lord created the heavens and the earth by merely speaking forth. The Lord is infinitely powerful and is exalted above all of His creation. In Isaiah 66:1, the Lord declared the heaven to be His throne and the earth to be his footstool. There is no other being in heaven or in earth like unto our God. Not only is God powerful, He is also gracious and compassionate as He cares for His people. The Heidelberg Catechism, Lords Day 9, pointed out that our Father up-

holds and governs His creation and turns all events to the advantage of His people. As Matthew 6 described, God never allows anything to happen by chance, but preserves and sustains His entire creation, including sparrows, lilies, and His people.

God especially manifested His great love for His people by mercifully sending Christ to die for the sake of His chosen elect.

While the Lord is infinitely powerful and merciful, the human race remains totally depraved in its sins. In the Canons of Dordt, in the Third and Fourth Heads of Doctrine, Article 3, the authors declared that all men are conceived and born in iniquity, willing only sin and evil. In Psalm 51:5, David declared that he was conceived and formed in sin. Apart from Christ, man is incapable of pleasing God and cannot perform any saving good, as Paul declared in Romans 8:7-8. In Romans 7:18-19, Paul lamented how he was continually inclined to evil even as he greatly desired to perform good deeds. As man in all of his being is completely evil, unable to do, think, or will any good, he deserves only the wrath of God.

Although Scripture explicitly describes the depravity of man, many claim that man is not inherently evil and is capable of performing some good. When such claims are made, man elevates himself and attempts to suppress the greatness of God. These humanistic attitudes began to especially evidence themselves during the Enlightenment when men began to emphasize the glories of the human race and asserted that man originated in a pure and natural state. Further, many argued that men were rational and reasonable creatures, able to progress over many years and eventually reach a state of perfection. Through the centuries, humanism exploded and today pervades every aspect of our culture.

Children and young people are bombarded with messages of humanism as they hear of magnificent inventions and brilliant theories along with all of the other accomplishments of men. Everything focuses on the

human race, and individuals lose sight of the greatness of God. As focus on God diminishes, so does the focal point of true authority. When men focus on God as the supreme being of the earth and believe men to be completely unable to perform any good, God is acknowledged as the authority over all things. However, as the status of man is elevated, authority shifts, and man becomes the authority in place of God. Each man sees himself as the authority over his own life, and thus reason that other forms of authority deserve no respect. Children and young people see this phenomenon all around them, both on television as well as in their neighbors, and begin to adopt this trend for themselves. Disrespect toward authority will increase as men reason that the individual is the only authority to answer to. Men leave God completely out of any position of authority, and when children and young people lose sight of the fact that God is the authority over all things and deserves our praise while men on earth are only totally depraved sinners, disrespect toward authority increases.

To respond to such an alarming trend and to develop a proper view toward authority, a teacher must implement a program requiring several steps. A teacher must begin to develop a proper mind-set by reaffirming in students a proper attitude of fear and reverence for God. The Lord is highly exalted above all and He alone ought to be praised. To help develop a proper attitude of respect for God, a teacher must emphasize the totally depraved nature of man. As stated in Lord's Day 3 of the Heidelberg Catechism, man is so corrupt that he is wholly incapable of performing any good and inclined only to hate God as well as his earthly neighbors, including those in authority. Thus, man cannot perform any good work to earn his salvation but must rely on God's mercy and grace. As Paul stated in Ephesians 2:4-5, God loved His people out of His rich mercy and delivered them from their depraved state through Christ. By instilling a realization of the infinite power and mercy of God along with the depravity of man, a teacher establishes a proper reverence for God and thus creates the foundation for the development of a proper view towards earthly authority.

To continue the process to develop a respectful attitude toward those in earthly authority, a teacher should especially look to the fifth commandment as it outlines God's requirements for His people with regard to earthly authority. Although the fifth commandment specifically mentions a proper attitude toward father and mother, the Lord requires similar honor and obedience toward all

other forms of authority, including teachers, coaches, ministers, elders, deacons, employers, and civil servants or magistrates. Lord's Day 39 of the Heidelberg Catechism pointed out that God requires His people to honor all authority by showing respect and reverence toward them as well as by obeying them.

Despite the weakness of those in authority, God still calls His people to honor the authority

Despite the weakness of those in authority, God still calls His people to honor the authority because God placed the earthly authorities over His people for a reason. Paul stated in Romans 13 that God ordained all powers upon the earth to be his servants, to protect the good and punish the evil. The Belgic Confession, Article 36, declared that God appoints rulers to not only keep order, but also to promote and sustain his church as well as to carry out God's will on the earth. Further, Article 36 outlined God's requirement to honor authority in all things and show obedience except when the authority requires disobedience to God. In such cases, as Peter stated in Acts 5:29, "We ought to obey God rather than men." However, even in disobedience, authority must still be honored. Christ serves as the ultimate example of submission to wicked authority as God sent His Son to be subject to earthly authorities even unto death.

Examining God's instruction for a proper attitude towards earthly authority will greatly aid a teacher as he or she seeks to develop in a fitting view toward authority. However, a proper view must begin with respect and reverence for our great God in heaven. The ever-increasing trend of disrespect to those in positions of earthly authority is rooted in a lack of respect for our Father and the subsequent rise of humanism. Once God is no longer the authority, each man becomes an authority unto himself, and disrespect intensifies and spreads. Once a child or young person realizes that God is the authority over all, a proper attitude toward earthly authority will follow. ❖

Sarah is a member of Hudsonville Protestant Reformed Church in Hudsonville, Michigan. She wrote this essay for the Protestant Reformed Scholarship.

Federation Board Update

by Matthew Overway

The Federation Board is a group of young people, young adults and adult advisors that works on behalf of the Protestant Reformed Young People's Societies. One of the main purposes of the Federation Board is to coordinate interaction among the societies. Mass meetings, singspirations and also involvement in the publication of the *Beacon Lights* are some of the undertakings of the Federation Board.

The Federation Board has added some new faces and lost some familiar ones. The members who have faithfully fulfilled their duties and retired are Kevin Gritters (President), Rachel Feenstra (Secretary), Brad Vander Veen (Treasurer), Jim Holstege (Youth Coordinator) and Prof. Barry Gritters (Spiritual Advisor). We would like to sincerely thank them for their services, time, and efforts as they helped all of us perform our duties to the best of our abilities.

The new members voted into the Federation Board to serve two-year terms are Dan Holstege (Vice-President), Rachel Nagelkerke (Vice-Secretary), Eric Gritters (Vice-Treasurer), Greg VanOverloop (Youth Coordinator) and Rev. Rodney Kleyn (Spiritual Advisor).

Dan Holstege attends Southeast Protestant Reformed Church. He is currently taking Pre-seminary classes at Calvin College. He hopes to maintain good organization by being prompt, complete in all our business, frugal and wise in our expenditures and always acting for the best interest of the young people.

Rachel Nagelkerke works as a sales assistant for Miedema Produce in Hudsonville, MI. Her church home is Hudsonville Protestant Reformed Church. She is twenty years old and is the oldest of five children in her family. She would like the Federation Board to continue maintaining the spiritual and physical connection of all the young people in the PR churches. She believes the Federation Board is a very essential part of the fellowship of our church's youth. It does this through conventions, societies and other activities. She would like to see the Federation Board create more contact with the young people in the mission fields and smaller churches who do not have the enjoyment of having many young people to commune with.

Eric Gritters also attends Hudsonville church. He is studying at Grand Rapids Community College for a degree in piano performance. He is engaged to Alicia Spriensma, and is planning to be married on the sixth of January. Eric is looking forward to learning the skills necessary to faithfully perform the tasks set before him by the Federation Board.

Mr. Greg VanOverloop has been working at D&W Foods, a family owned grocery store chain in western Michigan, for twenty-eight years and is currently in the Sales and Marketing of the Grocery Department. He has attended Hudsonville Protestant Reformed Church all of his life. His wife's name is Vicki. They have been married for twenty-five years and have three children and one daughter-in-law. Greg would like to help improve the current convention financial process in the Federation Board. Also, he would like to increase the effectiveness of the Federation constitution.

Our last new member is Rev. Rodney Kleyn. Rev. Kleyn is the minister of Trinity Protestant Reformed Church. Rev. Kleyn grew up in Tasmania, Australia on a dairy farm. He attended a small rural church with very few young people. His wife's name is Elizabeth and they have been blessed with four young children. Rev. Kleyn believes we have a wonderful treasure in the truth and in our fellow saints. He would like to help the young people appreciate these blessings from God and encourage them to develop godly friendships together. He wants us to see that we are brothers and sisters, co-workers, fellow soldiers and companions on this road of life and that we need to help each other on the way.

