

Beacon Lights

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“Let this mind be in you, which was also in Christ Jesus: Who, being in the form of God, thought it not robbery to be equal with God: But made himself of no reputation, and took upon him the form of a servant.”

Philippians 2:5-7a

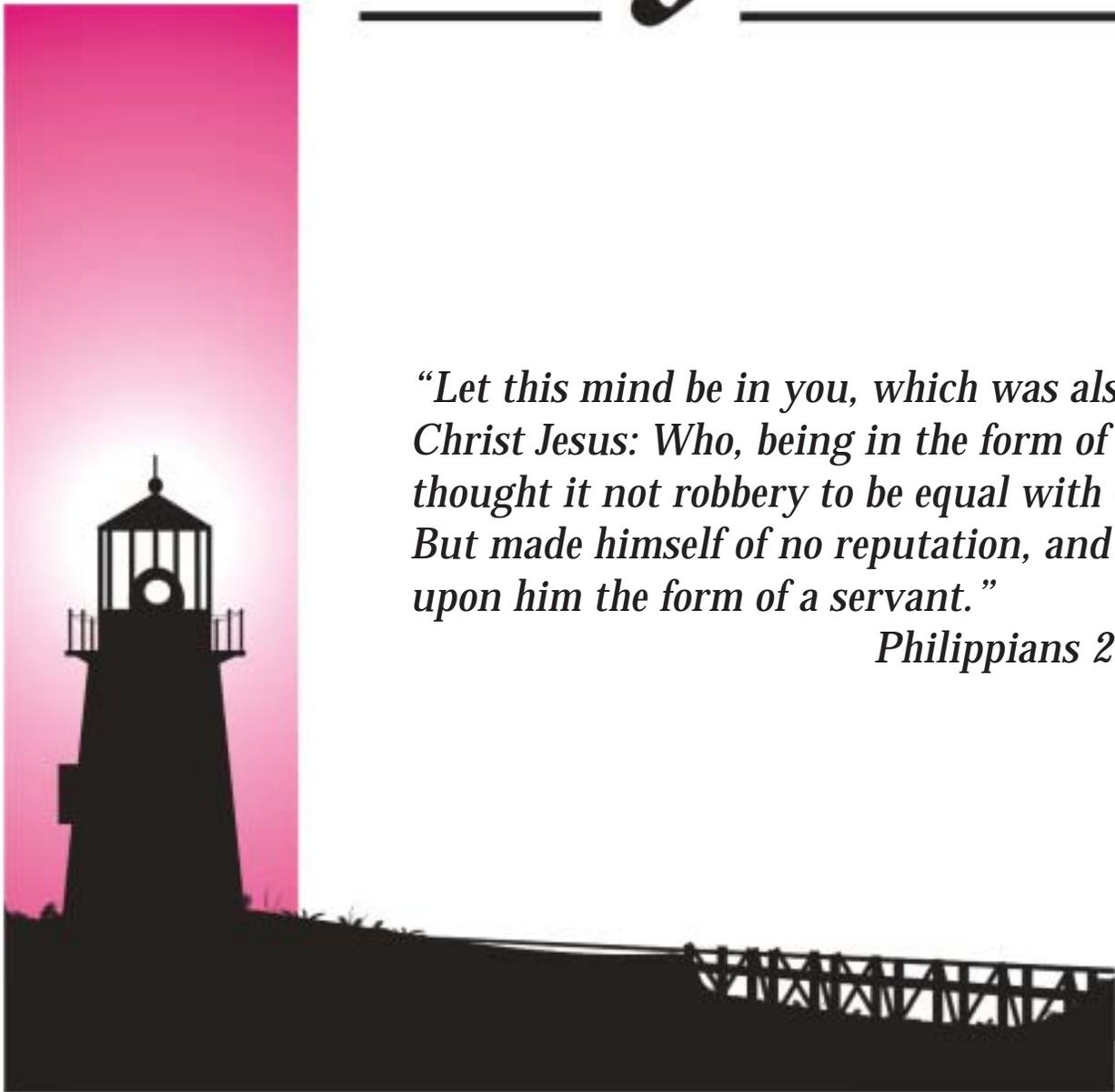


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BEACON LIGHTS

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Our Covenant Triune God

by Rev. G. Vanden Berg
Reprinted from October, 1957

GOD IS GOD!

To say less than this is to deny the simple but comprehensive revelation of this otherwise inexpressible truth. To say more than this is to philosophically impose our own foolish limitations upon the Infinite One and thereby destroy the truth. Let us, therefore, leave our confession in this simple form, the very utterance of which must needs impress us with the truth that our finite minds are incapable of comprehending and our sinful lips unable to express the incomparable greatness and absolute sovereignty of Him Who is alone GOD!

