

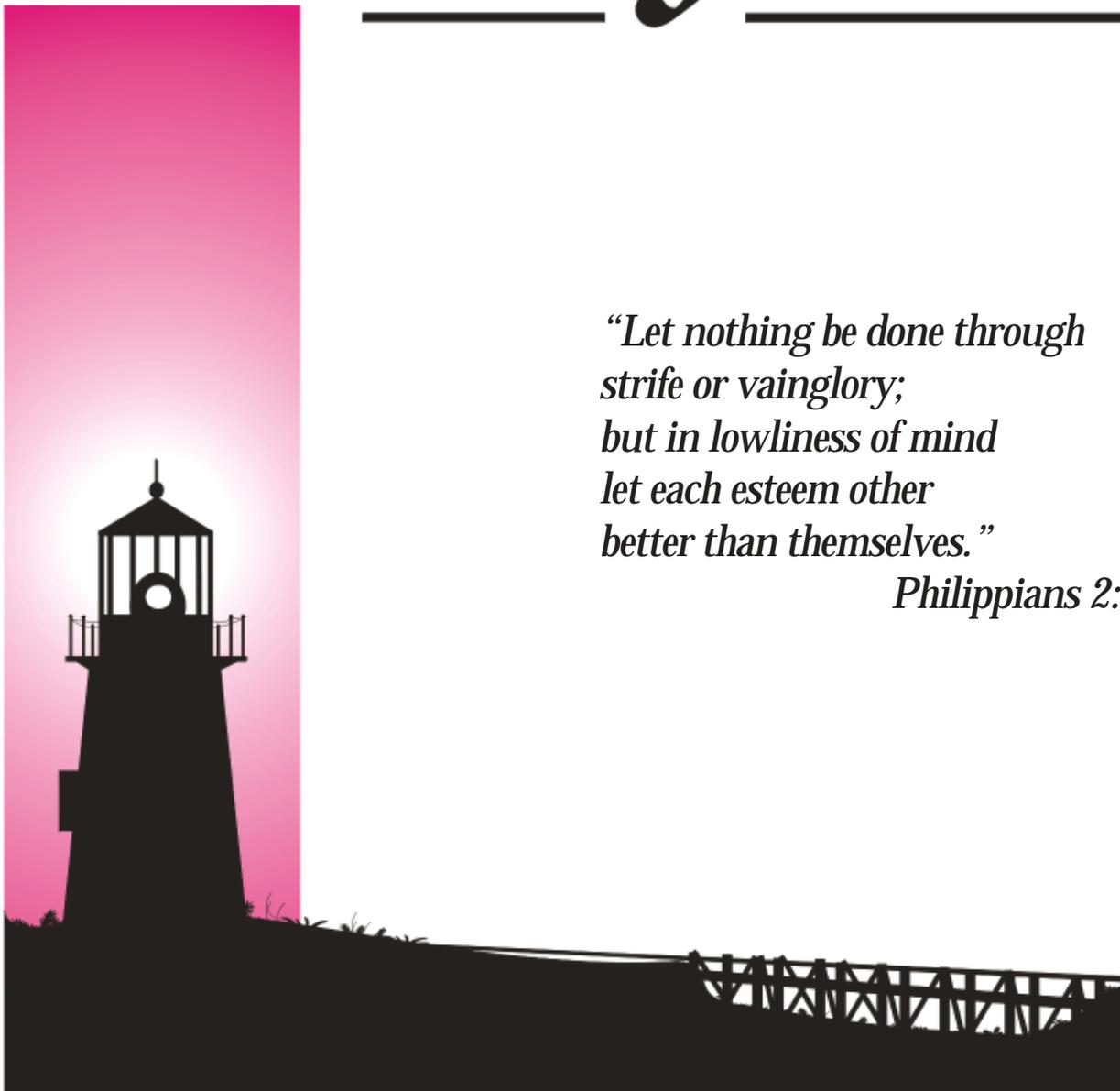
# Beacon Lights

July  
2005

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*“Let nothing be done through  
strife or vainglory;  
but in lowliness of mind  
let each esteem other  
better than themselves.”*

*Philippians 2:3*



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# Mega-churches: A Manifestation of the Spirit of the Age (3)



by Aaron J. Cleveland

So far in our examination of mega-churches we have noticed that in general they manifest the spirit of the age in their lack of clearly defined doctrine and their contemporary, seeker sensitive worship. Their doctrine and worship are calculated to attract as many as possible through the doors so that they continue to grow in numbers. As a result of this emphasis on growth in attendance, mega-churches are rarely organized and governed according to the pattern set forth in God's Word concerning the governing of the church. Neither do those who attend or become members of these massive churches understand what it is to join a church and belong to the body of Christ.

Southland Christian Church in Lexington, Kentucky is an example of the structure of a typical mega-church. One paragraph in the Owensboro, Kentucky, *Messenger-Inquirer* describes Southland Christian Church as follows:

But Southland isn't just a place for singing and preaching on Sunday mornings. It's a teeming, nonstop center of community life in suburban Lexington, an enormous business enterprise, an engine for volunteerism and a potent social and spiritual force with a multimedia message.<sup>1</sup>

The phrase "an enormous business enterprise" accurately describes many mega-churches. Many of these churches operate music studios, publish books, magazines and other religious materials. Some churches have their own record labels, while others produce television and radio talk shows.<sup>2</sup> Lakewood Church, in Houston, Texas, has a media strategy which it analyzes every quarter.<sup>3</sup> In 1999, the typical income of mega-churches averaged 4.8 million dollars, with average expenditures of 4.4 million dollars.<sup>4</sup>

The manpower needed to keep these enterprises operating is also enormous. The study performed by the Hartford Institute for Religion Research (referred to in the 1<sup>st</sup> article) indicated that the typical mega-church "averaged 13 full time paid ministerial staff persons, and 25 full time paid program staff persons. The average number of volunteer workers (giving 5 or more hours a week to the church) was 297."<sup>5</sup>

It is not unusual for these churches to resemble a shopping mall more than a church in their appearance and layout. Take, for example, the 140 acre campus of Prestonwood Baptist Church in Plano, Texas. "Prestonwood has sports fields, an arcade, small Bible-study groups and a bookstore on what is called Main Street. There is even a food court... complete with a Starbucks."<sup>6</sup> Before a Sunday morning service at Southland Christian Church, one can sip on Starbucks coffee at the café, or browse the CD selection in the bookstore.<sup>7</sup>

Because mega-churches are large operations, they need many volunteers in order to function smoothly. Volunteers are needed to maintain church grounds, organize and staff various church programs, lead Bible studies, direct traffic and usher at worship services, and contribute to the worship service itself. Leading this army of volunteers are scores of paid, full and part time staff members who typically report to a board of directors, often made up of church elders and ministers.

Consider the number of volunteers it takes just to conduct the service at Southland Christian Church.

“It takes hundreds of people to pull off a service,” Weece [senior minister of Southland, AJC] said. “People can’t even begin to fathom how this place operates. I don’t even know all the detail.”

Five camera operators caught the action onstage from every angle.

Upstairs, in what looks like a tiny television station, five people controlled the shots that appeared on the worship center’s four big screens and taped the service for broadcast on cable television later. A producer, stage manager and assistant stage manager were stationed downstairs.

“We all have different roles,” said Dave Welch, who was working as director.

The service was timed to the minute.

The first 14 minutes were spent in worship and the welcome. One minute for a prayer before communion, five minutes for communion itself, four minutes for baptisms.

As the band played “Sing to the King”—allotted four minutes—for the last time that day, “decision ministry” volunteers waited at the side of the room to meet with people who came forward in response to the sermon.

Those who came forward are taken to one of five small decision rooms equipped with a box of tissues, a Bible and a few wing-backed chairs.

“We always try to make people feel as welcome as possible,” said Katie Bodager, the decision ministry team leader that day.

The volunteers determine what the person’s needs are and direct them to the part of the church that can help. If they wish to be baptized, it can be done immediately or scheduled for a later time.<sup>8</sup>

That the worship service is flawlessly executed according to a set schedule is no accident. Just as most entertainers practice their routines before their performance, so the staff at Southland carefully plans and practices for all worship services. The *Messenger-Inquirer* reports,

An hour before the children arrived on Saturday evening, Jason Byerly, the children’s minister, and his wife, Christy, practiced teaching the concept of salvation—“God’s Big Gift,” illustrated by a large gift-wrapped box positioned on a small stage.

“God loves you more than anyone in the whole world,” Christy Byerly said. “God loves you so much that he wants to be your forever friend. He wants you to live with him in heaven.”

The lesson incorporated props, such as a large cross, and a video clip from “The Parent Trap.”

Out in the main worship center, which can seat as many as 3,000, Weece, only the third senior pastor in Southland’s 49-year history, and Jim Burgen, the church’s executive director of ministry, were onstage practicing the sermon they were about to preach together.

It was the third week in the month long sermon series “The Gospel According to Bass Pro,” which focused on Jesus’ instruction to the disciples on becoming “fishers of men.”

The stage—which gets a new look for each sermon series—was decked out with wooden boat docks, a fishing boat and fishing gear. Boats were parked in the concourse and on the sidewalks outside.

Weece and Burgen lounged on stools made of boat seats, with a big green cooler between them.

“At the end of the invitation, I’ll pray,” Weece said.

On cue, soft piano notes began to play.

“If you need to talk with someone, Jim and I’ll be down front,” Weece said, as the overhead lights dimmed and lights projecting onto the back wall of the stage changed from blue to red.

Although it’s scripted, Southland’s worship style is fluid, casual and ever-changing. It’s all part of the church’s effort to attract and keep worshippers. Greg Corona, who is in charge of worship, said “the element of surprise” is a key in keeping people engaged in services.<sup>9</sup>

With all of this attention to detail, massive budgets, scores of employees, throngs of volunteers, large campuses, and various business endeavors, it is no wonder that many mega-churches are managed more like a business than a church. And just as businesses are profitable by producing and marketing a product which the consumer desires, so do these churches seek to lure potential customer-worshippers by producing and marketing carefully developed products, such as their entertaining worship services, religious music and literature, and various family activities.

Articles 27–35 of the Belgic Confession show us not only how the true church in this world is known from the false, but also how the true church is governed. We have already noticed how mega-churches in general reject sound doctrinal preaching, which is the first mark of the true church. Because of their large

attendance and casual attitude toward membership, they also fail to manifest the third mark of the true church, the exercise of church discipline in the punishing of sin (Art. 29). Southland Christian Church, for example, averages 8,000 worshippers on a weekend. Of those, only 2,500 to 3,000 “attend worship regularly.”<sup>10</sup> Even if these churches have a council, composed of many ministers, elders, and deacons, how are they to properly take oversight of thousands of individuals, many of whom are only casual attendees? Christian discipline becomes nearly impossible in a situation like this. Further, because of this lack of supervision, the proper administration of the sacraments, the second mark of the true church, becomes impossible. Yet, because these churches reject sound doctrinal preaching, which is where discipline begins, and because their goal is to attract as many attendees as possible, they show that they are not interested in church discipline and even reject it. For this reason, just about anybody feels comfortable coming to one of these churches.

This comfortable feeling along with the anonymity of being one among thousands attracts people to mega-churches. This question was posed recently in a *Grand Rapids Press* religion article with the title, “Do mega-churches bring thousands to God, or let worshippers get lost in a crowd?”<sup>11</sup> The article, which summarized a study done by Calvin College students on three Grand Rapids area mega-churches, noted that the “students said it is easy to slip in and out of Sunday morning services without getting noticed, and that anonymity may be part of the mega-church attraction.”

One who is an anonymous attendee of a church, and who refuses to become a member and join himself to a true church, goes to church for the wrong reasons. One is living in the sin of refusing to submit to the “doctrine and discipline” of the church and is refusing to bow his neck “under the yoke of Jesus Christ” (Belgic Confession, Art. 28). Further, he shows that he does not want to use his gifts for the edification of the members of the body of Christ (Art. 28). Yes, one can say that he is “going to church” and come away with an emotional boost from the entertaining service, but all of this is in disobedience to God’s command to believers to join a local congregation which manifests the marks of the true church.

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...one can say that he is “going to church” and come away with an emotional boost from the entertaining service, but all of this is in disobedience to God’s command.