The other current members of the Federation Board are Matthew Overway (President), Sarah Koole (Librarian), Sara Huizinga (Secretary), Jeff VanUffelen (Treasurer) and Rev. Ronald Van Overloop (Spiritual Advisor).

The Federation Board asks for your prayers and for God's blessing upon this work for the covenant youth of the church. ❖

Matthew is a member of First Protestant Reformed Church of Holland in Zeeland, Michigan.

The Origin of Scripture

by Rev. Angus Stewart



In the last issue we saw that Scripture is the “more sure word” (II Peter 1:16-19). The Word is sure because its origin is not in man but in God: “the prophecy came not in old time by the will of man: but holy men of God spake as they were moved by the Holy Ghost” (21).

“Prophecy” (19, 20, 21) not only includes the Old Testament (OT) writing prophets, such as Hosea, but it also refers to the whole of the OT from the perspective of its predictions. From the mother promise of Genesis 3:15, we see that all of the OT points ahead to Christ and His universal church. For example, the *law* predicts Christ as the great king (Num. 24:17) and the *Psalms* prophesy His rule over the nations (22:27-31) and return to judge the world (50:1ff.). Thus Peter is telling us that the whole of the OT (from the perspective of its predictions) “came not in old time by the will of man: but holy men of God spake as they were moved by the Holy Ghost” (II Peter 1:21).

Let us be clear about it: man is not the originator of Scripture (OT or NT). Man did not determine what was said, nor how it was said, nor with what words it was said, “For the prophecy came not in old time by the will of man” (21). Do you believe this? You must, for this is a first principle in understanding the Scriptures: “*Knowing this first*, that... the prophecy came not in old time by the will of man” (21). Without this as the key you will never truly grasp the Bible or know the Savior revealed in its pages.

Higher critics reject this first principle for understanding the Bible. They hold that the origin of the Bible is in man (though God maybe helped a bit). They challenge the date of the OT books especially the prophetic books which they date after the event prophesied. They deny predictive prophecy because of their prior commitment to naturalism. Whereas Peter writes, “the prophecy came not in old time by the will of man” (21), they say, “The Hebrew books came by the will of man often a

lot later than they purport.” They hold that the Bible consists of “cunningly devised fables” (16).

Since the Bible did not originate in man’s will, it is different from every other writing. It is different from newspapers and magazines, from school textbooks and novels. It is different even from books written by Christians. All man’s books are written according to God’s providence but the Bible alone is written by divine inspiration. Buddhism’s Dhammapada, Hinduism’s Bhagavad-Gita and Confucius’ *Annals* (which do not claim to come by divine inspiration) and Islam’s Koran (which does) all come from the will of man. Thus the Bible alone is God’s hammer.

God’s will determined what was written in Scripture and with what words it was written. But since the Bible didn’t fall from heaven and since Scripture says that Isaiah, David, etc., wrote the words of the Bible, we must consider the God-given role of the divine penmen, the “holy men of God [who] spake [and wrote] as they were moved by the Holy Ghost.” The word “moved” is a very strong one. It means, literally, that they wrote not merely as they were guided or directed or led but as they were “borne” by the Holy Spirit. This Greek word is used of Paul’s ship driven by the wind (Acts 27:15, 17). That these men were borne by the Holy Ghost means that the Holy Ghost took them up, as it were, and empowered them to write God’s word so that they wrote exactly what God intended them to write.

God’s sovereign control of the writers did not negate their personality or make them robots. Nor does it imply that Paul could have written Revelation or that John could have written Acts. Rather God prepared the men beforehand to write what He willed. The divine penmen are called “holy men” not so much to indicate their personal sanctity but to indicate that these men were set apart and equipped for their role of writing particular books of the Word of God. God in His eternal decree and sovereign providence prepared the various men to

write the Scriptures. For example, God decreed that Jeremiah be a priest born at Anathoth with a religious upbringing and a particular literary style and emotional life. God ordained that he would be single, that he would have a friend, Baruch, and that he would live to see the desolation of Jerusalem. Thus God prepared Jeremiah to write *His Word* in such a way that the word choice, sentence structure, etc., fits with the style of Jeremiah. In fact, God used all His penmen to write particular books in accordance with the particular style He gave them in His eternal decree and providence. Clearly, the production of the Holy Scriptures is a great wonder: “O the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of God!” (Rom. 11:33).

In your believing Bible study, you must be absolutely certain that the Bible is God’s Word. Make this truth a first principle in understanding the Holy Scriptures: “*Knowing this first*, that ... the prophecy came not in old time by the will of man: but holy men spake as they were moved by the Holy Ghost” (II Peter 1:20-21). ❖

Rev. Stewart is a missionary of the Protestant Reformed Churches to the Covenant Protestant Reformed Fellowship of Northern Ireland. This series is being reprinted with permission from the Covenant Protestant Reformed Fellowship website, <http://www.cprf.co.uk/> Volume IX, Issues 4 & 5.

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. 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: jlanning@msn.com

Book Review

William of Orange: The Silent Prince

reviewed by Bruce Koole

William Gerrit Van de Hulst. *William of Orange: The Silent Prince*. Translated by Alice Veenendaal. 8085 Kraft Ave S.E., Caledonia, MI: Inheritance Publications: 1992. 142 pp. (ages 5–25)

W*illiam of Orange: The Silent Prince* is a soft-cover biography, (with illustrations!) translated from the Dutch for a younger audience! This young adult’s book recounts the exciting and scary life of Count William of Nassau (1533–1584).

The book informs the reader that this firstborn son's mother was the pious Juliana of Stolberg (1506–1580). His father was the mighty Prince William, ruler of the earldom of Nassau/Orange. As a powerful man he attended the 1521 Diet of Worms with Martin Luther (Here I stand...)! Read also about William, Jr.'s large family: he had four brothers and seven sisters. As firstborn, Jr. would inherit Dillenberg Castle. (Note: in 1713 King Louis XIV annexed the realm of Orange and made it a province of France.)

This privileged child of royalty attended school and lived in Brussels, Belgium within the courts of the most powerful man of Europe: the Holy Roman Emperor, Charles V of Spain. Turn the pages to learn why William of Orange received the name "The Silent Prince" (31-37). Watch a wiser Prince win the hearts and minds of the Dutch folk, when he chose to suffer affliction for a season with his comrades by fighting with them against the Spanish persecution!

See his courage when he refused to let the two wicked Spaniards, King Philip of Spain and Duke Alvarez de Toledo of Alva, kill him. Watch him write personal letters of encouragement to the citizens, people just like you and me! Ache with him when he comforts his mother, when her sons and his brothers die in battle against the murderous Roman Catholics. Follow him as he bravely leads armies into battle against the imperial Spanish army! Discover how his faith withstood the trials of battle and doubt. Experience with him the love of the people. Hear and see as an assassin tries to kill him! Does he survive?

Learn about his tragic death at the young age of 51. Weep with the whole nation. They buried him with honors in the "New Church at Delft," in the province of South Holland. Thus did William of Orange become the spiritual and political Father of the Netherlands.

Today the Netherlands' national anthem is sung in his memory, in which each stanza's first letter forms "William of Nassau." Find out about the vivid reminder

Treasure

by Deane Wassink

*Let my treasure be of things not seen,
Of spiritual lustre and godly sheen.*

*The gold be that of righteousness,
Refined by fire, put to the test.*

*The diamonds sparkling as the sun,
Reflecting the glory of the Eternal One.*

*Sapphires, agates, and even the petosky stone,
Are set in the crown the King does own.*

*Whether of amethyst, pearl, ruby, or jade,
Let me as part of that crown be made.*

*Let me a gem be shining bright,
Showing His glory, reflecting His light.*

of his death still present in the walls at Prisenhof, Delft, South Holland (118-129, 131).

Sadly, though, at two points in this book, the author revises and distorts the history, by claiming that the merciful William was a religious pluralist. In truth the Prince really wished to free the Reformed congregations from the Roman Catholic murderers, so that the *kliene leiden* (little people) would not be tortured for believing in justification by faith alone and Christ's spiritual presence at the table of the Lord's Supper.

Highly recommended for all ages. ❖

Bruce is a member of Faith Protestant Reformed Church in Jenison, Michigan.

Watching Daily At My Gates

by Chester Hunter

January 1 Read I John 1:1-10

As we begin another new year the three epistles of the apostle John make very instructive reading for the church of Jesus Christ. In chapter one of I John, John lays out the message that he will develop throughout this first epistle. That message is found summarized in verse three. John will make known to the church that which he heard firsthand from Christ Himself. Any fellowship that we have with each other is found in the fellowship that we have with the triune God. Is this the way we fellowshiped last evening? Was our fellowship with the world or with fellow believers? Can there be fellowship with the world? As another year begins and we draw ever nearer to the end of times, we need the true fellowship that only can be found with fellow saints in Christ. Let us look for that fellowship and prepare ourselves for those perilous last days. Sing Psalter 104:1-4.