HE IS GOD!

This we believe with all our heart. Within us is the irrepressible desire of faith to say more about Him. Conscious of our own inability to do so, we turn in humble reverence to His own Word in order that we may repeat after Him what He first reveals as the truth concerning Himself. In the light of His Word we boldly confess, "*Our God is Triune.*"

This, we saw in the preceding issue, means that there are three distinct persons *in* the one Divine Essence; the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit. Proof of this may be found in the Holy Scripture in both the Old and New Testaments. Rather than elaborating upon this now, we refer you to the 9th Article of our Confession which supplies this proof. At present we are interested in seeing that this truth, so clearly revealed in the Word, is also reflected in the works of the Triune One.

Our eyes look upward to behold the heavens which He hath made and, lo, we see the sun, the moon and the stars, hundreds and thousands of them. These three are the bearers of light that remind us of the truth that, "*God is light and in Him there is no darkness at all*" (I John 1:5). In Him is all light and apart from him is darkness and desolation.

Again our eyes turn downward to look upon the world of vegetation with its threefold classification of "*grass, the herb yielding seed, and the fruit tree*" (Gen. 1:11) and in each of these we discern a three-parted creature with roots, plant and fruit. In its threeness lies its completeness and if any third is taken away, the creature is essentially destroyed.

Thus we are carried further to consider man, God's covenant creature whom He made in His own image and likeness to manifest His praise in all the earth. Concerning man, God said, "*It is not good that man should be alone; I will make him an help meet for him*" (Gen. 2:18). In the creation of this help meet for man, God created potentially the family and instituted the home wherein the beauty of His triuneness is reflected in the highest sense. The family is one but in that oneness there is also a threeness consisting of father, mother and children. In the home God is revealed as the Covenant God Who establishes and maintains His covenant in the generations of His people. In the Christian home, therefore, the covenant life of God comes to manifestation in the relationships of parents and children and the more we live in the home from the consciousness of that covenant life, the more we will realize the significance of the truth of the Trinity.

The reason for this lies in the fact that the doctrine of the Trinity and that of the Covenant are inseparably connected. Were it true, as Unitarians claim, that God is One in Person and Essence, or, as Polytheists aver, that there are many gods, there could never be a revelation of the covenant. The covenant is essentially the relationship of friendship and fellowship between two or more persons that is based on personal likeness. Now if God is one in Person, He can have no fellowship. He can exercise no more friendship than a Robinson Crusoe on a desolate island. On the other hand, if He is many gods, the basis of covenant fellowship is lost in that there is no personal likeness and, consequently, there may be friction among the gods resulting in the very opposite of covenant friendship. But the truth is that the covenant has its highest and perfect realization within God in Whom the three Persons think, speak and act in one essence in eternal unity and live together the perfect Divine life in infinite glory. That covenant life God reflects in Jesus Christ, His Son, and through His people whom He calls unto Himself and separates them from the fellowship of the world, delivering them from the power and dominion of sin and fills them with His own life, the life of holy consecration and devotion.

Sin has corrupted the home of man. No longer does it reflect the blessings of covenant life. The contrary is true and the modern home of our day attests unmistakably to this fact. There is no unity but divorce. Friendship is supplanted by rebellion, usurpation of authority and the broken home. The home that is built on the foundation of man's self-interests is destined to destruction and even in the process of its erection can only emit misery to all that are a part of it and to many others who are affected by it.

Covenant young people, you are called of God to manifest the beauties of His holy covenant. This is especially important to remember when you set forth to establish your own home, to marry, to bear children, etc. Father, mother and children form an earthly tri-unity, called into being to reflect in all their living together the glories of the heavenly Trinity. How is it then possible when there is from the very beginning disunity between father and mother and especially if this disunity is of a spiritual nature, a disunity of faith? Before the children are brought into the picture the covenant relation is marred and broken. It may not be so. The Triune God commands it otherwise and you do well to wisely heed that Word in your courtship plans and marriage contemplations.

**The Triune God commands it otherwise and you
do well to wisely heed that Word in your courtship
plans and marriage contemplations.**

Remember that the success in building a home is not measured by God by ascertaining the amount of material resources to be found in the mortgage free house in which you live. Life doesn't consist in the abundance of things one possesses. Neither is success to be gauged by the fact that in the eyes of men you have obtained a really *good looking* spouse or that outwardly at least the relations in your home are judged by others (who really do not know) to be peaceful.