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Another attraction and characteristic of mega-churches is that frequently they are led by dynamic pastors. Kevin Dougherty, a Calvin College sociology professor, notes that often pastors are the main attraction at mega-churches. *The Grand Rapids Press* reports:

A survey by the Hartford Institute for Religion Research shows 70 percent of churches with at least 2,000 participants boomed into a mega-church during the tenure of their current pastor. That’s because those pastors “have their fingers on the pulse of the culture and are able to put together a product that people understand,” Dougherty said.

While only two-thirds of senior pastors have seminary training, Dougherty suggests all of them “are highly entrepreneurial individuals.”

As a result, mega-churches resemble “complex corporations” in the way they operate. And their growth attracts more growth, to a point where “their reach is comparable to small denominations,” Dougherty said.

“People want to associate with a winner,” he said. “These churches are winners.”

But are there too many people riding the bench in championship churches? Students wondered if those players will stay on the team when a coaching change occurs.<sup>12</sup>

While it is sometimes the case that God raises up energetic and gifted men to positions of leadership in His church, these men do not have their “fingers on the pulse of culture,” nor are they interested in creating a culturally relevant product which the masses will flock to. No, God uses them to preach the truth and deliver His church from error and departure. Quite often it is the case that many are offended by

the doctrinal truths they preach and leave. Only a remnant is left to follow their leadership. Those who follow today's "dynamic" pastors remind us of the multitude that followed Jesus when He gave them "to eat of the loaves, and they were filled" (John 6:26). As soon as they discovered that His kingdom was not of this world, with earthly health, wealth, and dominion, they left Him. Only those who desired the "true bread from heaven" (John 6:32) and a spiritual kingdom remained His disciples.

Next article, Lord willing, we will continue with this idea as it relates to the vision and purpose of mega-churches. We will also take a look at mega-church evangelism and outreach. ❖

### Footnotes

<sup>1</sup> Karla Ward and Lu-Ann Farrar. (2005, April 16). Megachurch Connection, Thousands worship at centers for community life. *Messenger-inquirer.com*, *Knight Ridder Newspapers*, Retrieved April 22, 2005, from <http://www.messenger-inquirer.com/features/religionvalues/8330085.htm>.

<sup>2</sup> Luisa Kroll. (2003, September 17). Megachurches, Megabusineses. *Forbes.com*, Retrieved March 5, 2005, from [http://www.forbes.com/2003/09/17/cz\\_1k\\_0917megachurch.html](http://www.forbes.com/2003/09/17/cz_1k_0917megachurch.html).

<sup>3</sup> Luisa Kroll. Megachurches, Megabusineses.

<sup>4</sup> Scott Thumma, PhD. (2000). Megachurches Today: Summary of the Faith Communities Today material on Megachurches, Hartford Institute For Religion Research. Retrieved February 28, 2005, from Hartford Seminary Web site: [http://www.hartsem.edu/org/faith\\_megachurches\\_FACTsummary.html](http://www.hartsem.edu/org/faith_megachurches_FACTsummary.html).

<sup>5</sup> Scott Thumma, Hartford Study.

<sup>6</sup> ABC News. (2005, March 27). Mega-Churches Offer Prayer, Play, and Shopping. Retrieved April 22, 2005, from <http://abcnews.go.com/GMA/print?id=617341>.

<sup>7</sup> Karla Ward and Lu-Ann Farrar, *Messenger-inquirer.com*.

<sup>8</sup> Karla Ward and Lu-Ann Farrar, *Messenger-inquirer.com*.

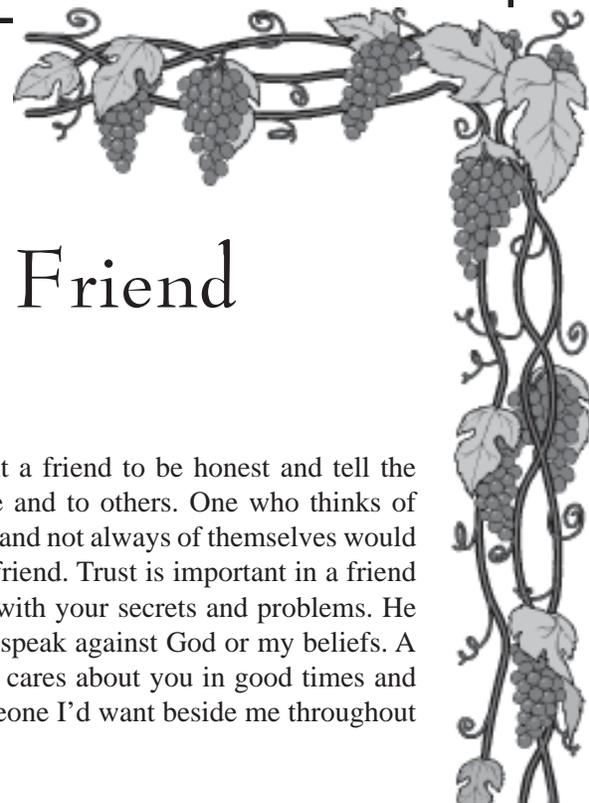
<sup>9</sup> Karla Ward and Lu-Ann Farrar, *Messenger-inquirer.com*.

<sup>10</sup> Karla Ward and Lu-Ann Farrar, *Messenger-inquirer.com*.

<sup>11</sup> Matt Vandebunte. Do Mega-churches Bring Thousands To God, Or Let Worshippers Get Lost In A Crowd?, *The Grand Rapids Press*, (February 12, 2005), Sec. D, pp. 1, 3.

<sup>12</sup> Matt Vandebunte, p. 3.

Fruitful Branches



# What I Look for in a Friend

by Jordan Reitsma

**A**cknowledging a common interest in each other like sports, family, school, or church can start a friendship. There can be many friends in a person's life and each one different in their own way. I would consider someone my friend who is kind, forgiving, and God-fearing. The most important thing in a friend is the walk, talk, and belief in Christ.

A friend should want to obey God's commandments and laws. They should be able to show you your wrong in sin and correct you without seeming better than you. I

would want a friend to be honest and tell the truth to me and to others. One who thinks of others first and not always of themselves would be a good friend. Trust is important in a friend especially with your secrets and problems. He should not speak against God or my beliefs. A friend who cares about you in good times and bad is someone I'd want beside me throughout my life.

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A good friend should be able to laugh with you but not at you. They should be able to have a good time but also know when to be serious and respectful. “A man that hath friends must shew himself friendly: and there is a friend that sticketh closer than a brother” (Prov. 18:24). If they trust in the Lord for all things, then their

friendship should be worthy as our friendship in Christ. If you have this kind of friend you have a true friend. ❖

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*Jordan is a member of Southwest Protestant Reformed Church.*

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Church Profile

# God's Covenant Faithfulness in South Holland, Illinois

by Eric Ophoff

*Editor's Note: Over the past few years, Beacon Lights has brought to you profiles of many of the ministers of the Protestant Reformed Churches. We hope you enjoyed them, and it is our prayer that God might use them as a means to guide other young men to serve Him as ministers of the Word. We would also like to do what we can to keep our readers in touch with the different Protestant Reformed churches. The Young People's Conventions are excellent ways to meet others from the different churches and tie a face and a friend to fellow believers in other geographical areas. Five years ago our churches celebrated 75 years as a denomination and published an excellent book, much of it devoted to giving the history of the various churches. We would like to visit these churches again and publish a series of profiles to bring you up to date. We are in the process of contacting the clerks of the churches asking for someone to write. If you have an interesting story relating to the history or current life of your church, please contact either Kris Moelker at [krismoel@sbcglobal.net](mailto:krismoel@sbcglobal.net) or John Huizenga by email, phone or mail (listed inside the front cover).*

**T**he Protestant Reformed Church in South Holland, Illinois is a testament to the faithfulness of God. The beginnings of the church were so humble and the trials so many over the past 79 years that from a human standpoint, this church should not be what it is today. And what is the South Holland Protestant Reformed Church today? It is a lively and growing church of 450 people with nearly a quarter of them under 7 years old.

The church was organized in 1926 with 7 families. This organization was the result of several lectures given by Rev. Herman Hoeksema in the mid 1920's in the southern suburbs of Chicago. A small group of Reformed believers committed to the truth of the sovereignty of God and salvation by particular grace had been meeting above a hardware store in Lansing, IL for two years. This small band desired a place in the fledgling denomination called the Protestant Reformed Churches.

In August of 1926, Rev. Herman Hoeksema preached a sermon at the organization of the little church on John 6:5, “When Jesus lifted up his eyes, and saw a great company come unto him, he saith unto Philip, Whence shall we buy bread that these may eat?” Jesus said that to Philip to test him, because it was only by the power of God that the multitude was fed that day as described in John 6. While no transcript of Rev. Hoeksema's sermon nearly 80 years ago exists today, you can envision that he pointed the soon to be established little church to the fact that they also would be spiritually fed by the power of the Word of God. Appointed by the Classis, Rev. G. M. Ophoff pronounced a blessing on the new church, and the South Holland Protestant Reformed Church was born.

Imagine what that was like. An insignificant little group meeting in primitive surroundings was led by the Holy Spirit to stand alone among family and friends and community. For the sake of the truth, they became a church in a denomination that was so small many people in the church world of that day had likely never heard of it. There was no big name seminary with high profile professors to teach large numbers of young scholars to

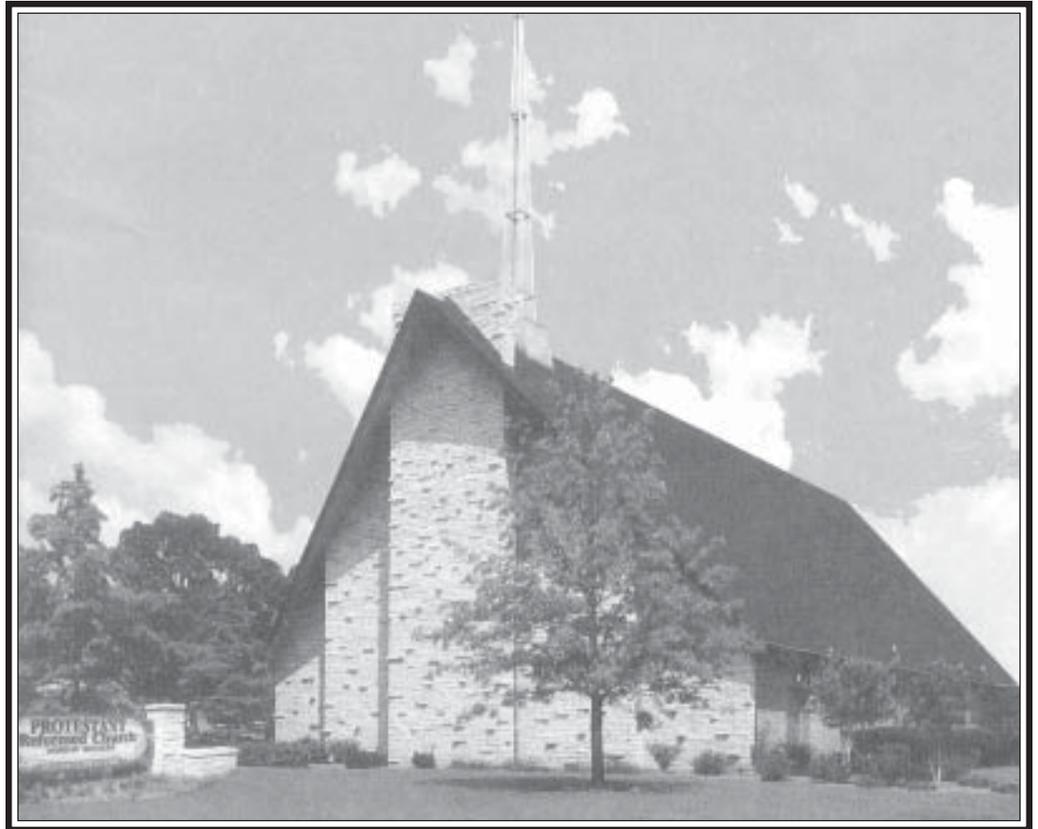
become preachers. There was no other church in the area to help them in any way. In fact, this little band never even had a minister until six years after they became a church.