January 2 Read II John

In this epistle we find how we must walk in that fellowship with each other in Christ. We must walk in love with each other. And to walk in love is to keep all of the commandments of God. This seems very simple, doesn't it? But yet when we consider the strife that we may have with each other, we find that they are caused by our not walking in God's commandments. We will hear or have heard these commandments read to us this morning. We need to consider them well and seek to walk in them. By doing this we will walk in love not only with God, which is the first great commandment, but also with our fellow man, which is the second great commandment. Let us walk in God's commandments in order that we may walk in love with one another in the fellowship of the body of Christ. Sing Psalter 369.

January 3 Read III John

School starts again for many of us today. What report will come back to our parents? No matter if we are a student in grade school, high school or college, we must be a joy to our parents. And they will be most joyful when they hear that their covenant children are walking in the truth. What about this, children and young people, what will your parents hear about you? What will your elders and ministers hear about you? Will you seek to walk in the truth of the Word of God? This is your calling in school. This will be your calling in life. By God's grace you can obey that calling and bring joy to those who hear news about your walk. Sing Psalter 24.

January 4 Read Jude 20-25

After reading verse 24 and 25 what else can we say? Here we have the reason we believe in God. Here we have the rea-

son why we trust Him with all our heart. We know what sinners we are. We know what our nature is. Here we have the blessed promise that not only will He keep us from falling, but He will also make us ready for the perfection to be found in heaven. To whom else can we give glory, majesty, dominion, and power? Let us do that now and let us do that in the blessed world to come. Thanks be to God! Sing Psalter 197.

January 5 Read Revelation 1:1-8

In this final book of the canon of the Holy Scripture we come to a description of what will be ours in heaven. We do this through the eyes and ears of the apostle John. John is lead through this vision by various heavenly beings. But the vision starts with Christ and ends with Christ. Jesus Christ was the focal point of the message of the apostle. That was the gospel which was entrusted to them. Jesus Christ must be the focal point of any gospel that we hear today. Is this what you hear from your pulpit? Is it the Jesus Christ of the Scriptures? Let us wait the day of His coming when we will all be gathered in heaven before the throne of God. Let us do this by focusing ourselves on heaven and not on this earth below. And let us do this through Christ. Sing Psalter 28.

January 6 Read Revelation 22:13-21

Having completed a journey through each book of the Bible over the past few months, it is good that we end with the words of our reading for today. Here we have words of promise and warning. We have the promise that what we have read will bring us eternal joy. And we have the warning that we must not add to or take away from this book. People of God, what is your belief concerning the Bible? Do you believe that it is the Word of God? Do you believe that it is the complete Word of God? Are you tempted to change or leave out part of it? If you are, then you must tremble before the warnings found here. The Bible is the Word of God. Believe that, people of God, and wait patiently for the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ. Sing Psalter 333.

January 7 Read Psalm 19:1-6

Psalm 19 is both a comforting and instructive chapter of Scripture. First of all, we see the two ways in which God reveals Himself to His people. Secondly, we see the need for us to go to God in prayer in response to His revelation to us. The first part of the Psalm deals with His revelation to us in His creation. Can we not marvel at the greatness of the creation? Are we satisfied by being cooped us inside four walls not venturing out to enjoy the creation and marvel at its Creator? People of God, look at creation. Walk under the night sky. Climb the majestic mountains. Marvel in the prairies. Be instructed by

the crashing oceans. God shows Himself to us in this. Let us learn from Him about Him. Sing Psalter 37.

January 8 Read Hebrews 11:1-6

When we begin to study creation we must begin with faith. We must learn what faith is and then what it says to us about the creation of all things. The writer of the Hebrews began there because God began there. Through the wonder of faith we have no problems with creation. Evolution does not tempt us. We see no contradictions in the world around us. We can believe that God is God, that He has made all things of nothing in six twenty-four hour days, and we can please Him in this belief. Scripture is replete with instruction about creation. Let us learn what Scripture teaches and let us appropriate it by faith. Sing Psalter 8.

January 9 Read John 1:1-6

On the first day of creation God created light. This is not so strange. Light is necessary for all living things to have life. Life is light. It is also not so strange because in creating light, God teaches us about Himself and His Son. God is light and in Him is no darkness. Even as the light of the sun sustains life on this earth God who is light sustains His church by His light. Christ is the light of the world we are taught in Scripture. Because He shines, we can shine too. In the new creation Christ will be the only light needed. All others are only dim glimpses of the glory and life that is to come. Sing Psalter 71:1, 4, and 5.

January 10 Read Job 37:15-25

To a little child the world is immense. But even to those of us who have seen a few years, can we say anything else? Can we measure the immensity that we call the sky? What a power God exhibited on the second day when He stretched the waters and created the firmament! We can still see that today. What a difference there is between the heavens above and the waters below. All of this was made by an all-powerful God. Look into the heavens, people of God, and learn of our great God. Sing Psalter 39.

January 11 Read Isaiah 55:6-13

Here in the northern hemisphere winter is upon many of us. We look outside and see little green. But we can think back over last year or look ahead to next spring and summer. We can consider the lily as Christ taught us to do. We can have our breath taken away by the tremendous redwoods, oaks, or other large trees. These plants were created on the third day of creation. They were created to give glory to God. They did this at creation and they still do that today. Those of us who work with plants daily cannot help but be amazed at how they reflect the Creator. We can see His glory in the beautiful flowers. We can see His goodness in the fruit that they provide for us. Our text for today indicates for us that plants will also serve to glorify God the creator for all eternity. Let us see how great our creator is as we consider the plant kingdom. Sing Psalter 286:1-2.

January 12 Read Psalm 136:1-9

On the fourth day of creation our God created light bearers for the light that He created on the first day. He gave to us the life-giving sun that is a picture of His life-giving Son. He cre-

ated the moon and stars that show to us His glory each clear night. There is much for us to learn in the night sky, people of God. No, we do not pretend to tell the future by the stars as civilizations did years ago and still do today. We see God's glory whether it be found in the life-giving sun or the bearers of heavenly glory-the moon and stars. Each path of each heavenly body has been ordained by the Creator. This is by no means an accident. This is the power of God that shows forth His glory. Sing Psalter 378.

January 13 Read Psalm 104:24-30

On the fifth day of creation God called out of the waters the fish and the fowl. We can learn from these fantastic creatures just as we can from the other creations of God. First of all consider the birds. Do we not see the grandeur of God as we watch the majestic eagle soar and glide through the air? Do we not see the care God has for us even as we see how many birds, including those majestic eagles, care for their young? We can see how God has suited them for their place on this earth just as He has suited us for our places on this earth. We learn that true freedom to obey God is the same whether it is obeying God spiritual laws as we must do or the law for the fish and fowl. They must live in the water and air even as we must live in the sphere of God's law. Consider these creatures and see how wonderful God is. Sing Psalter 229:1-3.

January 14 Read Isaiah 65:17-25

God finished His work of creation on the sixth day. We will take two days to consider this day of creation. First on this day, God created the land animals. Notice their diversity. Notice their beauty, and power. As we look at the various creatures found on this earth we see something of our God. We see the power of the king of the beast-the lion and we are reminded of Jesus-the lion of the tribe of Judah. We see the meekness of the lamb and we remember that that same Jesus was taken to the cross as a lamb to the shearer. Can we not see the beauty in the running antelope or cheetah? Each animal shows as a little bit of God. Each animal was created to glorify the creator. Once again we see that all creation tells the glory of God. Sing Psalter 286:4-6.

January 15 Read Psalm 8

Besides the land animals God created the crown of His creation on the sixth day. God created man. Psalm 8 shows us what man is like as created by God. The creation was finished but it needed a king. That king was man. That king was Adam. In Adam all men find their beginning. In Adam we find our calling to glorify God in the creation. Adam did not evolve over many years from an ape. God breathed into Adam the breath of life and he lived. This all happened in one day. When man was created, God was finished. He created us to rule over that creation. He created us to use that creation to His glory. Let us remember why we are created and carry out our calling to glorify God. Sing Psalter 14:4-7.

January 16 Read Isaiah 58:8-14

On the seventh day God rested. As we read in the fourth commandment that is the basis for us to rest on the Sabbath. In the Old Testament age the Sabbath was on the seventh day; in

the New Testament age because of Christ's resurrection the Sabbath is on the first day of the week. But the calling for us has not changed. We are to hallow the Sabbath day, rest from our daily labors, and worship the Creator of the heavens and earth. God's work was done on six day, and ours must be also finished in six days. This ordinance of creation still stands. Let us obey this ordinance today and every Sabbath until we are delivered to the eternal Sabbath in heaven. Sing Psalter 251.