Rather, establishing a home involves spiritual values and these are basic because the chief requisite of a true home is that it reflects the covenant life of the Triune God. It demands of husband and wife that they walk with the children God gives them in the way of the truth in humble submission to His will revealed in *His* Word. It requires diligent effort and, from the viewpoint of the flesh, much sacrifice to instruct and bring up the children in the fear of the Lord. Marriage and the institution of the home are not existent for the pleasure and convenience of man but must be subservient to the service of the living, covenant, triune God Who, in His Word, instructs us in this incontrovertible truth:

"The curse of the Lord is in the house of the wicked...but He blesseth the habitation of the just"
(Proverbs 3:33). ❖

The Gift (5)

by Tom Cammenga

Later that evening he remembered with a start as he looked at the pile of bills on the kitchen counter that he had not gotten the mail for at least a couple of days. With all that had been happening he had simply forgotten all about it. This had also been one of the many things his wife had always done and so it was difficult for him to remember.

Almost every day, rain or shine she would go out to the mailbox when she saw the mailman coming up the street and personally take the mail from him. He was a middle-aged fellow who had lost his wife many years ago and they would often take a few minutes and talk, sharing stories or simply saying hello. The old man smiled slightly as he remembered the many times she would take the mail from him only if he would accept a cup of hot chocolate or some cookies that she had taken along with her. That was just her way; always reaching out, always ready to talk, always willing to help in any way.

Returning from the mailbox he set the bundle of mail on the counter in order to take off his coat. He couldn't believe how much there was. Scattered here and there throughout was junk mail or a few bills but most of the envelopes in the stack, which measured about four inches high, were sympathy cards sent by friends and people from the church where his wife had been a member.

His first impulse had been to throw them in the trash container under the sink without even looking at them. The last thing he wanted was to be reminded of the hurt he felt. He didn't want to think about how much he missed his dear wife. No amount of cards or sympathy would bring her back.

Holding the bundle of cards in his hand however he couldn't help but think how disappointed his wife would have been in him if she had known that he had not even opened the cards that had been sent. His conscience finally won out and so he settled into his chair with the glass of juice he always had before bed and began to open and read each one, intending to look at only a few before retiring for the night.

As readers went he was somewhat slow, had always been slow in fact, and so an hour later, past his usual bed time, he laid the last card down on the table next to the chair. He took his glasses off and slowly rubbed his weary eyes. Looking at the clock on the other side of the room as he put his glasses back on he was surprised to see how much time had gone by.

What a woman his wife had been, he thought. He had always known it himself but for some reason it astounded him that so many others, most of whom he had never met, knew it too. She had certainly touched many lives as was testified to in the stack of cards next to him.

Slowly then he moved about the house performing his nightly routine of making sure the doors were locked and the lights turned off. Though he had slept well the night before the happenings of the last weeks still wore on him and the fatigue he felt in his mind and in his body seemed almost overwhelming.

That night however sleep eluded him. He chased it through dark tunnels and hospital hallways, across a sunlit cemetery and around the bed in which his wife slept. And it was so windy. No matter where he went there was that cold wind that blew, seeping through all barriers and chilling him to the bone. A man that he did not know came to the bedside of his beloved wife and laughed. He didn't know him nor did he understand why but the man simply stood there with leaves swirling around him in the wind and laughed.

With a start he woke up, freezing cold and yet sweating so much that the bed itself was damp. Slowly realization came over him and with some difficulty he sat up on the edge of the bed.

He had seen her. Though he knew it had been a dream it seemed so real. She had been sleeping but had looked so healthy and vibrant. There had been color in her cheeks and a glow about her that had been absent those last weeks. Unconsciously he reached over with his right hand to where she had slept by his side for so many years but felt nothing there except the cold bed and the blankets that covered it.

Gradually he drew his hand back and began to weep. At first the tears ran down his cheeks slowly and then as grief overtook him they flowed freely and his body rocked with wave after wave of sorrow. There, in the dark of his bedroom with a faint glow from the streetlight sneaking through the blinds and falling across him, he experienced the very depths of the valley of the shadow of death. With no others to comfort or console him he seemed to plummet deeper and deeper until he could fall no farther.

Never before had he ever felt so alone and lonely. There was an emptiness in his soul that seemed larger and deeper than anything could be. Hopeless. That is how he felt. There simply could be no hope. All the future he could see was dark and grim and filled with loneliness and sorrow. How in the world would he ever go on alone?

Again he thought back to the prayer that the young man had offered on his behalf that day in the cemetery. Especially he remembered the part where the young man asked God to fill the empty spot in his life and to give his soul peace. Peace. Oh, he thought, if only he could feel peace in his heart and soul.

With those thoughts lingering in the periphery of his consciousness he lay down again and was finally overtaken by the sleep he so desperately needed. As the long and dark hours of the night gave way to dawn he lay completely motionless and slept. Although he didn't

realize it at the time, that sleep was an answer to the request he had made. Though it was not a well thought out prayer or offered on bended knee, it was the simple and yet profound pleading of a child. A child of the Father.