Think about what it must have been like for Protestant Reformed young people in 1926 to 1932 in South Holland and Lansing, Illinois. Their parents told them they were leaving the churches in which they had been born and in which they had been baptized and in which, no doubt, they had family and friends. They were then led to worship with only a few and without even a full time minister. How do you think they explained that to their friends at school? How do you think they explained it

all to their relatives who thought the entire idea of a new puny church a bit odd that argued over a fine point of doctrine like common grace?

But God blessed the little church. A church building in South Holland was erected and by the time it finally received its first full time pastor in 1932, the church had actually grown to 18 families. Under the preaching of Rev. Peter De Boer, the congregation more than doubled to 40 families by 1938.

From 1938 to 1945 Rev. Vermeer was the pastor of South Holland Protestant Reformed Church. During these years, there were internal difficulties within the congregation and some members left the church. From 1945 to 1954, Rev. M. Schipper was the minister in the pulpit of the Protestant Reformed Church in South Holland and the group started to plan for a Protestant Reformed grade school. But the mid 1950's were not easy years for the church. While the pulpit was vacant, the consistory stood against the DeWolf faction and Classis West. The church had to fight for its name and property in the courts as a result of what you have been taught today was the split of 1953.



There was a series of ministers in South Holland from the mid 1950s to the 1970s. Rev. H. C. Hoeksema, Rev. John Heys and Rev. Robert Decker all served faithfully in the Protestant Reformed Church in South Holland. Is there a higher compliment that could be paid these men, than they served the church as faithful servants? The church increased in numbers during the tenure of the men, two of whom left the South Holland Protestant Reformed Church for distinguished service in the Protestant Reformed Seminary.

In 1974, Rev. David Engelsma became the pastor of South Holland. He served in South Holland for nearly 15 years. Again the church prospered under the preaching of Rev. Engelsma. It was during these years that what is now Bethel Protestant Reformed Church in Roselle, Illinois had its beginnings as a mission church largely as a result of the work of Rev. Engelsma. The Protestant Reformed Church in Lansing, Illinois was formed as a daughter church and is now Peace Protestant Reformed Church.

Following the departure of Rev. Engelsma for the Protestant Reformed Seminary, South Holland was capably served by Rev. Charles Terpstra who left in 1996.

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In 1998, Rev. Allen Brummel became the pastor in South Holland and he is still in the pulpit today.

In 1999, another church was formed from the membership of the South Holland congregation in the north-west Indiana area. Cornerstone Protestant Reformed Church, in St John, Indiana with a very attractive new church building, is comprised largely of members from South Holland who had moved farther south. The Village of South Holland, once a small farming community, is today an urban suburb of Chicago.

The men of South Holland have had an eye to the future as there will come a day in the not too distant future when the South Holland church will be relocated south of its present location. This move will likely be driven by the building of a school for Heritage Christian High School as well as the relocation of the Protestant Reformed grade school to property already purchased in Lake County, Indiana. The church in South Holland owns property in Crete, Illinois which may become the site of a new church when that move becomes advisable or necessary.

What is the South Holland Protestant Reformed Church today? It is a congregation of more than 100 families with many children and young people. It is a diverse congregation with many elderly saints. It is a church with

professional people, blue collar people, single adults and married couples, empty nesters and growing young families. It is a church of people who are sinners and can exhibit all the foibles of churches full of people in need of the cross of Jesus Christ.

It is also a church that continues to stand in the Reformed faith as it was given from the time of the great Reformation 400 years ago. It can be stated that the Lord has prospered His church in South Holland. The work of the Lord can be seen in the life of the church. The Word of God is preached every service. There are active societies both for young people and adults, a choir, an Evangelism Committee, faithful men to serve in the offices of the church, and the causes of God's kingdom receive financial support

Truly it can be said that the Lord has been faithful and good to the Protestant Reformed Church in South Holland, Illinois. Should you have occasion to visit The Protestant Reformed Church in South Holland, Illinois perhaps you will be reminded of Psalm 34:3, "O magnify the Lord with me, and let us exalt his name together."



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*Eric is a member of South Holland Protestant Reformed Church in South Holland, Illinois.*

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Memoir of Rev. C. Hanko

# Rev. C. Hanko

## Chapter 3

### Home Life

edited by Karen Van Baren

*Editor's Note: In this chapter, Rev. Hanko takes us inside his own home and its routine. No doubt, life in his home was similar to that of many homes in this Dutch-Calvinist community—orderly and scheduled.*

**T**he typical Dutch home had a task and a meal for each day of the week. Monday was wash day. At 4:00 in the morning the wash kettle was placed

on the cook stove to boil the clothes. The wash tubs were arranged on the hand wringer. Water was brought in from the cistern, and the lines were put out for the clothes to dry outside. When my father came in from his morning chores he would be asked about the weather. Rain meant that clothes had to be hung inside, most likely in the upstairs bedrooms. One common answer was, "It could rain, it could turn out well." We children were awak-

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ened by the strong smell of soap. How I hated those Mondays, especially because the kitchen table and all the chairs were pushed into the corner to make room for the washing paraphernalia. Wash day also meant that I had to turn the wheel of the washing machine until school time.

Usually by the time we arrived home from school in the afternoon the washing apparatus was being put away for another week. The evening meal that day consisted of brown beans which had stood cooking on the back of the stove all day. This was served with bacon, followed by rusk and milk.

Tuesday was ironing day. That mean that the ironing board stood over the floor most of the day. In those days, sheets, pillowcases, dresses, cotton shirts, and other clothes were ironed. Each cotton shirt took twenty minutes to iron. We had advanced from flat irons heated on the stove to a gasoline iron. This thing ran empty from time to time and had to be filled while it was hot. The result was that the whole thing would sometimes catch afire. When she was little, my sister Henrietta was so afraid of that new-fangled tool that she would stand by the screen door ready to run out every time the iron had to be refilled. Since this was the day that the fish man came through, we had fish with potatoes and a vegetable.

Wednesday was sewing day. The girls' dresses were home made. The long stockings were knitted. Sometimes even the men's shirts were made at home. For special dresses and shirts a sewing woman would come in to help my mother for a day. The warm meal consisted of potatoes, roast beef and beans or peas.

Thursday was shopping day whenever my mother was compelled to go downtown to shop. This was an all day affair, since there was usually quite a list of things that had be purchased for the family. I recall one occasion when my father suggested that mother should not go hungry all day, but should stop in the Five and Dime Store to get a sandwich. That was indeed a very special event. My mother could not stop talking about how good that sandwich tasted. And that coffee! It did cost ten cents. But to her mind it was well worth it.

On the Thursday that there was no shopping on the list the married girls came over. Maggie and Henrietta came all the way from the south end by streetcar. Henrietta, who had a heart of gold, but tended to scold, could be heard coming up the street saying to her son, "If you don't behave, we're going right home."

Friday the whole house had to be turned on end for cleaning. That meant that all the furniture had to be

moved, everything in the room had to be dusted, and the floor and carpet swept or cleaned by the carpet sweeper. The beds had to be changed and the bedrooms given a good cleaning. All but the kitchen had a thorough going over.

Saturday the kitchen had to get its weekly cleaning. All the chairs were moved to the living room and the table pushed into the corner. The floor had to be scrubbed, the stove had to be polished, and the rest of the room dusted. After that the baking had to be done. Mother baked seven huge loaves of white bread, and one or two raisin loaves, besides a cake. There is nothing quite as good as the smell of baking bread in the oven. Even the flies were thick on the screen doors, eager to come in, attracted by the smell. We all had our chores. My duty was to grind a pound of coffee for the week, learn my catechism, polish all the shoes of the family, chop the wood and fill the wood boxes for the weekend, fill the coal pails, and take care of the lawn. My sisters had to polish the silverware, sand the wooden forks, and fill in with other duties. On Saturday afternoon during the school year, Mother checked the girls for any lice they might have picked up. If there was evidence of that, the hair would be combed with kerosene and a fine toothed comb, which made the girls pull up their legs and scream.

We had a happy home. We often spent our evenings about the kitchen table, everyone engaged in his or her endeavor. Fred and the older girls often had their fun teasing and chasing each other. It was a good thing that Dad could replace a pane of glass, for more than once someone accidentally crashed through a window.

Late summer and autumn were busy times in the kitchen. Beans had to be strung and canned. Other vegetables, peaches and various fruits were also canned. There were also jellies to be made. I particularly recall the grape bag hanging dripping for a day or two. Then later in the fall twenty bushels of potatoes were stored in the cellar, and carrots and beets were placed in sand-boxes.

As soon as his work slacked up my dad took a day off to help cut up huge chunks of tallow, which we melted for a winter's supply of lard. The stench clung to the rooms. The good part was that we ate the crunchy kernels hot from the fire.

Then there was the all day job of setting up the hard coal stove in the living room. The stove, stripped of all its decorations was hauled out of the corner of the bedroom into the kitchen. Then the work began. All the mica squares for the doors had to be cleaned. All the black

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parts were polished. All the metal trimmings were cleaned and polished. Finally the stove was moved into the living room, set up in the corner with all its decorations and finally filled with hard coal, ready for lighting. The hard coal burned with a pleasant glow, which lit up the entire room at night.

The first Christmas that I remember I received, along with the usual knitted black stockings and mittens, underwear and shirts, and a black board on a stand. A year later I received a "Berry Cart," which was given by the Berry Varnish Company to customers such as my dad that had bought a certain amount of varnish. It was a wooden box, like a varnish case, with wooden wheels. This was often a source of entertainment among the kids of the neighborhood because it was the only one of its kind.

Since my mother's parents lived in Byron Center, we paid them an occasional visit by train. We took the streetcar to the west side of Grand Rapids and there boarded the train. In the afternoon at four o'clock there was a return train, which took us home again.

My step-grandmother, Mrs. Schriemer, died when I was about seven years old. A hack with two beautiful black horses came to pick up my parents and me and bring us to the home of the departed. After a short service at the home we were transferred by hack to the church. All the women who were closely related to the departed wore heavy black veils over their faces. The men wore black suits or black bands around their arms. When the minister announced the Psalm to be sung, the ladies took out a black bordered handkerchief and carefully reached under their veils to wipe away a tear. After the service we had a long ride to the cemetery where the committal was held. The black hearse, pulled by stately black horses led the way to the cemetery. It was customary in those days that the minister would take up a hand full of dirt and spreading that over the casket would say, "Dust thou art, and to dust thou shalt return." Afterward, we were taken back to the home of the departed for lunch and brought back to our own home. For me it was a wonderful experience and I proudly looked out of the window of the hack.

My Grandfather Burmania (after whom I am named) died in Byron Center, MI, his adopted hometown. His funeral followed the same pattern. His grave can still be found in the cemetery in Byron Center.

In the summer of my sixth or seventh year, my parents and I made a trip to Chicago to see my uncle Harm and his daughter, who lived on 103<sup>rd</sup> Place in Roseland.

We traveled by interurban to Holland and then by boat to Chicago, arriving there in the morning.<sup>1</sup> All I remember of this trip is that we did visit some of the parks in the Chicago area. The rides on the streetcar were especially exciting.

But on the way home the lake was rough and we were seasick. Even in the interurban I was far from comfortable and ready to lie down when we arrived home.

Some time before our trip to Chicago my father had gone alone to Chicago to attend the funeral of his sister-in-law. What stood out in the memory of the family was that while he was away Sena came down with black diphtheria, which was almost always fatal. Since my father was not at home, my mother did not dare to incur the expense of calling a doctor. For three days and three nights, with almost no sleep, she swabbed Sena's black throat with iodine, hovering over her almost constantly. The amazing thing is that she recovered.

In the meantime my brother, who was eleven years older than I, had graduated at fifteen years of age from the eighth grade. Passing every year was by no means assured in those days. He evidently had a struggle to get through the grades, mainly because of his bad eyesight. This was likely caused by the many ailments he had as a small boy. He had trouble with the glands in his neck, which would swell up, sometimes requiring lancing. He was on a steady diet of cod liver oil, so that the storekeeper asked him who in the world could get away with so much cod liver oil, which Fred bought by the gallon.