January 17 Read Psalm 19:7-14

The second part of Psalm 19 deals with the second way in which God reveals Himself to us. As we confess in the Belgic Confession, He reveals to us in His Word as it is given to us in the Bible. This is the place in which we find about our salvation. Here we can read about the sovereignty of God as He has chosen some to eternal life and reprobated other to eternal damnation. Here we can read about the way we must live as we prepare ourselves for life in the new creation in heaven. People of God, do you treat the Bible as being more precious than the finest gold and sweeter than the best honeycomb that is made by the bees? Do you do that each day? Let us read the Bible and His law that is found in it. And let us walk in that law as the means of gratitude for the salvation ordained by God and wrought by Christ. Sing Psalter 38.

January 18 Read Matthew 22:34-40

Here we read the summary of the law of God as it was given by Christ. Really it is all the law that we need. As Christ says we must love God with every particle of being that we have and we must love our neighbor as we love ourselves. By following these two guidelines, we will be sure to glorify God with every breath that we take. We will know how we must live each day of our lives. We will know how to glorify God in worship. We will know how to treat and act toward our neighbor in every situation that comes upon us. Let us make this our goal in this life as we await the life to come. Sing Psalter 26.

January 19 Read Jeremiah 17:1-8

The Ten Commandments as given in Exodus 20 and Deuteronomy 5 comprise the moral law that God gave to the church of both the old and new dispensations. In the first commandment we are taught who our God must be. There is only one God. This is the God who created all things, led Israel out of Egypt, and provided us with a Saviour. We may not seek to have other gods or make other gods. This was the mistake of Israel of the Old Testament. They were not satisfied with God as God. What about us? Are we satisfied with the God of the Scriptures? Or do we want something different, maybe something that we create? If we do, we are no better than Israel of old, and we deserve the captivity of hell, which they received in Babylon. Let us serve God and God alone. Sing Psalter 308:1-3.

January 20 Read Isaiah 15:16-23

Another sin that plagued Israel and plagues us is the sin of improper worship of Jehovah. Israel wanted to worship their God as the heathen nations worshipped their gods. I am afraid that we are no better. We would rather have a form of worship that suits us rather than that which glorifies God alone. People

of God, young people, children, know that our God is a jealous God. If we worship Him in ways other than He has set forth in His word, He will become angry with us and chastise us. Churches who worship God in ways other than He has ordained have not lasted and will not last. Let us worship God in the proper manner and know that in doing this He will bless us. Sing Psalter 137.

January 21 Read Leviticus 24:10-16

Yesterday we learned that in loving God we must worship Him in the way that He has prescribed in the Scriptures. Today we learn that He is jealous towards His name and names. Do we become upset when some one misuses or belittles our name? But yet we do this to God when we use His name lightly. We must be careful about this. The world has no regard for the name of God and can often be heard misusing it. We hear this and by imitation soon belittle the names of our God by our improper use of them. We do this when we pray in an irreverent fashion. We do this when we take His attributes on our lips as expression of dismay or other emotions. Once again we must be reminded that our God is a jealous God and He is also jealous towards His names. Let us not use them in vain or emptily. Sing Psalter 15.

January 22 Read Isaiah 66:15-24

The last commandment in the first table of the law deals with our care and concern of the Sabbath day. How do we use that day? Do we give to it all the reverence and importance demanded by God in His Word? Or do we make it as common as the other six days as is the case in the world today. Do our vacations begin on this day so that we can get as much pleasure for ourselves as we can in this way? Do we ignore the gathering together of the saints as it suits us? These and many other questions must be answered by the people of God. Basically it comes down to this. Do we love God with every portion of our being? If we do, we will remember the Sabbath and keep it holy. Let us prepare for tomorrow even as we use tomorrow to prepare for the eternal Sabbath in heaven. Sing Psalter 256.

January 23 Read Romans 13:1-7

The second table of the law, which deals with our love for our neighbors, begins with our duty towards all those that are in authority over us. Really this commandment is easy to understand. This commandment deals with obedience, and to obey is to show love towards those who are over us by keeping the commandments that they impose upon us. Children, do you like to obey? Young people, do you try to obey at all times? People of God of all ages, do we show our love for God by obeying *everyone* that God has placed over us? Failure to keep this commandment causes us not only to break this commandment but also to break the whole law. Let us love God by our obedience in this life. Sing Psalter 325.

January 24 Read Matthew 5:17-22

The essence of keeping the sixth commandment is love. The essence of breaking the sixth commandment is hatred. There is no other possibility. This is Christ's teaching in this famous sermon of which we read a portion today. Do you love your

neighbor? If not, then you have begun to kill him. Once again we see how this applies to God, people of all ages. Even our youngest children do not have to pull a trigger to break the sixth commandment. It can be done with the tongue. Let us love our neighbor, and by loving our neighbor we will not kill him. In doing this we will show our love for both our neighbor and for God. Sing Psalter 13:1, 2, and 7.

January 25 Read Matthew 5:27-32

Once again we turn to the teachings of Christ and learn how we must keep one of the Ten Commandments. When this commandment is broken, much pain is brought to many people. When this commandment is kept we have a beautiful picture of the relationship the covenant God has within Himself and with His people. Parents, our children need to know how to keep this commandment. They need to know how to speak of its subjects. They need to know how to dress in order that they do not break this commandment or cause others to do so. Young people, you need to stay out of situations that cause this commandment to be broken. You need the wise council of Christ to learn how to keep it. Adults, we have a great responsibility in the keeping of this commandment. We must teach our children and young people about it, we must be examples for them, and we must keep it ourselves. Let us live lives that glorify God and not seek the carnal pleasures of this sin. Sing Psalter 322.

January 26 Read I Thessalonians 4:1-12

Once again we see a commandment that the world in many spheres has trampled. Instead of loving the neighbor, they take advantage of him. What about us? Do we love our neighbor? Do we do things that turn out for his advantage? Do we use the talents that God has given to us in a way that is not stealing? There are many ways of stealing. To be guilty of one is to be guilty of all of them. To take a dollar is as heinous as taking a million dollars. Here again we see that to break this commandment is not to love God and our neighbor. To break this commandment is to bring spite upon the holy name of God. Let us respect our neighbor and his possessions. By doing this we will show love to God as we keep His commandments. Sing Psalter 25.

January 27 Read Proverbs 12:17-22

People of God, how do you speak toward and about your neighbor? Is it a whisper behind a cupped hand? Is it an absolute lie about him? Is it a white lie? Do we get ourselves out of difficulty by using a falsehood? Like each of the other commandments, there are many ways in which we can display hatred toward God and our neighbors. We can hurt with our tongues like we can with a sharp knife. We can ruin someone's reputation with a word just as much as we can with an adulterous act. We can steal with a word just as much as with a pen. The list goes on and on. Our mouths can be fountains of poison when they are to be fountains of fresh water. Do you love your neighbors, people of God? If you do, then speak well about them and to them. Sing Psalter 138.

January 28 Read Romans 7:7-14

We come to the end of our treatment of the Ten Commandments. In our study of the Tenth we see that the keeping of the

law is not just a physical matter. In fact it is much more than a physical matter. To keep the law of God is basically a spiritual matter. That is because to love is not physical but is spiritual. Being covetous is to break any and all of the commandments within our spiritual hearts. We become discontented with whatever God has given to us and we begin to want something different. We want to be a different person with different physical characteristics. So we see that because keeping the commandments is a spiritual matter, that is why keeping them is showing our gratitude to God for the great salvation that He has wrought for us in Christ. Let us keep each of the commandments contentedly. In doing this we will be thankful for all that God has given to us. Sing Psalter 42.

January 29 Read James 2:9-13

This passage of Scripture gives to us instruction about several matters in the keeping of God's law. We see that in breaking one of the commandments we break them all. We cannot keep a pet sin. We cannot be satisfied with keeping ninety percent of the law and letting ten percent go. We must keep each and every commandment in order to show our love and gratitude toward our heavenly Father. Secondly, we see that we will be brought before the judge of heaven and earth who will hold us up before the mirror of His law and see how we compare. This should not fill us with dread because we know that Christ's death will keep us from the punishment we deserve. This should fill us with love as He has given to us a way to thank Him for life in Christ. Sing Psalter 337.

January 30 Read Philippians 3:8-12

As we finish our treatment of God's revelation to us in creation and His word, let us turn to this beautiful text to learn about our calling in this life. Paul teaches us that our works no matter how many or how good they may appear will not gain us anything before the tribunal of God. There is no righteousness to be found in our work alone. In fact even our best works are as filthy manure before the holy God. We know God by faith alone. This faith is afforded to us by Christ and His redeeming work on our behalf. We must see that a mechanical keeping of the law is fruitless. We must see that it is only by Christ that we are righteous before God. Sing Psalter 232.