The Lord had brought him in those hours into the depths of despair and the man would never be the same again. Those hours, and really, those moments had been determined by God as the particular time that this man's cold heart would begin to be turned toward his Father. All of the events in his life up to this point the Lord had used to prepare him for this amazing moment. How fitting it was then that the man lay sleeping. Fitting because it was nothing he had done nor was it even his conscious desire, at least at this point, to turn towards God. The Holy Spirit had worked in his heart and though he would not realize it for some time, he was and always had been a Christian. Chosen by God since before the foundations of the world and saved by the precious blood of Jesus Christ, his savior. It would be a long time though before he could make that confession with his heart and mouth. In fact from a human perspective it could be said that this would happen only in the nick of time and yet in God's time it was exactly as it was determined to be.



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

Consider the Creation

When I In Awesome Wonder...

Michigan's Golden Coast

Death

by Deanne Wassink

Have you ever counted the number of dead animals you see along the side of the road? The numbers are astounding. Especially along the lake shore where there is a concentration of wildlife because of conservation and feeding the numbers are even greater. The closer I work with my fellow creatures the

more sensitive I am becoming to the suffering and death that pervade the natural world. I think we naturally avoid dwelling on this subject because it is depressing. Nevertheless, we should take time to consider it. God is speaking to us here.

I did a brief study on the survival of some of the most well known wildlife songbirds and deer. Do you realize that the population of songbirds remains roughly the same every year in spite of the fact that the nesting birds produce three to seven eggs each nest and sometimes nest twice? That means that more than half of the songbird population dies every year! The numbers are similar with the deer population. Depending on the type of winter, the quality of food, and the predator pressure, all of which can change from year to year, somewhere around half of the spring fawns do not make it to their first birthday. If we were to look at the animals that fall into the “prey” category like rabbits and mice, the numbers would be much higher.

The animals that God gave to us to care for also suffer and die. Whether they are our companions or on the farm, part of caring for them involves relieving them of suffering, whether that is vet care or “putting them to sleep” as we gently describe euthanasia when they are suffering too much. It can be very difficult for us to deal with, especially if we felt a very close bond with them. I’ll never forget how gut wrenching it was to “put down” sick or injured dogs or horses. Farmers have to deal with death all the time. They understand death. We are so often oblivious to it and shelter our children from it, that is not good. For our children I am convinced one of the best lessons in life for them is to care for, love, and eventually to bury a pet. It is good for them to bond with God’s creatures and to suffer with them.

With this death and the suffering of God’s creatures all around us, we have to hear His word concerning death. Death in the creation is because of our sin. It is our fault that animals die and suffer. The whole creation, including all the animals, came under the curse of death along with all of mankind in the fall of Adam and Eve. We may not stop there, however. Our hope is forgiveness of sins through Christ! Our hope is in the resurrection and the recreation of this present world into the new heavens and earth. We long for that full salvation. In Romans 8:19-23 we understand that the creatures groan in pain and suffering, longing for our full salvation. No wonder we can sympathize with suffering creatures. They are bearing the pain and death of the curse along with us. There is so much more that could be said about this profound concept.

Do you hear the cries of God’s creatures? Do you sense the painful longing of the creation? We should all be close enough to God’s creatures to hear it. But, we may not be depressed about the death that we see. We

have to hear the groans of God’s creatures as so many voices calling us to look ahead to the day when there will be no more suffering and death. They look to a new creation. We must remember that we are only sojourners here. We seek an heavenly kingdom. Death is the door that leads us into our eternal joy of life with God in the new heavens and earth. Are you groaning? Look to Christ!

“For we know that the whole creation groaneth and travaileth in pain together until now. And not only they, but ourselves also, which have the firstfruits of the Spirit, even we ourselves groan within ourselves, waiting for the adoption, to wit, the redemption of our body” (Rom. 8:22-23).

Groaning

Pain and disease

*We observe all around.
Creatures are suffering
With no help to be found.*

*Man groans in pain,
From the curse suffering.
Not finding any peace,
From pain no buffering.*

*Christ knows our hurts.
Our suffering He bore.
With Him we’ll rise again.
In joy forevermore.*

*No suffering,
But, freed from curses pain.
Earth’s creatures will frolic,
The new world they gain. ❖*

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

The Calling of a Young Wife (3)

by Rev. Steven Key

As we have seen from Titus 2:4, 5, the young wives must be taught to love their husbands and children. That love comes to concrete expression by their being discreet, chaste, keepers at home, good. But there is one other thing that young wives must be taught.

Obedient to Their Husbands

The older women must teach the young women to be obedient to their own husbands.

This is the calling sounded repeatedly throughout the Bible's teaching on marriage: The godly wife is to be in subjection to her husband.