After Fred had graduated from the eighth grade he naturally fell into the painting business. He now began to drive the horse to work early in the morning, and back from work after five o'clock. That poor horse had to stand out on the street for at least eight hours, with the only interesting time being when the feed bag was suspended from his neck at noon. This horse traveled over the gravel and cobblestones at a merry pace. He was as meek as a lamb and readily allowed himself to be harnessed to the wagon every morning to make another trip somewhere in the city. Sometimes the work called Fred and Dad to go beyond North Park. That meant getting up before six o'clock in the morning so that the entire family could gather around the table for morning devotions before they left. Then it was the long trip to the north end and working in the bed bug infested houses in that part of town. My mother was always afraid that they would carry some of the pests along with them in their clothes, which hung in the back hall. They themselves were very careful not to take any more clothing into the

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houses than was absolutely necessary. As they took the dirty beds of customers apart the bed bugs and cockroaches would run helter-skelter. The only bugs they ever took home with them were, as far as I know cockroaches, which never went farther into the house than the back hall.

By the time I was born my three older stepsisters had already left home to do house work among the richer class of people. Jennie married Nick Bolt when I was slightly over one year old. They had one child, John, who spent much of his time at our house, because that was where the action was. Maggie worked for a number of years on Fuller Avenue near Lake Drive. She also slept there, coming home only on Thursday afternoons. Later, she married Pete Kladder. Henrietta worked on Sigsbee Street across from the Sigsbee Christian School where she also made her home until she was married to Rich Helder.

When Sena graduated a year or so after Fred she also went out to do house work on Cambridge Boulevard. Later she worked in Klaasen's dry goods store on Wealthy near Charles Street. I peddled fashion sheets for them after school thus making a little money. Sena later married Charles Van Dyken.

When Lucy finished school she worked in the Calvin College dormitory on Eastern Avenue at Dunham Street. She came home nights. She had more than one boy friend but the friendships did not last until Bernard Woudenberg came around.

Corrie (or Cornelia, after my grandfather) worked in the dry goods store of Katie Scheepstra on Diamond Avenue near Wealthy. She also had various boy friends, some for a longer, some for a shorter time, but finally settled on Otto Vander Woude who was attending Calvin College at the time. They were married and had four children. First they lived on Bemis Street, where she was quite a help to my aged mother. Later they moved to Prince Street.

I might mention that when I was seven, I fell out of the neighbor's tree. On the way down my arm was torn open by a broken branch. The neighbor lady saw this and quickly submerged my arm in a tub of rainwater. Wrapping the bleeding arm in a clean towel she sent me home. My mother called the doctor who advised giving me a half-cup of whiskey at once. When he arrived he took a look at the arm and suggested another half-cup of whiskey. Laying me on the kitchen table, he put in twelve stitches. Evidently the liquor made the sewing virtually

painless. But I did walk around with a bandaged arm for the rest of the summer.

I was soon old enough to work in the summer. My first job was with a lawn tender who lived on Lake Drive. My brother had fixed up his old bike and made it fit to ride so that I had means of transportation. Every morning I went to rake the leaves from four area lawns.

Later I worked for this lawn tender six days a week in the summer, at 26 cents a day. He went from one lawn to another cutting the grass with a lawn mower. I followed him with a lawn trimmer and shears. I had to trim the edges and sweep up the grass. This lawn tender was a man of few words. He rarely spoke and then only when necessary. He expected me to see what he was doing and then follow suit. If he picked up a lawn mower, that meant cutting lawns. If he picked up rakes and other tools that meant weeding flower beds. When it was time to quit we put away our tools. No words were wasted.

After a few years, our neighbor who was also a lawn tender hired me to work for him. He paid me 25 cents an hour, but because I was receiving more than the other boys, I was made superintendent over them. I was not allowed to do menial work. This was in the neighborhood of Morris and Madison Avenues, where a slightly higher class of people lived.

And so the rhythm of life continued. We worked, we ate, we slept, we went to church, and when we grew old, we died. Though the times have changed drastically, the rhythm of life remains much the same. As Solomon says, "There is nothing new under the sun." ❖

### Footnotes

<sup>1</sup> The interurban was a local train that connected nearby cities. The old interurban track between Grand Rapids and Byron Center is now part of Kent Trails.

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*Karen is a member of Protestant Reformed Church in South Holland, Illinois, and a granddaughter of Rev. C. Hanko.*

# Watching Daily At My Gates

by Skip Hunter

## **July 1 Read Romans 3:10-19; Canons of Dordt 1:1**

The Canons of Dordt were written by the Reformed Churches in a Synod held in 1618-19. The men at that synod guided by the Holy Spirit wrote this document to combat errors concerning our salvation. Today the same errors are present and we do well to often read the Canons and study them. In the first article we find that we have fallen into sin. This fall was because of the original sin of Adam and Eve. By nature we are corrupt in every part of our being. Because of our moral depravity God would be just in leaving us in our sin and destroying us forever. The fact of our condition shows to us that of ourselves we can do nothing and without help would perish forever. Sing Psalter 1.

## **July 2 Read John 3:14-21; Canons of Dordt 1:2**

From the gloom of yesterday's article comes the bright hope of today's. God loves us. What a beautiful thought and truth! God, who is perfect, loves a wicked morally corrupt sinner like me! In fact He loves me so much that He sent His only begotten Son to die the awful death on the cross. From the despair of Article 1 we go to the beauty of Article 2. What a comfort He has provided for us through His Son! People of God, let us remember what He has done for us. Let us go to the cross for the only way of salvation. Sing Psalter 398.

## **July 3 Read Romans 10:8-17; Canons of Dordt 1:3**

After sending His Son to die for us, God also provided the way that we may be brought to salvation. This way is not in us. This way is through the preaching of the Word which is Christ. Today many of us were privileged to sit under the preaching of that Word. People of God, did you hear Christ? Were you listening for Him? Young people, did you consider that Christ was speaking to you today as you listened to the sermon? Did you try to hear about the salvation that Christ wrought for you? Let us be joyful to hear the Word proclaimed by those sent by God for us. Let us use this day to consider that Word and know it. Sing Psalter 334.

## **July 4 Read I John 5:1-6; Canons of Dordt 1:4**

In the first article we were brought face to face with the wrath of God because of our sin. We deserve nothing less than eternal damnation. Then we were shown the way of salvation that God has provided for His people. Now we begin to see the means by which this salvation is given to us. Yesterday we learned about the preaching of the Word. Today we begin to learn about the idea of faith. By faith not only are we delivered from the punishment of sin, but we also are given the promise of eternal life. We also see that there are two kinds of people in this world. Those who receive the gift and those who do not. Let us who are the "called according to His purpose" receive Him with joy. Let us do that now and every day. Sing Psalter 35:1-4.

## **July 5 Read Ephesians 2:1-8; Canons of Dordt 1:5**

Here in this article we begin to see that the gift of faith is not of ourselves but only because of the grace of God. Like any gift we do not merit it. We can never earn it. We do not deserve it. Like any gift it is given by the good pleasure of the giver. We who are dead in the blackness of sin are given a glorious gift by the Light of the world. We are given the most precious gift that can ever be given. We are given the gift of eternal life. Thanks be to God for His unspeakable gift. Sing Psalter 32:1, 3, 4.

## **July 6 Read Romans 9:9-16; Canons of Dordt 1:6**

As the fathers develop this idea of salvation as a gift of God, they continue to go back to the fact that we by nature are dead in our sins and miseries. We are so dead that we are like a complete dead and dry stick which has no life. But God though the decree of election has given to us life. That dead stick now has life in it! What more can we want? Why would we think that we can have life of ourselves or even by a little bit of our doing? God in His mercy has given to us full and complete life! What a glorious gift! Sing Psalter 403.

## **July 7 Read Ephesians 1:4-11; Canons of Dordt 1:7**

Here in this article we have a concise definition and explanation of the beautiful doctrine of election. Here

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we can find many answers to the questions which may puzzle us or questions others may ask about the hope which is in us. Here we see the truth that God is everything and man is nothing. Here we find the heart of the truth fought for by our fathers during the reformation. Let us return to this article often for comfort and solace in times of despair. Sing Psalter 237.

**July 8 Read John 10:11-18; Canons of Dordt 1:8**

Here we find that the doctrine of election is one for both the old and new dispensations. Our fathers said that from eternity God had ordained one church. From eternity He had called His people to be one in Christ. While the working out of the way of salvation was different for those of the old dispensation, the way of salvation was the same. That way was salvation by faith through Christ. Because God has ordained for us this way of salvation, we can be assured that it will never fail. Sing Psalter 222:1-5.

**July 9 Read I Peter 1:13-21; Canons of Dordt 1:9**

Once again the fathers return to the idea that nothing of the way of salvation is of man. Like Paul in the book of Romans they must put this question to rest. Those who do not hold to sovereign election want man to have a part in salvation. They will go to great lengths to give man that part. Why do they want to do this? Can not they see that men make a mess of everything to which they have put their hands? The answer must be that they do not want to give God the glory that belongs only to Him. What about you, people of God, do you hold to this doctrine? Do you say that God is all and man nothing? There is no other possibility. Sing Psalter 221.

**July 10 Read Acts 13:45-53; Canons of Dordt 1:10**

The fathers continue to expand upon the idea that man has absolutely no part in his salvation. This was the heart of the controversy in the church of that day. This, too, is the heart of many who want nothing to do with the sovereign doctrine of election. Acts 13:48 is concrete proof from God Himself that He is the fountain from which our salvation flows. Do you believe that, people of God, or do you seek salvation some other way? If you do, rest assured that your way of salvation will fail. If you believe that God is the sole source of our salvation by grace through faith, then rest assured that He will fulfill that salvation and take you to glory. Sing Psalter 179.

**July 11 Read John 10:24-30; Canons of Dordt 1:11**

A very comforting and sure outcome of the doctrine of election is that election is forever. If God is a sovereign God, than His decrees will never fail. If we believe that He is sovereign over all things including our salva-

tion, then we must never worry about falling into sin. God will bring to glory those whom He has ordained to bring to glory. As we worship Him let us remember this fact, and let us thank Him for it during each and every time we bow our heads in prayer. What a comfort this doctrine of election truly is! Sing Psalter 164.

**July 12 Read Ephesians 3:14-21; Canons of Dordt 1:12**

As we continue through our work week, we cannot help see those fruits of election in our lives. The question is, "Are we looking for them and recognizing them?" Each of us must examine ourselves to see those fruits. We must sorrow for our sins. We must do this because our sins rise up against us. When we do this, we must fall on our knees in faith and pray through our elder brother to our sovereign God for forgiveness. By doing this we will receive the joy of our salvation each and every day. This will give to us much joy and pleasure and give to us an immeasurable comfort in the ways of God. Sing Psalter 83.

**July 13 Read Eph. 4:24-32; Canons of Dordt 1:13**

God not only provides for us the way of our salvation—a way that is so sure that it will never fail, but He has also provided the assurance in us of that way of salvation. In humbleness we see that all things come from Him. In humbleness we love Him who first loved us. In humbleness we do not try to change this glorious doctrine to suit our fancy. In this way God gives to us the assurance that we need. Sing Psalter 28.

**July 14 Read Romans 11:28-36; Canons of Dordt 1:14**

Here we find the fathers emphasizing to us that the doctrine of election needs to be proclaimed today. God reveals to us this doctrine in His Scriptures even as He revealed it to those who lived in the past. We must hear it preached. We must proclaim it as we do the work of evangelism in our home towns, or as we proclaim the gospel to the nations. Young people, do you speak of election with your friends? Do you hide the fact that you believe in salvation by faith alone? If we do not continue to proclaim this doctrine, we will not feel the comfort in our hearts that it affords. Let us not reduce the doctrine of election to man's endless questions and analysis. Let us believe election for what it is—God's glorious plan for His people's salvation. Sing Psalter 176.

**July 15 Read Romans 10:14-23; Canons of Dordt 1:15**

Companion to the doctrine of election is the doctrine of reprobation. This is also known as the doctrine of double predestination. God not only chooses those whom He will to eternal life, He condemns others to everlasting hell. He does this because He is a righteous judge.

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We can be comforted in this because we know that we, too, should be condemned to hell except for His good pleasure. Do you believe that God is God, people of God? If you do, then you will embrace these doctrines as the work of our sovereign God and will be comforted in whatever way He leads you. Sing Psalter 224.