January 31 Read Philippians 3:13-21

Read the beautiful words found in verse 14 one more time. Here we find the duty of the child of God. The child of God must live his life even as a distance runner runs a race. He must press on and endure. He must keep his eyes on the mark that God has set before him. He must run the race to its end even as he draws his last breath on this earth. The prize is not some earthly prize. This prize is eternal praise of God in glory. In our lives let us keep all of God's commandments as they keep us on the course to the end of God's glory both in this life and in the life to come. Let us do this through Christ who gives to us the victory. Sing Psalter 164.

The Helping Hand

by J. P. deKlerk



Lieske Hiddink, the youngest daughter of Rev. Hiddink, entered the beautiful town hall of the Dutch city of Enkhuizen that morning at the stroke of nine. She saw that there was already a long queue of girls of her own age at counter with the superscription “staffing.” It was a warm summer day and most of them were dressed in airy frocks.

Lieske politely asked them, “So, the applications are being taken?”

One of the girls only nodded yes and continued reading a popular weekly. Lieske looked around. Over the years she had passed this 17th century building designed by the architect Vennecool almost every day without having a reason to enter it.

The hall in which she stood was well-illuminated, so that tourists coming to see the work of historic master builders would have no trouble seeing how carefully and solidly it had been built. In the center of the hall stood a long oak bench. A thin elderly lady sat there, embroidering. At the entrance a porter stood looking outside.

Suddenly a gentleman looking very proper in a dark blue suit appeared, stopped, and looked at her with keen interest and asked, “Do you happen to be here in response to the Social Welfare advertisement in the newspaper last night?”

“Yes, indeed, sir,” answered Lieske in surprise.

He laughed and said, “Come right this way, ma’am.”

At a quick pace he walked straight in front of her, ascended two flights of stairs, walked through a glass door, and into a big room. In the middle of the room stood a large desk. In front of the desk stood a small wooden table with two easy chairs, all covered in dark green velours. The sun was shining through the leaded windows onto a large desk that held a computer. A young man sat behind the desk.

Her host pointed at the chairs and said: “Take a seat. Don’t you know that I am the burgomaster? I saw you growing up, more or less, because I see you every Lord’s Day in church. I have been reading in the church-weekly about your activities as a youth leader.”

Lieske snickered and said with a sigh, “I did not know that anyone noticed me.” She was embarrassed and it seemed to amuse him.

“Yes,” he said. “My name is Tjeerd Sikkema and I am an organist. From the organ above the pulpit I see many faces coming and going every Sunday. I notice whole families. I often find it fascinating, Miss Hiddink.”

“Oh, please, say Lieske,” she said. She noticed a large, framed photograph on the wall, showing Mr. Sikkema with his wife and three grownup children. “What position do you have available?”

“Well, Lieske, when I wrote down the words of that advertisement I had a girl exactly like you in mind. You see, we have some official social workers, but not someone who is used to talking with younger people about their problems, their wishes, and their dreams. I think in every town or village you have the risk that these people become only numbers on papers or in computers, paid for by faceless taxpayers. We must have contact with everybody in the community. You are young, and perhaps there will be situations that you can even refer to

the Gospel, the Lord Jesus. Well, your father can say that better than I, but you know what I mean; it will not officially be part of your job.

You get the addresses of all the people who receive social welfare, with some particulars. Some of them will be difficult to handle. Be careful if you discover drug users; better to leave them to others, before they bring you in danger. Unmarried mothers are mainly cases for the special medical caregivers, but you notice perhaps things they have been hiding from us. There may be elderly neglected people, who feel ashamed to bring forward the whole truth about themselves, their children and grandchildren. Some give a roof over the heads of runaway youth who are sought by the police. But your task in the first place is to always lend a helping hand, in the love of Christ. See that the people trust you; some young people are sinking away in the mud; you will probably be shocked sometimes. There will always be wild geese and obstinate donkeys among them. So, it will not always make you happy or give you satisfaction, but you serve an important part of the community. Clear enough?"

Lieske stroke her chin and said, "Sir, I hesitate. I will perhaps often meet people who I normally would avoid. I can also not predict whether I'll succeed. If I accept and try it, I am sure my father will not be happy with it, and Mother will have a sleepless night when I tell her what you have said. However, at the end of the day, I will try."

The burgomaster ran his fingers through his gray hair.

He gave her two checkbooks and said, "Here, if you see that the people you speak with need extra support, give it without formalities. I trust you. I have heard much about you from your father. If you like, start tomorrow. Leave the rest to me."

Lieske was speechless. This was all very different from what she had expected. She realized that a good reputation was important when you were looking for a job.

The first address she had to go to was to Rens Heukels' home. He has a black rowboat with a deckhouse on it, situated somewhere at the quay, said the message of the paper she had received. But what did Rens look like? And his boat, would it still be at the same spot, and where was that? Lieske wanted to ask her father about this, but he had left the house already. He had gone to visit a seriously wounded member of the church at the hospital. Mother's guess was that the boat probably

would be near the old houses with the added porches. She had often seen small boats there in the water behind them. The name Rens Heukels however she had never heard before.

Because the weather was beautiful, Lieske was not wearing a jacket. She had left her bag in her room. She had an envelope with some documents in her left hand. She felt light-spirited and excited about her first day at work being able to stand on her own feet, no rules to follow, set at liberty to her own responsibility. She could not imagine that it would be too hard. But she had yet to find her first customer.

It was not busy in the streets. There were women cleaning windows, a man painting his front door, a shop-on-wheels selling cakes and rusks, and a postman delivering letters and packages.

But the old houses were not difficult to find. Most of them were three-story. They all had red tiles of hard baked clay, well protected against stormy weather.

The first one did not have the usual gate of wrought iron. She saw a small grassy path along a branch-canal next to the house, with a wooden edge against a facing of piles standing in the clear water. Curious, Lieske walked over the path to the back of the house. The only two windows on the side of the house were high above her head, so that she could not look inside. The wall seemed recently cleaned with a sand-blast as to preserve it for years to come.

She found four very small rowboats, each one with only a couple of seats and a set of oars on the bottom.

She went two steps down and began to search the whole area alongside the water more carefully; it looked like a very big square pond, but it was obviously connected with the water of the IJsselmeer (formerly Zuyder Zee).

She passed by a young woman, who was busy hanging out the washing on a clothesline. A small dog stood there wagging his tail. "Excuse me, madam, could you tell me perhaps where I can find Rens Heukels somewhere in the neighborhood?" asked Lieske.

"Yes, there to the left of the creek you will find a kind of miniature houseboat. Rens Heukels built it himself. He is a painter by trade. Once I remember he sat here a couple of days with an umbrella above his head, painting a portrait of the houses beyond the water. It was a piece of art. My husband wanted to buy it from him, but he said it was too fresh and it needed some alterations," she told her.

"Thank you very much, madam," said Lieske.

It took her a quarter of an hour to reach the creek. The creek, in fact, was not much more than an inlet, with a small wobbly pier. Next to the pier was a neat polished copper plate with the initials "R. H." and an antique door bell. Lieske pulled the rope of beads connected with it and she heard a lovely sound vibrating over the water.

Immediately a head with blond curly hair appeared in a gap of canvas which seemed to be the door of the artist's house.

"Hello, come in," said a jolly voice. "But be careful, or else you could break your neck."

The boat was much bigger than Lieske had expected. The area in which Rens Heukels lived and worked was roomy and rather high, with one real port-hole at the front side. The boat was also securely moored, so that it did not move when Lieske went on board and down the stairs.

She found herself surrounded by a whole collection of paintings, hanging on cords in two rows, in a variety of sizes. In the middle a rather big canvas stood on an easel; it showed a worshipful elderly man, with one hand on an old Bible.

"This is a copy of an ancient picture of John Calvin the reformer. I have taken the liberty to put him on another background, using a good photograph of the pulpit in his church in Geneva. It is almost like he is moving his lips, don't you think so? The light is supposed to come mainly from the windows in the round ceiling above him at midday. Do you see that?"

He carefully cleaned a brush and looked at her, not asking who she was, because his thoughts were absorbed by his painting.

"Yes," said Lieske. "It is like he is standing here in front of you. It is masterly... oh, and all those other paintings here. Your work should be known worldwide," she faltered.

Rens looked at her with a happy smile and said, "Sorry, I have only a stool available. Please sit.... Oh, yes, I should ask you who you are. Excuse me.... If you want a cup of tea, there is a tin with tea and a kettle... The shadow here at the foot is a bit too dark," he murmured, looking again at the painting, mixing a bit of paint on his palette.

Lieske felt motherly and grinned. She found an old biscuit tin with three tea bags and told Rens, "I am Lieske Hiddink. I am coming from the town hall, to see whether you are all right. If you need something that social welfare has not provided, just tell me. For example, if you

need to have a bigger place where you can work, or organize an exhibition, we can provide it. Do you need a new blanket, or fruit or anything? Do you ever go shopping?"