That refers, first of all, to the attitude of her heart. She must know in her heart that God gave her husband to her as the head of their home. To live in subjection to him is to live in obedience to God Himself.

The reason is stated in Scripture, in Ephesians 5:23, 24: "For the husband is the head of the wife, even as Christ is the head of the church: and he is the savior of the body. Therefore as the church is subject unto Christ, so let the wives be to their own husbands in every thing."

We recognize, of course, that husbands sometimes are most difficult to deal with. That is why Scripture also addresses the husbands very pointedly concerning their calling to treat their wives as Christ treats His Church, nourishing and cherishing her, giving honor to her out of the deep spiritual love of the regenerated heart. For the young men who read these articles, that is your calling as a husband, for which you will also answer to God. And therefore also you may not ignore your wife, nor refuse to allow her to talk or express her feelings. Marriage is communion, fellowship between husband and wife.

But turning again to the text before us we see that, without exception, the wife who will live in obedience to God must live in subjection to her husband.

You should remember, at the time this epistle was written, the church was full of new converts, many women whose husbands were unbelieving and ungodly. Peter addressed that issue specifically in I Peter 3:1, when he wrote: "Likewise, ye wives, be in subjection to your own husbands; that, if any obey not the word, they also may without the word be won by the conversation of the wives."

It makes no difference if the husband is unreasonable and disobedient to his calling as a husband. The wife is to show her love for God by living in subjection to her husband.

There is nothing more disruptive to the home than a rebellious wife who will not submit to the rule of her husband.

There is nothing that gives a more disastrous testimony to the wicked world, than a woman who claims to be a Christian, but lives in rebellion to her husband.

What a horrible testimony to the truth of God's Word, when a wife in the church rules in the household of her husband, contrary to her husband's desires!

What tragedy, when the wickedness of the world's women is manifest in households of the church! You wives must be in subjection to your husbands, says the Word of God.

The Instruction of the Older Women

Again, I remind you older women: It is your calling to exhort earnestly the young women concerning these things.

Of all these things that we have heard from this text, not one of them comes naturally. And you young women, as well as you older women, having heard these virtues and characteristics of godliness set before you, recognize very clearly that these things don't come naturally for you, do they.

It takes the grace of God and the fellowship of the Spirit of Christ to enable us to walk in godliness. In all spiritual virtues we must be taught of God. And God uses means to teach us.

It may be difficult for a young woman to receive this instruction from a man. It may also be difficult for you to approach your daughters and other young women in the church concerning these matters. We are often of a mind to let things be, and hope that they somehow turn out well. But we may not live that way.

You, as godly women in Zion, are to exhort the young wives and remind them that what we have here is not merely the instruction of a self-seeking man. This is the very Word of God, the God Who is all-wise, Who knows what is best for us and for our families and for the Church, the God Who loves us so much that He gave His Son for us, and now shows us how to enjoy the fellowship of His covenant love. We must walk in obedience to Him.

The instruction of this text is as much the teaching of the Bible as is the truth of total depravity, the virgin birth of our Savior, Christ's death and resurrection, and any other doctrine of the faith. And as important as is God's truth and His revelation concerning those doctrines, of the same importance is the instruction given us in Titus 2:4, 5.

This is the life of a young wife that is consistent with the truth of God's Word and the life of a Christian.

A Spiritually Fruitful Obedience

Godly obedience to this high calling is indeed spiritually fruitful.

That is evident from the last part of verse 5, where the focus is on the fruitfulness with respect to God's honor and glory.

Women are to live such a life of godliness, that the Word of God be not blasphemed.

That shows that the way you live reflects upon God.

For one who claims to love God and His Word, and yet who lives contrary to it, that person shows reproach to the Word of God, that it is not in his or her heart.

And when a person walks uprightly, that person shows that the Word of God reflects in his or her life. This brings a seriousness to your calling, doesn't it.

The Word of God is blasphemed by the world when we Christians speak so much about the covenant of God with us and our children, when we claim that our children are God's gifts to us, and then we forsake our calling as godly parents. We give occasion for the Word of God to be held in contempt. So that those who oppose us say, "The Word of God? It has no power. It doesn't

make a real difference in your life, does it!" Sometimes we hear that, don't we. It only takes one member of the congregation living wickedly, and we hear, "You P.R.'s; you claim to have the truth, but it sure doesn't make any difference in how you live, does it!"

But we must remember that this inspired instruction is given to young women who have been born again by the Spirit of Christ. You who are God-fearing know that there is nothing worse than to live in such a way that we cause God and His Word to be blasphemed. You don't want that! You love the Lord God! And therefore—I know of you—you want God's Word to be praised.

That is why you hear this Word of God. You find your strength and fulfillment in the way of obedience.

Isn't it so?