**July 16 Read I Cor. 5:1-7; Canons of Dordt 1:16**

There are times in our lives in which we do not feel the comfort afforded by the doctrine of election. Because of sin and the war that Satan wages against us, we may fall into the bonds of despair. As the article says, we may even be worried about being reprobate. But the article as well as Scriptures assures us that as we make use of the means of prayer, Bible reading and meditation, as well as other means, we will find the comfort ordained by God in His good time and pleasure. This should cause us to fight the fight of faith with vigor, using the means that God has given to us to fight sin and Satan. Let us consider this as we prepare ourselves to make use of the means of grace in tomorrow's worship services. Sing Psalter 160.

**July 17 Read Acts 2:37-42; Canons of Dordt 1:17**

Our God is so gracious to us. He even considers the questions of those whose loved ones have died before they could make a conscious confession of their faith in Christ. He tells to us that the doctrine of election is for them as well. Those souls who are comprehended in the covenant of grace are also part of this doctrine and ultimately of salvation. Grieving parents can be comforted at the graveside by this truth and aspect of election. Sing Psalter 53.

**July 18 Read Matthew 20:1-16; Canons of Dordt 1:18**

At the end of this first section of the Canons, the fathers repeat the questions and answers of Romans 10. These questions have been asked often by men. These questions should not be asked by us. If we believe in the sovereign God of the covenant we will rest assured in our salvation and election. To Him be all glory alone! Sing Psalter 84.

**July 19 Read Deut. 28:15-22; Canons of Dordt 2:1**

This section of the Canons deals with the atonement which Christ has made for us. Once again we are brought to realize that we are miserable sinners in ourselves. We also realize that there is nothing that we can do to make satisfaction for our guilt. God's justice must be satisfied. Of that there is no doubt. Once we come to this realization we have no choice but to look to God Himself for the satisfaction that He requires. Let us go to

Him each and every day and thank Him for the salvation that He has given to us in Christ. Sing Psalter 65.

**July 20 Read Galatians 3:7-14; Canons of Dordt 2:2**

Thankfully God has provided for us a way of escape. That way is not in us or in any other creature found upon the earth. That way is in God Himself who provided for us a lamb, the Lord Jesus Christ. Christ came to this earth and was made accursed for our sake. He put aside His heavenly glory on our behalf because there was no way we could obtain salvation in or of ourselves. This truth must be pondered daily by us. We must defend it. It is the heart of the gospel. Sing Psalter 243:1, 2, 5.

**July 21 Read I John 2:1-7; Canons of Dordt 2:3**

How great was the sacrifice wrought by Christ on the cross? It was so great that it was sufficient for the whole world. This is the testimony of this article and Scripture as well. Did Jesus die for all men? We know better than that. The confessions and Scripture both testify that His death were for those "whom the Father had given Him." But when we think of each of our sins we can truly appreciate how great the death of Christ was. It is the only way to salvation and it is of value unmeasured. Thanks be to God for his unspeakable gift. Sing Psalter 362.

**July 22 Read Romans 8:1-8; Canons of Dordt 2:4**

God's requirements for our Savior were very strict. So rigid were they that no one person or creature could satisfy those requirements. These requirements could not even be satisfied by a committee. These requirements were good. Why, might you ask? This was the only way that we could be saved. If left up to any other person, persons, or creature, we would have never received salvation. By this means God's justice was completely satisfied and our salvation is sure. For what more can we ask? Absolutely nothing! Sing Psalter 230: 1, 2, 5, 6.

**July 23 Read Mark 16:14-20; Canons of Dordt 2:5**

Christ's sacrifice is sufficient for the entire world. That good news or gospel must be proclaimed to the entire world. This was Jesus's final command to His disciples. There are two ideas which we must see. First of all we are required to preach the gospel to all nations. The work of missions is the work of the church of Christ and may not be neglected. Secondly we must preach the Word as it is given in the Bible. The way of salvation must not be man's invention. Only the way of salvation by grace through faith must be proclaimed. To do anything else is to do that which God forbids. Let us not be respecters of persons as we proclaim the gospel of grace to the nations. Sing Psalter 177.

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**July 24 Read Romans 1:21-32; Canons of Dordt 2:6**

Part of the gospel which must be spread is the idea that some are not saved. Some will perish without ever believing in Jesus. But this does not mean that Christ's atonement was faulty. We may never think this for a minute. In fact because some go lost is our comfort that God is good in giving to us His Son. He did not have to, you know. All mankind has the responsibility to obey and to glorify God. We do not do this to gain salvation. If that were the case, none would be saved. We obey and glorify God because we are saved. Once again let us thank God for salvation that He was given us through Christ. Sing Psalter 165.

**July 25 Read Romans 3:21-31; Canons of Dordt 2:7**

Here we have it in black and white that salvation is by faith alone. There are those throughout this world who say that man must do "something." There are those who even hold to this confession who say that man must do "something." What do you believe, people of God? Are you Arminian, Pelagian, even semi-Pelagian? If you believe that we must do "something" for our salvation, you are one of the above. Even if we believe that we must do one little act, we repudiate this confession. How do we live? Do we live lives that speak of salvation by grace alone, or do we exhibit something else in our lives? By God's grace let us give Him all the glory in our salvation, and let us not try to keep any of the glory for ourselves. Sing Psalter 110.

**July 26 Read Revelation 7:9-11; Canons of Dordt 2:8**

This portion of the Canons is lengthy and let us let it speak for itself. Reread the passage in Revelation, and then mediate on that day in heaven when we will join with all the redeemed in praise to our sovereign God. Then we shall understand all that salvation truly means. Then we will be purged from all attempts to steal from God His honor and glory. Sing Psalter 29.

**July 27 Read Revelation 7:13-17; Canons of Dordt 2:9**

These last two articles afford to us great comfort as we see that the gates of hell cannot prevail against God and His church. Nothing or no one can keep us from enjoying that blessed day in heaven when we receive those white robes of righteousness. Let us look for that day, let us live for that day, and let us pray that that day will come soon. Then we will see the bridegroom waiting for us, His beloved bride. Sing Psalter 125:1, 3, 5.

**July 28 Read Gen. 1:26-31; Canons of Dordt 3 & 4:1**

In the first two sections of the Canons we have looked at the doctrines involved. Now we will look at how those doctrines came to pass on this earth. As with all things

earthly after God's eternal council we must begin with creation. We must begin with especially the creation of man. Who did God create? He created one who was after His own image in knowledge, righteousness, and holiness. Did man stay that way? No, he fell into grievous sin and continues to sin grievously today. Today we must look to God or we will continue in our misery. By His grace we are delivered and can eagerly await the day of judgment. As we read the greatness of our depravity, let us pause and give to God the glory for the salvation He gave to us in Christ. Sing Psalter 85.

**July 29 Read Psalm 51:1-5; Canons of Dordt 3 & 4:2**

Young people, children, what about you? Have you escaped the depravity into which Adam plunged all mankind? The answer is a thousand times no! Even David in his sins confessed that he was worthy of condemnation even before he was born. We are not born into this world perfect and then learn bad habits. We are born black and filthy. We are born as those who need the cleansing power of the blood of lamb. Do you believe that, young people? Do you pray? Do you seek salvation in Christ alone. That is what you, like your parents must do. Sing Psalter 140.

**July 30 Read Psalm 53:1-6; Canons of Dordt 3 & 4:3**

This article sums up those truths stated in the first two articles. Once again we can turn our attention to the figure of a dead, lifeless stick. That is what we are by nature. That is they way we act. That is what we want to be every day. We can do nothing good in this world and we do not want to. How can we contribute to our salvation? Our nature is completely contrary to such an idea. But yet we have the comfort that God from eternity has provided for us the way of salvation for our benefit and for His glory. Let us hold onto that truth and seek salvation by faith alone. Sing Psalter 357:1-3.

**July 31 Read Isaiah 64:1-8; Canons of Dordt 3 & 4:4**

A dead stick still looks like a stick. With some imagination you might even see some leaves on it. But in reality it is still dead. There are no leaves. There is no chance that it will blossom and bring forth fruit. Do you remember the story of Aaron's rod that budded? That rod would have remained a dead stick save for the grace of God. We, as dead sticks, are only fit for the fire. In the fire we become filthy ash. But out of the dead stick we have the promise that God will bring forth in us fruits of repentance. Let us pray that we may bring forth those fruits in thankfulness for the salvation given to us by God. Sing Psalter 367:1, 5.

# Self Esteem Destroyed

by Peggy Barendregt

**S**elf esteem was a big happy concept that appeared in the circle of education in the seventies and eighties and continues today as the solution to so many problems. If we build a child's self esteem, they conclude, he will not go wrong.

Read the newspaper: another shooting took place in a school, killing or injuring so many students, and everyone is stunned. It is news, big news. Another school shooting...so the headlines scream. The news media cannot get there fast enough. But what do you read about the alleged shooter? He was a loner, with low self esteem, was picked on and teased by fellow students. The media concludes that once again the other individuals are at fault for creating this monster and failing to raise his self esteem.

I believe the opposite is true. If we are treated badly or hurt by others the reason we take offence is because we think too highly of ourselves. The problem is too much self esteem. I deserve to be treated better. I am above the law. I will show them. I am not responsible for my own actions. These people deserve to be punished for not respecting me. I am worthy of better treatment. The media laps it up and the social workers nod happily. Society has failed again. Self esteem or the lack thereof is the new excuse for inexcusable behavior.

Scripture repeatedly asks us to esteem others better than ourselves. To have self esteem is contrary to scripture. What makes you worthy? What is the basis for your self esteem? Your clothes, your looks, your intelligence, your athletic ability, the list is endless. Obviously the problem arises when you lose the basis for your self esteem. The gorgeous outfit you purchased is damaged and you felt so good wearing it. A good looking person's face is injured by fire. A wonderfully intelligent mind is destroyed by meningitis. And the talented athlete is confined to a wheelchair. Self esteem or the basis for it is gone. Are you now nothing? Do you roll over and die? There are many people whose lives have been dramatically altered because God placed a completely new challenge in their life.

If we cannot obtain self esteem by what we possess, can we achieve it by what we do? Can we achieve self esteem by our good works? In our form for baptism we confess, that we are conceived and born in sin and prone to all manner of evil. This does not look too promising in our ability to achieve much good. Paul confirms this in Romans 7:19. "For the good that I would I do not but the evil which I would not, that I do." So even our best intentions are filled with sin. Even our best deeds done for others, which we feel so good about, are filled with sin. It is precisely because we feel good about the things we do for others that these works are filled with sin. They are nothing but another example of our sinfulness. In our catechism we read that we must do good works out of thankfulness. (LD 32 Q&A 86) But it sure helps when people are thankful towards us. We have just destroyed the good in good works. Feeling good about our good deeds is natural but by our nature we are sinful beings and "incapable of doing any good." Thus we cannot achieve self esteem by doing good works.

So why is it wrong to have self esteem? When one has self esteem, it means that you esteem yourself better than others. This is completely against God's law. The Lord commands us to love our neighbor as we love ourselves. It is a given. You love yourself. You do not read in scripture that you should love your neighbor and yourself. David writes in Psalm 22:6, "I am a worm and not a man." A worm is a rather lowly creature. We have little respect for them. We feed them garbage in the composter. They get the rotten food. Observe the fisherman as he deliberately pokes the hook through the worm. No heed is given to the futile struggles of the worm as it objects to this treatment. A worm is a most despised creature. One does not hear of and "stop the cruelty to worms" campaigns. Can you sing with David, I am a worm and not a man? Do you take offence? When one is feeling guilty, one certainly feels "wormly." Guilt destroys self esteem. Sunday after Sunday the pastor reads God's holy law to us. Once again we stand before God, guilty and empty of self esteem and as low as worms.

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Now that your self esteem has been destroyed, what do you have? What is your only comfort in life and death? I believe we cannot obtain confidence in what we have or in what we do but have our confidence in Christ. ❖

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*Peggy is a member of First Protestant Reformed Church in Edmonton, Alberta Canada.*

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From the Pastor's Study

# Christ's Words Shall Never Pass Away (2)

by Rev. Angus Stewart



Christ's words, "Heaven and earth shall pass away, but my words shall not pass away" (Matt. 24:35), are a divine promise of the preservation of the entire Scriptures up to (and beyond) Christ's second coming. This text leads us to believe that God has providentially maintained His Word for over 3,000 years and will continue to do so. The *Westminster Confession* states that the Old Testament in Hebrew and the New Testament in Greek "being immediately inspired by God, and by *his singular care and providence kept pure in all ages, are therefore authentic*" (1.8).