"Yes, but only if I have to, to get this or that. During the summer I leave the boat at some Saturday afternoons to give painting lessons to schoolchildren, but when the weather is bad I can't do that. That is annoying. Some of these children really have talent.... I am not sure if you would agree, because there are modern ideas, but I am just old-fashioned. You have noticed that already, of course. You don't think I am crazy?" Rens sighed.

Lieske protested, defending his work.

"Society needs old-fashioned people, Rens. I don't like today's trend at all. In the art world some products are disgusting. There are few people with good taste, because they are not educated. They stupidly follow the common herd in arts and sciences. They are really afraid of words that are conservative and old-fashioned. I am glad you are not like them, Rens. Now, I wonder, will it be healthy for you to live on this rather small boat in the long run? When it is autumn there will often be fog, in winter it will be cold, and there will be rain, hail, snow, frost.... I guess, when everything is all right, it will be charming and romantic by candlelight, but..." Lieske considered.

He rocked with laughter and said, "You are a wonderful girl, a rare bird, unspoiled and honest. I like that, Lieske Hiddink. I understand your good intentions, but please don't rob me of my dreams. Say I am an idiot, if you like. I could sell some of my paintings, though they are like children to me, my family.

But would that help me that much, if I threw them out? The city council would perhaps take my money away. You can tell them that I don't use alcohol and that I don't smoke. I have no radio, no television, and no newspaper. I don't care. When I become an old man they perhaps want to put me in an old people's home to die." He again cleaned a brush.

"Don't be afraid of me," pleaded Lieske. "I will never do anything that will hamper or hinder you. This is only a conversation. Perhaps I can discover some possibilities you have not yet thought of, if you allow me to come here again. Is that all right?"

It made him stare.

"You are welcome," he said. "If everybody was like you... I no longer go to church, because people move away from me—perhaps because I have untidy clothes. You know, I have to mend my clothes by hand. I am not

a good hand at that... Well, I should not complain. Do you meet many silly men like me?"

Lieske protested again. "You are not silly at all. By the way, this is my first day, and my first job. Perhaps I do everything wrong."

She put two tea bags into two mugs of earthenware and poured some boiling water on them. She heard sparrows kicking up a row on the roof. "I will do for you what I can," she said in a decided tone and put the mugs next to Rens on the floor.

He looked at her with some kind of quiet amazement.

They drank the tea and talked more about some of the paintings, before Lieske said, "I have to do more today. Until next time, God bless you."

He thanked her for taking the trouble to pay him a visit.



Opposite the 15th century Gomarus Church Lieske went to a charming old-fashioned pet shop. She was welcomed by a beautiful white cockatoo who called, "Good afternoon!"

At the back of the shop she saw a small old lady and a handsome young man very busy mixing several grains with bits of dry-pressed green food.

Lieske knew they were Mrs. Vlasakker and her son Bas.

"Sorry, we are making fresh mash for rabbits and guinea-pigs," said Bas. "Give me a minute. I am coming."

Lieske smiled and looked interested, asking, "Do you need a helping hand?"

"No, thank you," said Bas. "Though, if someone comes in who is in a hurry, please, hold him or her in talk."

He shook out a gunny sack, and raised large clouds of dust.

"Sorry, Miss," said Bas. "I didn't know this one was that bad." Behind him Mrs. Vlasakker had started filling bags with the mixture, and coughed. Lieske looked at a big aquarium with tropical fishes. A black rabbit sniffed at her feet. Two hamsters squeaked to attract her attention. There were tame mice in a glass house, climbing on a small ladder, stretching out their little necks to get a good view of her. In an imitation tree there were budgies, turtledoves, fantails, canaries, finches and silvereyes. A squirrel jumped on her right shoulder. In the shop window some turtles walked around.

Bas came towards her and asked what he could do for her.

They shook hands and Lieske told him that she came from the town hall. "I come to see how things are going with you and the shop. Can you manage or are there special problems?"

Bas laughed and said, "Mum and I thought that nobody cared about us. They send some money to keep us alive. We hang on and keep going, although sometimes we are advised to shut down the business. My dad would not have done that. We love these animals! Believe me, sometimes I am sorry that I have to sell a particular animal. I must be sure that it goes to a good home, where he or she will not be dumped or forgotten, not given enough food or water, no sunshine or too much. I always give instructions on what to do to keep the animal healthy. Perhaps it is silly, but do you understand what I mean?"

Bas made a helpless gesture. He had a fresh face and looked intelligent. He took to Lieske at once. She regretted that he was too lean, and wiry.

"Yes," she said, "I think I feel like you do about these animals. The only reason why I do not dare to have one at home is the knowledge that after some years these poor creatures will probably die. Then you are so attached to them, it breaks your heart, you know."

"Exactly... We could go and sit in the living room, but the shop is still open and I know some customers will come in yet to pick up food they ordered last week."

Lieske noticed that he was nervous and was not finishing his sentences. She asked him, "Do you ever have time for relaxation? Business comes first, but don't you have leisure interests, things you like to do in your spare time?"

"Yes, if I have some spare minutes. Perhaps these animals are my work and my hobby at the same time, but I love to play piano and organ. We don't have the money to waste on a teacher, let alone on attending the conservatory. I have played the organ in church for special occasions." Disconsolate he shrugged his shoulders.

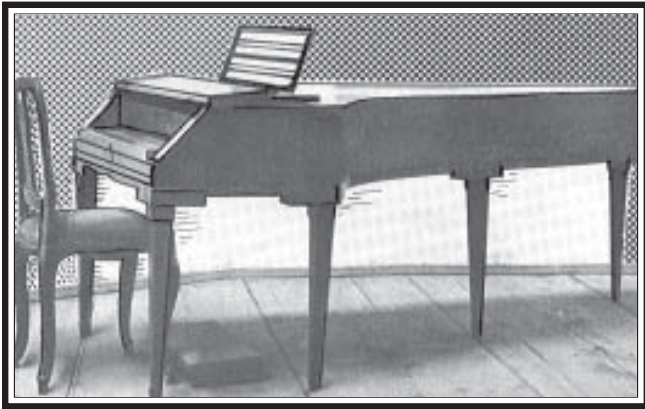
Lieske found it heart-breaking to see him like that.

She said, "Could you play something for me on the grand piano, if we leave the door to the shop open? Bas, you have made me curious. Let me hear a few minutes of your talent, will you?"

He jumped to the door and bowed for her, "Come in, my lady. Do you want Händel, or Schubert, or what is your pleasure? I have some favorites, but there are a lot of melodies in my head."

“Whatever you choose will be all right with me. I hope you don’t find me a nuisance,” Lieske said.

He rushed to the piano seat and started to play immediately. Lieske stood there and listened fascinated by the wealth of sounds, which came in waves over her. It was like listening to a CD of professional classical music.



On the wall behind his back she saw the framed portraits of the composers Georg Friedrich Händel (1685-1759), Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart (1756-1791), Johann Sebastian Bach (1685-1750) and Franz Schubert (1797-1828). Above them was a painting of Bas’ father, captain Nico Vlasakker, who was lost with his ship several years ago somewhere near Greenland. Perhaps that was the reason why, after playing pieces by Händel and Schubert he suddenly played and sang with a beautiful baritone: “Nearer, still nearer, while life shall last, Till safe in glory my anchor is cast; Through endless ages, ever to be, Nearer, my Savior, still nearer to Thee.”

Lieske took a seat near a window and it seemed that he forgot her presence. Customers came into the shop and were helped by his mother. Some of them stood listening, framed in the doorway.

He played and sang: “Be thou my vision, O Lord of my heart; Naught be all else to me, save that Thou art. Thou my best thought, by day or by night, Waking or sleeping, Thy presence my light.”

Lieske gave serious consideration to the idea that a solution should be found. She must get Bas to a conservatory. He played with much nuance, gliding from loud to soft and back again with ease. Perhaps he could also conduct an orchestra or a choir one day.

If the Lord wanted this, everything was possible. She could imagine him performing on a stage with a large audience listening to him.

Although Bas had worn out clothes, he acted very refined. He was very dignified, quiet, contented, despite the disappointments in his life.

The room was gloomy; not enough daylight coming in. It seemed Bas did not notice that, at least not when he made music.

Lieske wondered if something could be done for Bas. Help for his mother had to be provided when he was absent from the shop. She must not be left in the lurch while Bas was studying full time.

She had to explain this whole case to the burgomaster. She had to be well prepared with detailed information even though she had not spoken with Bas and his mother. She must talk to their church, some experts in the field of commerce and finance, and a conservatory. The rabbit came out of the shop and found Lieske again. He nestled his head against her feet and yawned.

The squirrel followed and again jumped on her right shoulder. Perhaps they wanted to “adopt” her as part of the family. But Bas continued playing.