These matters pertaining to the life of young wives are the things that become, that are consistent with, sound doctrine. And God is glorified in those virtuous young wives and mothers who walk in obedience to His Word.

But in addition, when God is glorified, He also gives His blessing.

Look once again, beloved, at those characteristics manifest in the God-fearing young woman. She loves her husband; she loves her children. *She is discreet, chaste, a keeper at home. She is good, obedient to her own husband.*

It is those kind of characteristics that make the women of the world rage. ... According to God's Word, those things spell BEAUTY, spiritual beauty.

It is those kind of characteristics that make the women of the world rage. To them such characteristics spell male-domination and bondage, drudgery and suppression. What do those things spell to you?

According to God's Word, those things spell BEAUTY, spiritual beauty. Such beauty is possible only by your freedom in Christ Jesus, freedom to walk in the way of God's will. For we are partakers of God's glory and grace in Christ Jesus.

The young woman who strives to live in obedience to this Word of God certainly rises above the degrading principles of sin and wickedness. That is not to say that obedience is found to be easy. Nor is it to say that such a

life will not result in certain sacrifices and hardships. But when you live according to God's precepts, your life is seen as one of beauty and nobility. It is seen as such by God Himself. But it is also seen as such by God-fearing husbands and children and brothers and sisters in Christ.

When you walk in the way of this Word, though you are so conscious of your weaknesses and sins, you set examples before your husband and children and neighbors that are worthy of emulation. They will know that your life is hid with Christ in God.

And so you also shield your children from the evils and errors, sins and wickedness that surround them. By your own example of godliness, you warn them against the ways of the world, and show them the higher, more beautiful and worthwhile things of life: obedience to God and His Word, and partaking of the fellowship of His love.

Of the woman who lives in such a way, the writer of Proverbs 31 speaks, "Her children arise up, and call her blessed; her husband also, and he praiseth her. . . . Favour is deceitful, and beauty is vain: but a woman that feareth the LORD, she shall be praised" (Proverbs 31:28, 30). Hear this Word of God, my young sisters in Christ. Walk in His way. And May God Himself so grant you His blessing. ❖

*Reprinted from November, 1998
Beacon Lights.*

Isaiah 53

Man of Sorrows, acquainted with grief,
Despised, rejected of men.
Even His death as a common thief
Speaks to us ever again:
No fault of His, 'twas our sins He bore,
For our transgressions, slain,
For us the crown of thorns He wore;
In our place suffered pain.

Isaiah said we all like sheep
In sin have gone astray;
The Lord's commands we do not keep
But turn to our own way.
Yet God upon His son divine
Iniquity has laid—
Corruption that was yours and mine
Upon the cross was paid.

Yet through this agonizing way
Christ as a lamb was led
In silence; God He would obey
As His life's blood was shed.
It pleased the Father so to bruise
His sinless Son. His plan:
For us God chose to so implant
Christ's righteousness in man.

His holy seed thus justified;
Prolonged shall be his days;
God's righteousness is satisfied;
We shout aloud His praise!

Thelma Westra

Leaving Father and Mother— Biblical Courtship and Marriage

reviewed by Rev. William MacLeod

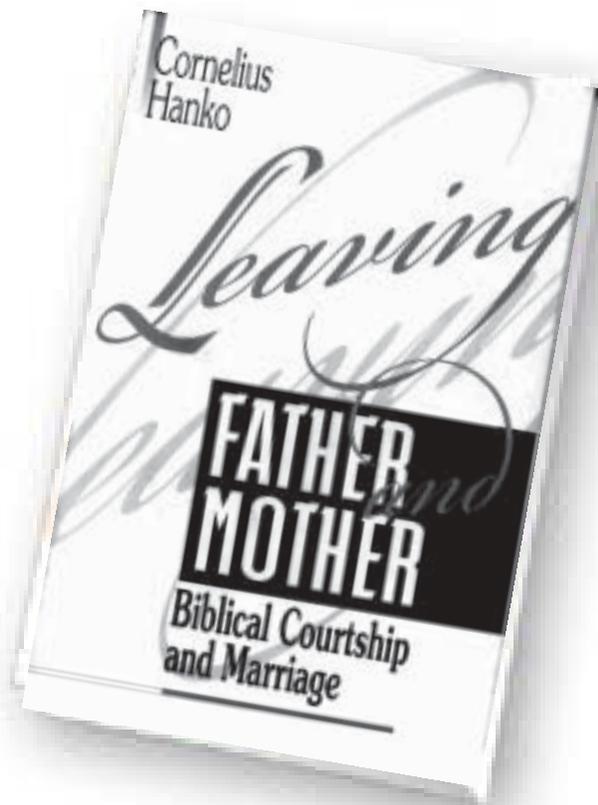
Book Review by Rev. William MacLeod originally published in *Free Church Witness*, the magazine of The Free Church of Scotland (Continuing).