God's special preservation of the Scriptures is denied or ignored by many. Liberal Protestants don't see God's sovereign hand much in the world at all, never mind in His singular care for His Word. Muslims tell us that the Bible is hopelessly corrupted and so cannot be trusted. Most textual critics labour without a living sense of God's special providential preservation of His inspired Word.

It is true that we do not have the original manuscripts written by holy men of God as they were moved by the Holy Ghost (II Peter 1:21). And in the thousands of copies that we have, there are transmissional errors. However, from these manuscripts, the correct reading can be and is seen.

God used the Jews as the librarians of the Old Testament for the church, as Augustine said. The Old Testament priesthood was commanded to care for the law (Deut. 31:9f.). When Ezra returned from the Babylonian captivity, he probably brought with him the inspired

oracles written up to that point. Philo, an Alexandrian Jew and a contemporary of the apostles, said that the Jews would rather die a thousand times than see one word of the Scriptures altered. It was a common Jewish saying that to alter one letter of the law is no less a sin than to set the whole world on fire. The Massorettes, Jewish scribes who laboured in the second half of the first millennium after Christ, had a great respect for the written Word. They counted the number of verses in each book and identified the middle verse. They numbered the occurrences of each Hebrew letter in every book and in the whole Old Testament. For example, the letter Aleph occurs 42,377 times and Beth 38,218 times. In 1947 when the Qumran scrolls were found in some caves west of the Dead Sea, unbelieving scholars hoped to see vast differences between these Hebrew manuscripts written before Christ and the later manuscripts used by the church. Much to their chagrin, the Dead Sea Scrolls agreed with our Hebrew manuscripts remarkably. These are just some pointers showing how God has kept the Old Testament pure by "*his singular care and providence*" (WC 1.8) so that His Word shall never pass away (Matt. 24:35).

Christ's promise that His "words shall not pass away" includes not only the preservation of the Old Testament but also the rejection of the Apocrypha as uninspired. The Apocrypha, which includes I and II Maccabees and additions to Daniel and Esther, etc., was not reckoned part of the Old Testament canon by the Jews, as is evident, for example, in the writings of Josephus, a Jew of

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the first century AD. This is particularly significant, for “unto [the Jews] were committed the oracles of God” (Rom. 3:2). Thus Christ and His apostles do not quote the Apocrypha.

The Apocryphal books were written later than the Old Testament and even then not in Hebrew as the Old Testament books. Moreover, some of the Apocryphal books disclaim inspiration or teach false doctrines such as free will, prayers for the dead or the worship of angels. Thus the true church understood that the Apocrypha was *not God-breathed*. Jerome, a fifth century church father, made this point in his Latin translation of the Bible. The *Westminster Confession* declares that the Apocrypha is “not ... of divine inspiration” for it merely consists of “*human writings*” (1.3; cf. *Belgic Confession* 6). The false church of Rome, however, in its Council of Trent (1546) calls down an “anathema” upon those who do not receive the Apocrypha as “canonical and sacred.”

Not only the Old Testament (which does not contain the Apocrypha) but also the New Testament has been specially preserved by God through the centuries. In the early days of the New Testament church, the 27 God-breathed New Testament books were recognized and grouped together. Uninspired materials, such as the *Didache* and the *Shepherd of Hermas*, were set aside. From the original autographs good copies were made. These were then copied, and so on. The original manuscripts in Greece, Turkey, Israel, Rome, etc., (and faithful copies of them) served as controls or checks upon the new copies which were made. Believing scribes labored in the consciousness that God threatened plagues upon those who add to or take away from God’s Word (Rev. 22:18-19). The invention of the printing press in the middle of the fifteenth century ensured wider availability of God’s inspired and preserved Word.

The number of New Testament manuscripts possessed today far outweighs those of any ancient book. For the *History of the Peloponnesian War* by Thucydides (c.460-c.400 BC) we have eight manuscripts. The works of Sophocles (an older Greek contemporary of Thucydides) are only found in one manuscript written 1400 years after his death! On the other hand, there are about 7,000 manuscripts containing all or part of the New Testament. Christ is faithful; His Word has not passed away and will not pass away.

The church of Jesus Christ confesses that the Holy Scriptures are a *wonder*. Almost 2,000 years ago, Jesus uttered these famous words: “Heaven and earth shall pass

away, but my words shall not pass away” (Matt. 24:35), and His words have not passed away. You are a witness to this marvel, the preservation of God’s Word, Old Testament and New Testament.

This is all the more remarkable in that the Bible has frequently and fiercely been attacked. In the fourth century, Diocletian, a Roman emperor, ordered all Bibles to be handed over to the civil authorities to be destroyed. The so-called Enlightenment of the eighteenth century disparaged the Scriptures as a book written in a “pre-rational” age for childish or adolescent man who had not yet attained to maturity. Higher criticism of the Bible entered the mainstream in the nineteenth century. Yet even then the nineteenth century became the century of Bible Societies translating the Scriptures into many languages and distributing them all around the world. Today there are more translations and copies of the Bible than any other book. After 2,000 years of desperate efforts, the unbelieving world has still failed to prove one error in God’s Word.

We must thank God for the Bible and its preservation. It is rightly said that verbal inspiration is only a significant doctrine if verbal preservation is also true. Without the preservation of the Bible, the church would be unable to fulfill the great commission. How could we go into all the world to preach the (pure) gospel if the Scriptures are hopelessly corrupted? Moreover, the preservation of the Bible and the preservation of the church are closely tied together. Without the Bible, there would be no church, for the Word—preached and read—creates the church. On the other hand, without the church there would be no one (humanly speaking) to preserve the Bible.

We can be sure that our Bible (Authorised Version) is a trustworthy and faithful translation of God’s inerrant *and preserved* Word—a Word breathed out by the Spirit in Hebrew and Greek thousands of years ago. Christians have nothing to fear from unbelieving textual critics or new discoveries of ancient manuscripts. For Jesus said, “Heaven and earth shall pass away, but my words shall not pass away.” ❖

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*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 17–19.*

# Of All the Places...

By Bruce Koole

When a columnist from a secular newspaper advocates studying the teachings of an important Christian preacher, i.e., reading his books, a man tends to sit up in his easy chair and take notice. In the November 30, 2005 edition of the *New York Times* (page A1), Columnist David Brooks explains that John R. Stott, as opposed to Jerry Falwell, Pat Robertson, or Al Sharpton, is the representative of Evangelical Christianity. Brooks is quite blunt and calls Falwell and Sharpton “bozos.”

By way of information, John R. Stott is a very excellent Scripture exegete and it would be worth your while to purchase some of his commentaries. Stott wrote some 40 books and a tome I once used for a *Beacon Lights* article was his excellent commentary on Revelation 1–3 entitled, “What Christ Thinks of the Church: An Exposition of Revelation 1–3.”

Brooks begins by describing Sharpton and Falwell’s appearance on Tim Russert’s TV show, “*Meet The Press*,” in the following manner: “naturally, they got into a demeaning food fight that would have lowered the intellectual discourse of your average nursery school.” For the record, “*Meet the Press*” is a TV show that violates the 4<sup>th</sup> Commandment.

Sadly, Brook’s chief disagreement with Falwell is not that this Baptist minister contradicts John 3 by placing faith prior to narrow regeneration in the order of salvation. Brooks, rather, expresses disgust at the ways by which Falwell-Sharpton manage to make the honorable doctrines of Christianity part of an immature tantrum.

Brooks’ favorite quote of Stott is:

“It is not because we are ultra-conservative, or obscurantist, or reactionary or the other horrid things which we are sometimes said to be. It is rather because we love Jesus Christ, and because we are determined, God helping us, to bear witness to his unique glory and absolute sufficiency. In Christ and in the biblical witness to Christ God’s revelation is

complete; to add any words of our own to his finished work is derogatory to Christ.”

This quote does not quite demonstrate that salvation is by Christ-crucified alone, but the fact that Brooks unflinchingly quotes Stott is a very good start.

A Reformed believer finds it heartening that a *New York Times* employee is even aware of John R. Stott, let alone willing to read, enjoy, and promote Stott’s doctrines. Now, if they knew about a pipe-smoking Dutchman, Herman Hoeksema...

Another problem with the article is that Brooks quotes some public-policy guru in order to hyperbolize, “if evangelicals could elect a pope, Stott is the person they would likely choose.” For an audience unaware of the doctrine of Christ-as-head-of-the-church, it is possible that Brooks’ statement linking Stott’s importance to the Pope’s fame could help them understand Stott’s contributions to Christianity. Truthfully, though, when evangelicals write on the Pope, i.e., Luther, Calvin, Zwingli, and their religious descendents, they do have a tendency to call this man the Anti-Christ, or reveal him and his church to be that of Q&A 80 from the Heidelberg Catechism.

Brooks also mentions Stott’s musings on paradox. Brooks writes, “In many cases the truth is not found in the middle of apparent opposites, but on both extremes simultaneously.” Paradox is a dastardly word introduced into religious terminology by neo-liberal, and Swiss-German theologian, Karl Barth (1886–1968). Barth commendably authored the Barmen declaration (1933), which was six articles defining Christian opposition to Adolf Hitler’s National Socialist ideology and practice. Barth also commendably described liberal theologians this way, “They think they are saying ‘God,’ when all they are really saying is ‘man’ very loudly.”

Yet, the doctrine of paradox has given too many Reformed preachers the license to advocate in the same sermon that even though God certainly saves whomsoever he will by the power of sovereign, free, double pre-

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destination, you need to save yourself by accepting Christ into your heart as your Saviour. Here the error of placing faith prior to regeneration makes itself very clear. Your act of acceptance is the power that saves you, not regeneration because of Christ's death on the Cross alone. Man, not the cross, is the way to salvation.

I also find it difficult to accept that Stott uses the Barthian method to exegete Scripture. That would be grievous.

Brooks might not be Reformed, and neither might Stott in all his books, but Brooks has made a very good start by introducing Stott to you and the generally spiritually blind readers of the *New York Times*. Go to your local library. Read the article. Brooks is usually good stuff. Go to a bookstore. Buy Stott, or some of his books.



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

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Our Young People's Federation

# Common Grace: A Threatening Doctrine

by Nathan Decker

**T**he Protestant Reformed denomination is a denomination that is rooted and grounded in the truth. What is this truth? At the heart of the Scriptures is the awesome, comforting, and beautiful gospel of Jesus Christ's death on the cross whereby free grace and salvation were given to the elect seed in Christ. Throughout the ages, the church is called to promote, defend, and develop these precious doctrines of Scripture. The Protestant Reformed Churches are a direct result of this calling. The adoption of the three points of common grace by the Christian Reformed synod of 1924 resulted in the formation the Protestant Reformed Churches, and therefore, it is important that every member of the Protestant Reformed Churches be familiar with and understand common grace. Furthermore, Protestant Reformed members must be on the watch for and realize when common grace creeps into our lives. Common grace has influenced and entered our lives in several different areas from entertainment to education, and a faithful Protestant Reformed minister must always be on the lookout for and attempt to fight against this church-threatening error by preaching the truth of God's sovereign and particular grace.

In order to fully understand how common grace enters in our lives, it is necessary to examine the world from the viewpoint of common grace. In order to find

common grace, one must actively look for it. Viewing the world from God's particular grace hinders our ability to recognize common grace. Therefore, this doctrine is more easily found when culture is looked at through the glasses of common grace, which will inevitably lead to understanding its possible devastating effects.

Analyzing life with a common grace paradigm, the following are two areas of life in which common grace creeps into the lives of Protestant Reformed Church members: First, there is a vast array of entertainment that is able to infiltrate our lives; such as the Internet, music, and television. All one has to do is search the web, scan the radio, or change the channels to realize the extensive amounts of filth and corruption and sinfulness that can be accessed. Granted, the child of God is able to use these means in a holy and pure manner, but the fact still remains that the majority of present day entertainment not only does not glorify God, but also defames him. Obviously, wicked and corrupt people run and control today's world of entertainment. What does this have to do with common grace? The second and third points of common grace state that there is a restraint of sin in the hearts of all men enabling them to do good works. Common grace allows Christians to look, listen, and watch because, even though the entertainment was produced by wicked men, good can come out of it

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because of man's ability to do good works. In sum, common grace eliminates the antithetical life. As Protestant Reformed people, we must be aware of this serious danger.