Lieske passed by one of the old gateways, which had been part of the fortification of the city of Enkhuizen since the 14th century. It was restored carefully and had a roof of gray schist. How many battles had been fought here, defending the city against many enemies? It was once an important port for trading with other cities and countries.

She branched off to the right and went to an old manorhouse, located at the corner by the Zuyder Zee Museum.

On the panel next to the door, a number of small doorplates were visible, with a doorbell beside each.

In the distance Lieske saw the flagged masts of numerous sailboats at the aquatics center.

She could have gone home now, but this address was close by. She looked at the worn steps and pushed the bell of Number 151A.

A young boy opened the door and asked if she had come to speak with his father. After she answered in the affirmative, he said with a polite smile, “Come in, lady.”

He led the way, taking steps down to a basement. Here a girl of a couple years older than the boy looked on. Lieske shook hands with her and said, “I guess you are Christiane, and he is your brother Sjors.”

The children were amazed and Lieske quickly explained that she came from the town hall only to ask if all was well. She showed them her identity card.

After this they walked into the living room, which had half windows in the front and full windows in the back. The doors were flung wide open. This house was built against a dyke.

The children's father welcomed Lieske, while Christiane introduced her. He sat at a special chair with a footrest.

"Good afternoon, Engineer Van Veen," said Lieske. "I see, you are making progress," pointing at his right foot, still in a plaster bandage.

"Yes, indeed," he answered. "A month ago half of my body was bandaged and I depended on the help of a nurse. Take a seat here next to the yellow roses." (There were many of them in the garden.)

"Well, I should make preparations for our meal tonight, but we'll just have a couple of cans of food Christiane can open for us. Everybody has been very kind to us. I was just playing a kind of Bible quartet game with the children. I had never played it before and I found it quite interesting. The children are better at it than I, because I remember some words only in French. I lived in France for many years with my wife...but you know about that."

"Yes," said Lieske. "If I may ask, are all the formalities done and settled with the company from whom you had hired the plane?"

He shook his head and sighed.

"Partly. The insurance company has a fight on its hands. There are differences of opinion among the experts. until it is over in court, they send me a weekly amount for support. I thought it was all very simple, but they fall over words and sentences about precautions, regulations, weather reports, etc."

"Do you feel O.K., physically?"

"Well, not completely of course. My back gives me some trouble. Now and then I feel pain in my joints and ligaments; nasty shooting pain, but I will overcome it. The Lord does not give us more than we can carry. He is our refuge and our strength."

Lieske observed that Mr. van Veen looked very pale. She asked, "Is there something special you need under the circumstances? Is there something that you normally would not get from Social Welfare?"

He seemed to hesitate, looking at his children. "I am thankful for what you have done for us. We can manage. In fact, as it is now, the three of us are happy together. Remember, as a pilot I have worked several years for missionaries. Often my family did not see me for a number of weeks. I was often in danger. I learned to handle

emergencies and once was stranded in a broken down airplane. I had a lot of trouble in Somaliland and Cameroon, was shot at by communists above Angola, and by Moslems above Sudan. We have missed each other so often when we could not communicate with each other. Now we are making up for lost time. Can you imagine? I could not be at two places at the same time. The missionaries counted on me for repairing bridges, building or restoring schools and churches and laying pipes for water. Christianity does not stop at the last page of the Bible for us. Well, I presume you are a Christian, aren't you?"

"Indeed, yes. I admire the courage you had to do all that dangerous work."

"Well, good Christian people help us. But they cannot replace my wife of course. Every Friday a lady from a fellowship of the church comes here to vacuum, clean and do the laundry. On Saturday two girls come to help Christiane put clean sheets on the beds. On Monday the woman next door takes the children with her to do the shopping.

The accident was an awful experience. Before the crash, we had viewed all the dykes, sluices, floodgates, docks and canals of the IJsselmeer-works, the old windmills and the Frisian Islands; beautiful views from the air. Suddenly I was surrounded by thick fog; I wondered where it came from. I tried to land quickly. I tried three times, but I seemed to have touched something with my left wing. I lost control in a few seconds. Thank God the children survived."

William van Veen showed her the framed photograph on the small bookcase and he said, "Look, here we are all four still together half a year ago." Lieske saw tears in his eyes, and the children hugged him.

Lieske said, "My father is Reverend Hiddink. He will be interested to hear from you about your work in Africa."

He nodded a bit absent-mindedly and assured her that he would keep this in mind for the future. "We are still busy becoming acclimated to Enkhuizen. There are certain experiences to be digested. In the evenings I sometimes fall asleep in my chair. I do not want to annoy you."

"Not at all," replied Lieske. "But it is time for me to go home. Perhaps I may come and see you again another time."

He gave a broad grin. "Of course, but I guess there are people who need your help more than I do. I don't want to hold you in talk."



Sjors took her left hand and asked, “Won’t you come once to see my electric train?”

Lieske promised him to do that next time.

While she approached the front door, she saw this framed text hanging on the wall (Romans 10:9):

That if thou shalt confess with thy mouth the Lord Jesus, and shalt believe in thine heart that God hath raised Him from the dead, thou shalt be saved.

That night she wrote a long report about her first day with Social Welfare and her visits. She showed it to her father, asking for his opinion, and he was content with it. ❖

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

Short Story Writing Contest

Eight Prizes Beginning with 6th Grade

Attention teachers, students, and anyone else who is willing to yield their pen to some prose. *Beacon Lights* is offering a writing contest that has been designed to work with your school writing instruction. Many of the teachers were introduced to some good strategies for writing stories at the last teacher’s convention, and here is some incentive for prize-winning stories. A total of eight \$10 prizes will be awarded: one prize for each grade level (6th through 12th) and one for post high school entries. The prize winning entries may also be published in *Beacon Lights* as well as the second and third place winners. Please contact the business office of *Beacon Lights* for information regarding material for writing stories that was presented at the teacher’s convention.

For this contest, we are looking for short stories having a distinctly Reformed perspective. Entries will not be considered for the contest unless they are between 800 and 1600 words, typed, double-spaced and postmarked by June 1, 2005. All entries must have the author’s name on the first page along with the word count. The entries will be judged according to the following guidelines: originality, believable plot, character development, appropriate setting, and resolution of the problem.

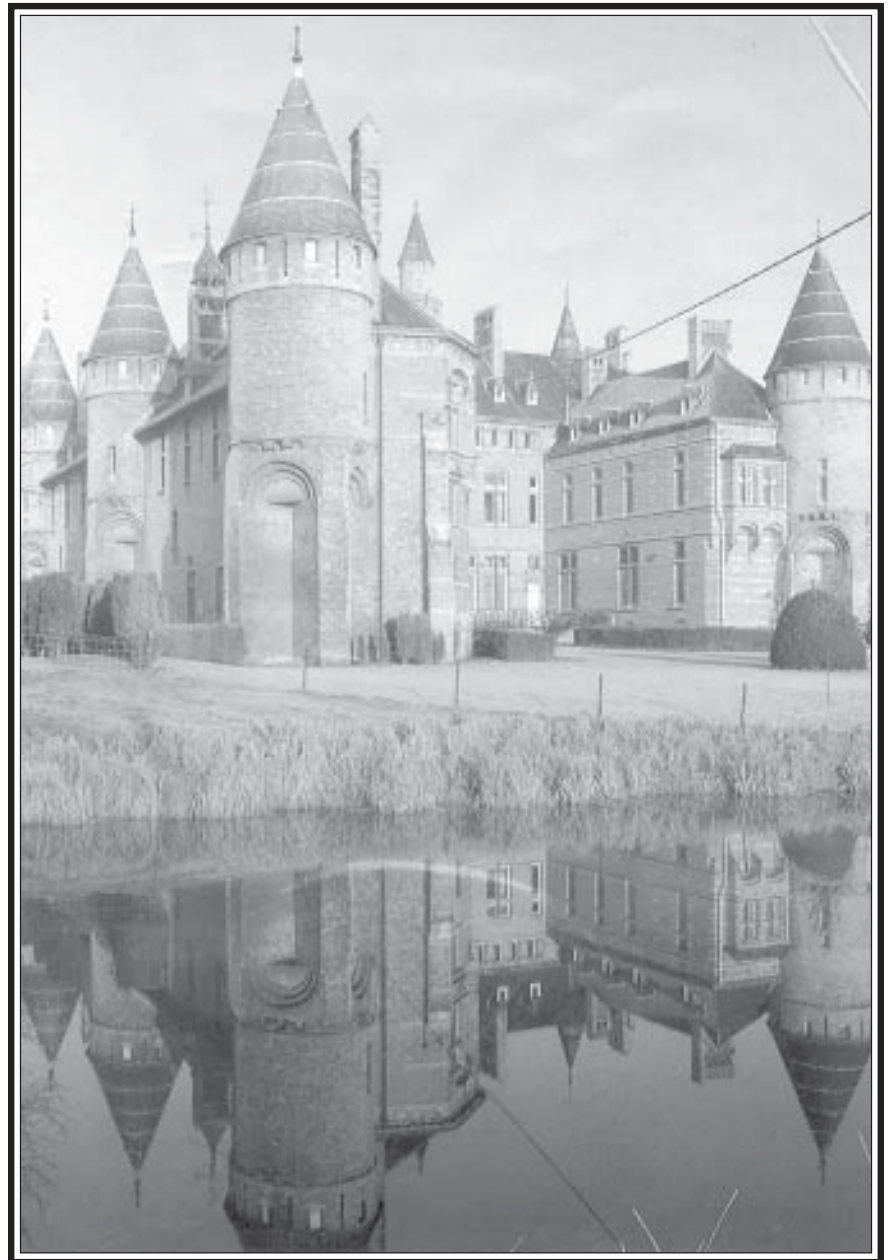
We look forward to receiving your entry. Please mail it to the business office of *Beacon Lights* no later than June 1, 2005. Please follow the guidelines carefully! Start early and plan on doing lots of revisions to polish it and hone it down to the required length. Keep in mind that a typical double spaced page contains about 200 words and your word processor probably has a word count feature.