Leaving Father and Mother—Biblical Courtship and Marriage by Cornelius Hanko, Reformed Free Publishing Association, pbk, 54 pp, \$5.95

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Much common sense and biblical wisdom is to be found in this little book. It is specially directed at Christians in their late teens and early twenties. How careful young people must be to seek the guidance of God with regard to a spouse! In a day when sex before marriage is regarded as the norm it is good to have the teaching of the Bible on moral purity clearly spelled out. The emphasis that is laid on the interest of the whole congregation in a member's marriage is also wholesome. It is a common saying that "love is blind" but Hanko advises to enter marriage with both eyes open. Thereafter it is best to shut one eye! ❖

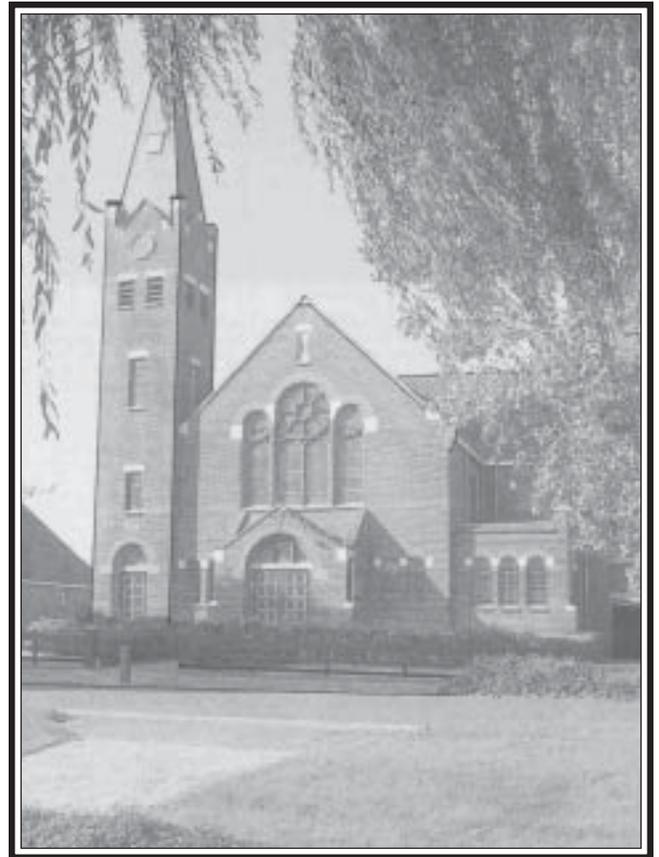


The Reformed Church of Lollum

by J. P. de Klerk

You see here the Synodal Reformed Church of Lollum, a town in the Dutch province of Friesland. The congregation is united with the State Reformed Church, and the Lutheran Church, in the ‘Samen Op Weg’ (together on our way) Movement. This brick building was built about 75 years ago.

The movement has its problems. In the State Reformed Churches there is a Reformed Alliance of 60 conservative ministers who do not want to work together with the modernists. This has made the leaders of the movement very angry. It undermines their plans of growth if these ministers leave and are followed by the majority of their congregations. These groups could set up a separate church or join the Liberated Reformed Churches of The Netherlands.



In Twijzelerhside

by J. P. de Klerk

This is the State Reformed Church of Twijzelerheide in the Dutch province of Friesland. Because it is built on weak soil it has buttresses against the walls. To avoid heat loss during the winter months it has double windows. The whole building was recently restored. Because of the ‘Samen Op Weg’ (together on our way) Movement, the State Reformed Churches and the Synodal Reformed Churches of the area have combined services in this church building. ❖



J. P. de Klerk was a writer and journalist in Ashhurst, New Zealand.

Watching Daily At My Gates

The Song of Zion

“A Psalter–Psalm Devotional of Praise to Our Sovereign Covenant God”
by Skip Hunter (Reprinted from April 1998)

April 16 Read Acts 11:19-26

Psalm 51:13-15 David recounts two results of his return to grace. First of all, he will teach transgressors God’s ways. David must do this by experience. Words alone will not convince others in this case. We must walk a proper walk in order to show others the error of a sinful way. David realizes that sin is not the proper path of the child of God. We, too, must realize and live out of that truth. Secondly, David says that he will praise God through the use of song. This is a very proper way to show gratitude for deliverance from sin. Only a redeemed child of God can sing with the joy acceptable to God. We, the redeemed, must confess our sin and then open our mouths in praise to our heavenly Father. By this method God will turn sinners to his way. Sing Psalms 141:2, 142:3, and 144 1-2.