A second area of life threatened by common grace is that of education, and more specifically, higher education. The majority of the colleges and universities today are not instructing from a faithful, reformed perspective. Knowledge of this unreformed viewpoint is critical when studying the arts, sciences, and history because of the grave danger that looms in the instruction's wake. Common grace views the works and studies of wicked men throughout history as good. A student in a classroom such as this must understand that, not only are these works not good, but rather that all the works of such men work to their greater condemnation. It is so important for the Protestant Reformed member to fully understand the doctrine of common grace because it allows them to repudiate such ideas and stand for the truth concerning these matters. Thankfulness must be in our hearts for our own Protestant Reformed schools because of the protection they provide the children from common grace.

In response to the threatening influences of common grace in the lives of Protestant Reformed members, Protestant Reformed ministers must be aware of, and attempt to ward off such threats. How does he become more aware of such pertinent threats? Most importantly, he must always be on the lookout for any and every false doctrine hovering around the church. This is even more the case when dealing with common grace. The Protestant Reformed minister must not be, as Ephesians 4:14 expresses it, "tossed to and fro, and carried about by every wind of doctrine." Rather, he must stand against common grace and false teaching. The way in which a minister does this is through faithful expounding of the Scriptures from Sunday to Sunday. A minister must preach the truth over against the error. More specifically, he must preach the Scriptural truths that are diametrically opposed to common grace.

What must be preached? Most importantly, the Protestant Reformed minister must preach the doctrine of God's particular grace as explained in the reformed confessions. The truth of double predestination, that is, that God sovereignly in His eternal counsel elected some persons to salvation and reprobated others to hell must be preached. Even though common grace does not explicitly correlate with saving grace it, nevertheless, is a

grace of God bestowed upon all men, and therefore, is opposed to particular grace.

There is both Scriptural and confessional proof for this all-important doctrine. The Bible is full of passages that speak of the doctrine of predestination. One clear text is Romans 8:29, which states, "For whom he did foreknow, he also did predestinate to be conformed to the image of his son." That this predestination to election is by grace alone is illustrated in Ephesians 2:8, which reads, "For by grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is a gift of God." From these two texts comes the conclusion that the grace of God is given to only the elect in Christ and that this grace is saving. There is no room in these texts for a common grace of God. Not only that, but this truth is also found in the Confessions. No where is this more clearly stated than in Article 16 of the Belgic Confession, which reads as follows: "Merciful, since he delivers and preserves from perdition all, whom he, in his eternal and unchangeable counsel of mere goodness, hath elected in Christ Jesus our Lord, without any respect to their works." In sum, God's grace is particular, not common, and this most emphatically must be preached from the pulpit in order to equip the congregations with weapons to fight against and ward off common grace.

The child of God is called to live an antithetical life. The antithesis is the spiritual separation between the believer and unbeliever, church and world, and elect and reprobate. Believing in and viewing the world from common grace makes it impossible to fulfill this calling. We, as Protestant Reformed people, must be aware of common grace around us, especially in the areas of entertainment and education. The Protestant Reformed minister must especially be aware of such influences and attempt to combat them by the preaching of God's particular grace. This preaching will enable Protestant Reformed members to combat and ward off common grace because of their greater knowledge and understanding of God's sovereign, particular grace. Furthermore and finally, this preaching will enhance our ability to live antithetically in a sinful and corrupt world as well as giving us a Scriptural basis for an all-important reformed world and life view. ❖

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*Nathan is a member of Faith Protestant Reformed Church in Jenison, Michigan. He wrote this essay for the Protestant Reformed Scholarship.*

# George M. Ophoff (23)

## Polimicist

by Prof. Herman Hanko

**A**lthough the words “polemics” and “polemicist” are bad words in our day, the servant of God must engage in polemics and be a polemicist if he is to be faithful to the cause of Christ in the world. Both words come from a Greek word meaning “war,” and that meaning is precisely right, if the war that is waged is spiritual. The Scriptures urge this war upon us and remind us that a Christian man who is not a warrior is no Christian at all. The Church Order, recognizing the importance of this aspect of the minister’s calling, specifically includes an article which reads: “To ward off false doctrines and errors that multiply exceedingly through heretical writings, the ministers and elders shall use the means of teaching, of refutation, or warning, and of admonition, as well in the ministry of the Word as in Christian teaching and family-visitation.” And the Formula of Subscription which every office bearer must sign makes these officebearers promise “not only to reject all errors that militate against (the doctrine of the Confessions), but to be disposed to refute and contradict these, and to exert themselves in keeping the church free from some errors.”

This is not a very popular teaching in our day. The spirit of the times is against it. The day is which we live, colored by many false ecumenical movements, speaks of brotherly love which ought to prevail over differences in doctrine, of toleration of opposing viewpoints, and of smoothing over differences so that there may be more unity in the church. The result is that churches overlook doctrinal departures, tolerate heretics, turn away their eyes from that which is contrary to the Scriptures, and fail to exert themselves in their calling to maintain the truth of Scripture.

This is serious business, for heresy is the work of Satan; and its tolerance leads inevitably to the destruc-

tion of the church. The church of God needs to fight the battle of faith—also in the area of the defense of the sound doctrine.

That both Revs. Ophoff and Hoeksema were polemicists no one can deny. They may have been reproached, but those in our churches who were interested in rapid church growth (not something necessarily wrong in itself) saw in this movement of Dutch people to the shores of our continent, an opportunity for our church to grow rapidly by the incorporation of these people into ecclesiastical structure.

There was however, one difficulty with all this. Although the Liberated churches were agreed with us on many points of doctrine, there was one fundamental point of doctrine with which they disagreed. And this was the truth concerning the covenant.

In brief, the differences were these. While our churches held to the idea that the covenant is essentially a relation of friendship and fellowship between God and His people through Christ, they held to the idea of the covenant as an agreement between two parties: God and man. While our churches maintained that the promise of the covenant was a particular promise which God makes only to His elect people, and in baptism, to the elect children of the covenant, they maintained that God’s promise is made to all who are born within the covenant and to all children of the covenant at the time of baptism. While, therefore, we maintained that the promise is unconditionally fulfilled by sovereign grace, they maintained that the promise of the covenant was only realized in those who accepted the promise by faith. They therefore maintained a general and conditional covenant which was dependent for its fulfillment on faith. Our churches maintained (and correctly so) that this was an introduction into the covenant of an Arminian concep-

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tion and made the promise of the covenant like the free offer of salvation—a doctrine which our churches repudiated already in 1924.

It is evident that these differences were deep and important, and struck at the very heart of the truth of sovereign grace. The real question was whether our churches were, now after so many years of defending

the truth of sovereign grace, going to go back to something that had been repudiated as Arminian after all.

But our space for this time is taken, and we shall have to continue our story, the Lord willing, in our next issue. ❖

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

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## The Ascension Church

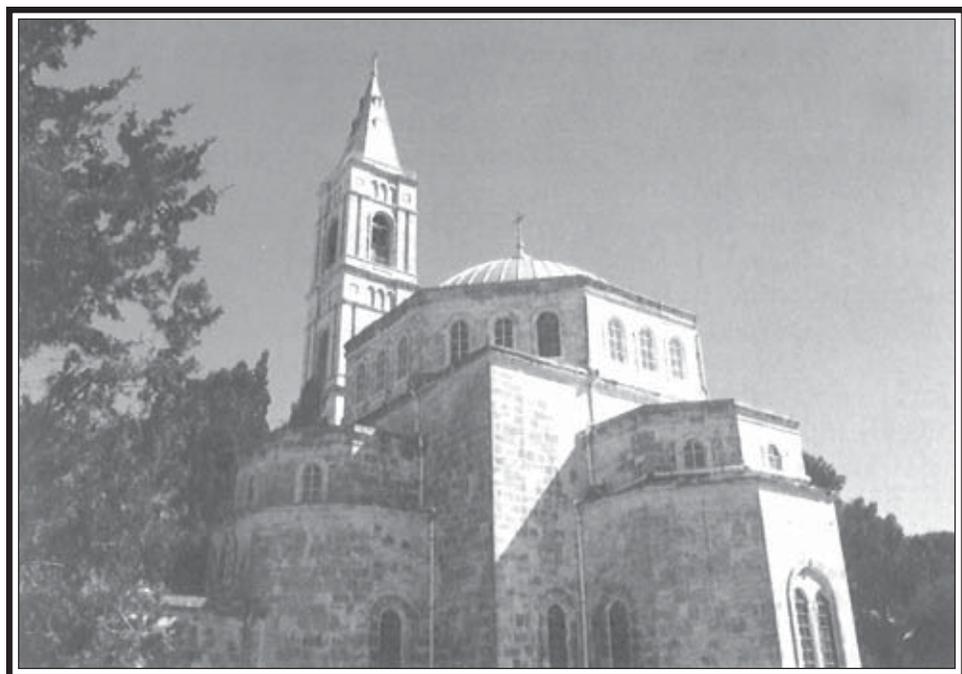
by J. P. de Klerk

This is a picture of the Russian Orthodox Church of the so-called “White Russians” on the Mount of Olives in Jerusalem.

The mother of Emperor Constantine the Great, Helena (255-332), was a Christian who founded several chapels and churches in the countries she travelled to, and so when she came in Jerusalem she founded a chapel on the Mount of Olives. Later a larger church, four stories high was built here, with a modest stone facade, but the chapel is still there. Shaped like a cross, this sanctuary is surmounted by a dome resting on a drum with 24 windows. The walls and the ceiling are dominated by shades of cloudy blue. Beneath the dome a kind of representation of the ascension is made, by the four evangelists, Mark, Luke, Matthew and John, in colorful paintings. The marble floor is blotched with reddish-brown stains. A shrine built here in 360 was almost destroyed in 614 by pillaging Persians. Over 100 people were massacred on the spot by the invaders. The spots serve to remind visitors of that long-ago slaughter.

A marble tombstone marks the grave of an important man in the history of the Russian Orthodox Church of

Jerusalem. His name was Antonin Kapustin, a man of many talents, who encountered difficulties when he came and tried to buy land in this area. He had studied Arabic so that he could communicate with the locals. He rode a donkey as they did and squatted next to them on the floor. So, in 1870 Kapustin managed to buy a big piece of the Mount of Olives, where he erected an extra chapel and contributed to renovations of the Church of the Ascension. There is still an undamaged Byzantine-era mosaic, part of the original chapel (built on the orders of Queen Helena), which had been buried under rubble. Worked into the design are species of birds and animals of Pales-



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tine. The chapel was ruined by the Persians, but carefully restored by Armenian Christians.