Marnix Castle

by J. P. de Klerk

The national anthem of The Netherlands is the “Wilhelmus,” composed in 1568 by Marnix van Sint Aldegonde. He was an important man in the history of The Netherlands because he was advisor to Prins William I of Orange. Prins William I organized the liberation of The Netherlands after a war which lasted eighty years. The war had been with the Roman Catholic king of Spain, who wanted all the people to leave the Reformation and return to the Church of Rome. Marnix was born in 1540 in Brussels and died in 1598 in the university city of Leiden. He was a famous Calvinist statesman, theologian, painter, author and poet. He wrote in Dutch, French and Latin. His father was originally from Savoye (French province), moved to Holland and became advisor to Emperor Karl V of Germany. His mother came from Aldegonde (Hainaut, Belgium). Marnix studied at the first Calvin university in Geneva from 1559 to 1561. He fought the Spanish army in 1567 for the defense of Antwerp. In 1572 he represented Prins William in the “Meeting of the States” in Dordrecht. At the request of William’s son, Prins Maurits, he led negotiations with the governments of England and France. In 1594 he wrote a Dutch translation of the book of Genesis as well as the Psalms. In 1583 he became Lord Mayor of Antwerp, but was forced to leave Antwerp by Francois d’Alencon (Duke of Anjou) and his army.

Marnix built the Castle of Bornem (in Flanders) that you see in this picture, It is located not far from Antwerp at the old Schelde River. Now a descendant, Duke Jan of Sint Aldegonde, lives here. The original name of the “Wilhelmus” was “Geuzenpsalm”



It became the official national anthem by decree of the government in 1932. ❖

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

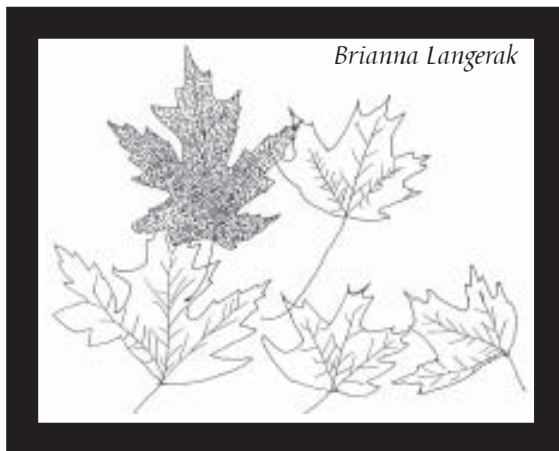
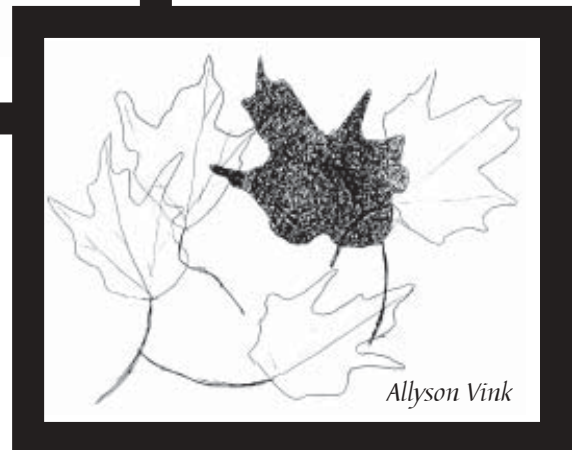
"LITTLE LIGHTS"

Line and Contrast

*Line and contrast,
 Black and white,
 God divided
 Day and night.
 Years and seasons,
 Rhythm, rhyme,
 All is His for
 God made time.
 C. L. Meyer*

... let it shine!

by Connie Meyer



Find all of the words from Job 38:4, 5 in the puzzle below:

“Where wast thou when I laid the foundations of the earth? declare, if thou hast understanding. Who hath laid the measures thereof, if thou knowest? or who hath stretched the line upon it?”



Connie is the mother of 5 children and a member of Hope Protestant Reformed Church in Grand Rapids, Michigan. The artwork was supplied by students from Mr. Tom DeVries' 4th grade class of Hope Protestant Reformed Christian School, in Grand Rapids, Michigan.

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Church News

BAPTISMS

"For the promise is unto you and your children, and to all that are afar off, even as many as the Lord our God shall call." Acts 2:39

The sacrament of Holy Baptism was administered to:
Alexander Malcolm, son of Mr. & Mrs. Colin Buchanan—
Ballymena, N. Ireland
Dale Richard, son of Mr. & Mrs. Bryan VanBaren—Byron
Center, MI
Trevor Scott, son of Mr. & Mrs. Jason Elzinga—Byron
Center, MI
Leah Faith, daughter of Mr. & Mrs. B. J. Mowery—Doon,
IA
Seth Christian, son of Mr. & Mrs. Dean Bekkering—
Georgetown, MI
Josie Joy, daughter of Mr. & Mrs. Kevin Timmerman—
Georgetown, MI
Weston Michael, son of Mr. & Mrs. Mark Meulenberg—
Grace, MI
Leah Ruth, daughter of Mr. & Mrs. Eric Dykstra—
Hudsonville, MI
Toby Daniel, son of Mr. & Mrs. Bruce Hugg—
Hudsonville, MI
Avery Kaye, daughter of Mr. & Mrs. Brain VanMaanen—
Hull, IA
Marissa Lynn, daughter of Mr. & Mrs. Steve Westra—
Hull, IA
Emily Ann, daughter of Mr. & Mrs. Travis Groeneweg—
Hull, IA
Cody Ryan, son of Mr. & Mrs. Jack Kooienga—Loveland,
CO
Luke Edward, son of Mr. & Mrs. Ed Tolsma—Loveland,
CO
Elise Elizabeth, daughter of Mr. & Mrs. Tim Engen—
Southwest, MI
Calvin James, son of Mr. & Mrs. Brent Looyenga—
Southwest, MI
Kenzie Faith, daughter of Mr. & Mrs. Andrew Dykstra—
South Holland, IL

Abby Beth, daughter of Mr. & Mrs. Jeffrey Zylstra—
South Holland, IL
Isaac Everett, son of Mr. & Mrs. Jim Geerlings—Trinity,
MI
Adult baptism was administered to Nathan Gallagher—
Lacombe, Canada

CONFESSIONS OF FAITH

"Train up a child in the way he should go: and when he is old, he will not depart from it."

Proverbs 22:6

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

Hussein Wario—Byron Center, MI
Sara Brummel—Faith, MI
Todd Griffioen—Faith, MI
John Heyboer—Faith, MI
Lisa Huckleberry—Faith, MI
Todd Kooienga—Faith, MI
Joel VanDyke—Faith, MI
Emily Lotterman—Grandville, MI
Nicole Van Overloop—Grandville, MI
Luke Kooops—Holland, MI
Lynette Moelker—Hope, MI
Scott Oosterhouse—Hope, MI
Bonnie Boer—South Holland, IL
Grace DeJong—South Holland, IL
Joshua Dotson—South Holland, IL
Matthew Fennema—South Holland, IL
April Hetfleisch—South Holland, IL
Timothy Vander Meulen—South Holland, IL

MARRIAGES

"For this God is our God for ever and ever: he will be our guide even unto death." Psalm 48:14

United in the bond of Holy Matrimony were:

Mr. Mitchell Zuverink and Miss Jennifer VanBaren—
Hope, MI
Mr. Derek VanDenTop and Miss Anna Hoksbergen—
Hull, IA