The sharply pointed belfry of the church is located on the very peak of the Mount of Olives, visible from almost every part of Jerusalem. The bell arrived from Russia in 1885, weighed eight tons and was put on a

special wagon, pulled and pushed by volunteers from the harbor of Jaffa to the Mount in three weeks, and there the bell was lifted into the tower... Visitors of this church are not allowed to wear shorts (women must wear dresses or at least skirts). ❖

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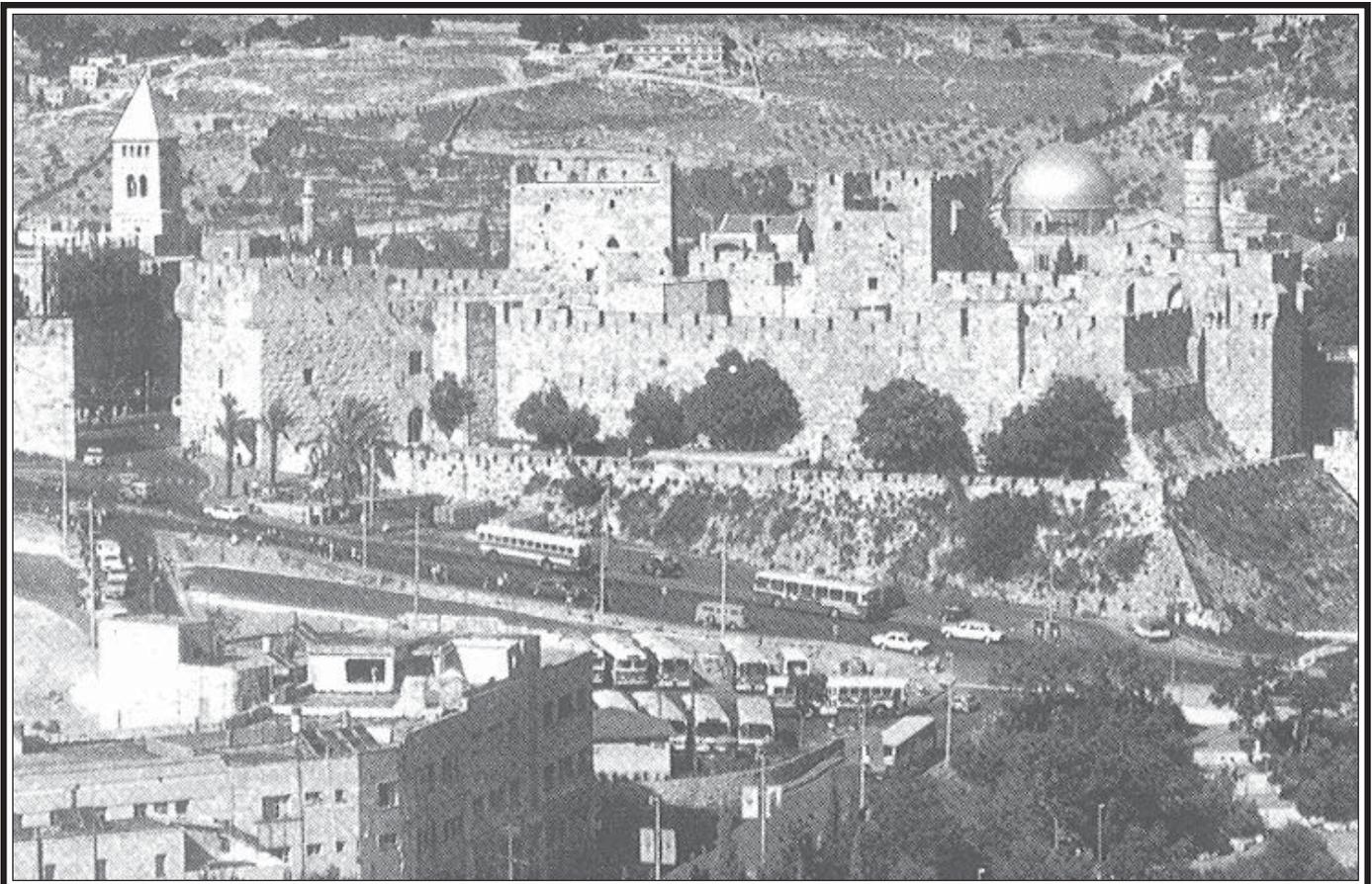
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## A View at Jerusalem

by J. P. de Klerk

**Y**ou see here one of the oldest parts of the capital of the State of Israel, Jerusalem. At the right is the so-called tower of David, not far from the gold plated dome of the Mosque. In the past in this area was the temple, which was destroyed by the Romans. You see the restored walls of the city, as they were built by the Turks (on top of the old ruins). This picture shows only one quarter of the whole of the city. Outside the

walls many new buildings are under construction. Some are owned by Arabs, but the majority are owned by Jews. There are many conditions and rules to be followed before a permit is given to build in the majority of the city. The old city lays on a hill, which can best be reached by public transport. Note the buses in the parking area and restored streets. In the central area of the city, not much has been altered since the destruction in the year 70 AD,



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except for portions of the Jewish areas. The main source of income in Jerusalem is tourism.

A souvenir of the crusaders is the bell tower of the Church of the Holy Tomb which has survived many battles. Golgotha is situated inside the old city. Also Gethsemane is still in existence, with centuries old groves of olive trees and some fig trees. Monks are allowed to

maintain these historical places. Christian missionaries are not able to obtain permanent entry permits, because the government wants to discourage Jews converting to Christianity. ❖

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

## Gem of the Month

# God Incarnate

by Thelma Westra

*I*ncarnation: what a comfort!  
Only God in heaven above  
Could determine so to save us  
In His everlasting love.

*W*e His creatures, steeped in sin  
Could not please a holy God;  
What we needed was redemption.  
Finite minds are overawed!

*G*od determined that His own Son  
Should in human form appear.  
God with man is now united  
In our Savior to cohere.

*M*ankind for his sin could never  
Perfect satisfaction make;  
But our righteous God provided  
Substitution for His sake.

*J*esus, our transgressions bearing,  
Suffered all the pains of hell:  
He atoned for us completely—  
Now for us all things are well.

*F*rom our hearts thanksgiving rises:  
Undeserving sinners, we  
Now are bound for heaven's glories,  
From our sins forever free.

# "LITTLE LIGHTS"

## The Ploughboy (5)

*... let it shine!*

by Connie Meyer

The king and his agents were hot on the trail of Tyndale and his companion. But in the providence of God, the king had other important things to do, too. Dealing with war and famine were chief. In the meantime, Tyndale and his helper, Roye, were able to travel safely to Worms and again attempt to print the English New Testament. Worms was a city much inclined to the defense of Luther and his reforms. The printing of Scripture was welcomed in this town.

Soon 6,000 copies were off the presses, complete and shipped to the ploughboys—and milkmaids, butchers, bakers, and nobles—of England. The Scriptures were having their effect. More copies followed, but they could not be kept secret for long. Finally Bishop Tunstall of England saw a copy for himself. He was livid. Burn them! Burn all English Bibles! And burn the heretics who read them! It was a dangerous time to be in England and read the Scriptures for yourself. By the spring of 1527, the prisons were full of such “criminals.”

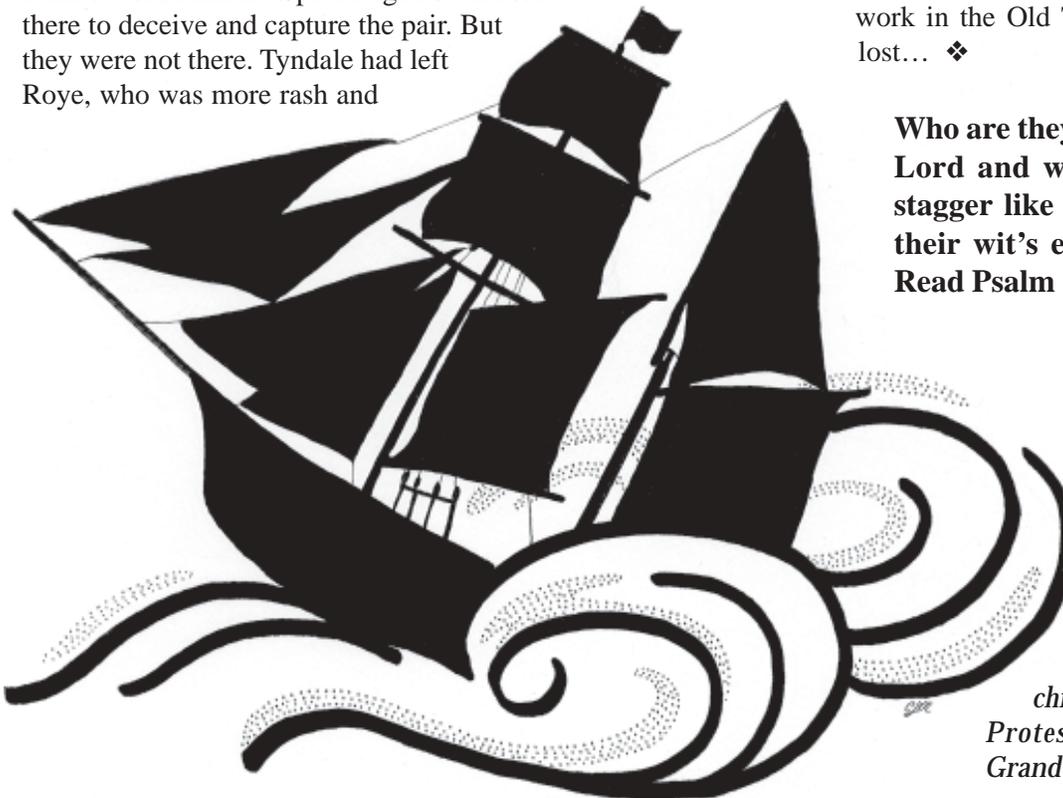
But the source of the problem needed to be found. Where were Tyndale and Roye? Many banned books came out of Frankfurt. Special agents were sent there to deceive and capture the pair. But they were not there. Tyndale had left Roye, who was more rash and

likely to be caught, and went alone to Marburg, 100 miles north of Frankfurt. It was an unlikely place for him to flee—and so it was a safe one.

In a small room there, Tyndale wrote and studied and wrote. Not one precious hour could be wasted. He learned Hebrew, even without an instructor, and translated the first five books of the Bible. It was 1529. The agents of the king had not given up looking for him. In fact, their search had increased. Where could he go to print these Old Testament books now?

Tyndale chose to go once more to Hamburg in Germany, a friendly city to reformers and a destination that could be reached by ship rather than by dangerous travel on foot. But neither was travel by water very safe. The ship he was on was wrecked off the coast of Holland. His life was spared, but all he had—including all his work in the Old Testament manuscripts—was lost... ❖

**Who are they that see the works of the Lord and what He commands, who stagger like drunken men and are at their wit's end—yet are made glad? Read Psalm 107:23-31 for the answer!**



*Connie is the mother of 5 children and a member of Hope Protestant Reformed Church 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: Makenna Clare, daughter of Mr. & Mrs. Doug Brands—Edgerton, MN

Everett Jacob, son of Mr. & Mrs. John Pipe—Faith, MI

Naomi Lynn, daughter of Mr. & Mrs. Mike Potjer—Faith, MI

Makayla Rose, daughter of Mr. & Mrs. Joe Kleyn—Faith, MI

Carissa Marie, daughter of Mr. & Mrs. Brendan Looyenga—Faith, MI

Annaliese Skye, daughter of Mr. & Mrs. Aaron Knott—First, MI

Rebecca Lynn, daughter of Mr. & Mrs. Aaron Lehrman—First, MI

Skyler James, son of Mr. & Ms. Jon Eldersveld—Georgetown, MI

Daniel James, son of Mr. & Mrs. Peter Boverhof—Grandville, MI

Larissa Joy, daughter of Mr. & Mrs. Jack Brands—Grandville, MI

Anna Elise, daughter of Mr. & Mrs. Brian Huizinga—Grandville, MI

Allison Marie, daughter of Mr. & Mrs. Nathan Pastoor—Grandville, MI

Sammantha Jade, daughter of Mr. & Mrs. Brad Brower—Hudsonville, MI

Kaitlyn Joy, daughter of Mr. & Mrs. Nathan Dykstra—Hudsonville, MI

Cedric John and Seth Richard, twin sons of Mr. & Mrs. Jay Kalsbeek—Loveland, CO

Koen Robert, son of Mr. & Mrs. Brent Huizenga—Randolph, WI

Anna Lynnae, daughter of Mr. & Mrs. Shaun Karsemeyer—Redlands, CA

Dylan Luke, son of Mr. & Mrs. Tim Schulz—Redlands, CA  
Keagan Paul and Kent Gordon, twin sons of Mr. & Mrs.

Jeremy Ward—South Holland, IL

Hailey Alexandra, daughter of Mr. & Mrs. Manuel Montalvo—South Holland, IL

Zachary John, son of Mr. & Mrs. Dan VanBaren—Trinity, MI

### 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:

Lydia Kleyn—Grace, MI

Jess Kraayenbrink—Hull, IA

Daniel Gritters—Hudsonville, MI

Matt Kiel—Kalamazoo, MI

Tim Kiel—Kalamazoo, MI

Nelle Bishop—Kalamazoo, MI

Caleb VanBaren—Randolph, WI

### 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. Brad VanDerZwaag and Miss Cinda Kroese—Hull, IA

Mr. Eric Traviss and Miss Dawn Vermeer—Hull, IA

Mr. Steve Swets and Miss Rachel Stouwie—South Holland, IL

Mr. Tim Machiele and Miss Elizabeth Haveman—Trinity, MI