April 17 Read I Samuel 15:13-26

Psalm 51:16-17 David realizes that outward actions are not enough. Saul could never learn this lesson. He thought he could do wrong, make a sacrifice, and all would be well. That is not the testimony of Scripture. God desires a true sorrow of heart. We must empty ourselves even as Jesus did for us. We must put self last and God first. We must be content and accepting of the will of God for our lives. Like Samuel we must constantly say, “Speak, Lord, for thy servant heareth.” This is the only thing that God desires. Outward sacrifices only pointed to Christ; they were not the way to salvation. Even as we prepare to worship on the Sabbath, let us make sure it is from the heart that we do all things. Sing Psalms 141:3 and 144:3-4.

April 18 Read Psalm 51

Psalm 51:18-19 David opened this Psalm with the truth of total depravity. By his experience he led us through the way of forgiveness. Now he closes with the truth that the whole way of salvation is unconditional. It is all of God. When God does his sovereign good pleasure in the church and in the heart of the elect, then He is pleased with the sacrifices that we offer. Cain did not understand this, Saul did not understand this, and there are many today that do not and will not understand this. Pray for God to do his good pleasure in your lives. This is a prayer that we must utter daily. Then and only then will our worship, whether in or out of church, be acceptable in his sight. Sing Psalter 141:4.

April 19 Read Psalm 52

Psalm 52:1 At first glance it seems peculiar to put the two thoughts together that we see in this verse. But yet when we consider what they say, we see that it shows off God’s goodness very well. Man by nature likes to do mischief. We see this in very young children, we see this in young people, and sad to say we see this in adults. This is not the innocent mischief, but rather an attempt to discredit either our brother or even God. On the other hand, God only knows good. He can only do good; He can only will good. That goodness is something that the child of God experiences daily. God does not play tricks on us. God loves us as a father loves his children. Stop and think of the numerous times you have experienced the goodness of God. Then stop and give thanks for that goodness, for His mercies do endure forever. Sing Psalter 145:1.

April 20 Read James 3:5-13

Psalm 52:2-3 The context of this Psalm is David fleeing from Doeg. David must feel that all is against him. In verse 1, he shows that even though man tries mischief against him, God is good. Today David confronts Doeg’s sin. Doeg had gone to Saul and reported what had happened at the tabernacle. This sin is not peculiar to the reprobate. This sin of using the tongue for evil rears its ugly head in the church. The church must not only combat those without who report evil against them. The church must also make it her business to stamp out the same evil within. Yes there are wicked out there trying to do us in. We must have two responses. First of all, we must remember that God is good. Secondly, we must root this sin out of our lives. Sing Psalter 145:2.

April 21 Read III John

Psalm 52:4-5 The apostle John had spent three years listening to the teachings of Jesus. He heard Jesus tell the parable of the wheat and the tares. John knew that there were wicked in the church and that it was by the will of God. He warned the church to whom he was writing about one of those wicked people. David, too, had that experience. He knew that there were those in Israel who hated him and hated God. We must also come to that realization. Satan works in the church to try to cause the people of God to fall. Like John and David, we have the comfort that God will deal with the wicked in his sovereign way. We must not despair; we must serve God and know that he will take care of us. Sing Psalter 145:3.

April 22 Read Micah 7:1-7

Psalm 52:6-7 We read this text, and we may get the idea that we can make fun of the evildoer or that God will allow us to see the wicked's destruction. This is not always the case. We may see the wicked fall, but we must remember that it is only by God's grace that we stand. We must be sobered at the sight of the wicked's destruction. David is talking about a future time. David is not experiencing this sight now. We must wait for God's time and realize that any reaction we have will be to give God the glory. Our reaction must be that we fall on our knees and thank him for the salvation He has wrought for us through Christ. Sing Psalter 145:4.

April 23 Read Psalm 1

Psalm 52:8 David now makes the comparison between the child of God and the wicked. After seeing the source of the wicked's trust, David confesses that his trust must only be in the mercies of God. This was a mighty confession, seeing that David was fleeing for his life before Saul. David, even in that flight, saw the goodness of God's mercy. David realized that God would bring him back to worship in the tabernacle. That was the only place where the fountain of God's truth and mercy flowed. Is this our confession? Do we see that the church is the source of our election? The church is that source only because it is the body of Christ, not because of its earthly characteristics. Psalm 1 tells us about the blessed man. Can we take its words upon our lips? Do we want to take its words upon our lips? Sing Psalter 145:5.

April 24 Read Psalm 52

Psalm 52:9 The final verse of this Psalm is an exclamation of praise by David to our God. David realizes that this trial at the hands of Doeg has been ordained by his heavenly Father. He realizes that there is nothing else he can or must do but glorify God who reigns sovereignly above. In the second part of the verse, he says that he will wait upon God's name. In the name of God, David and we can do all things. He says that it is good to do this. Is this our confession, people of God? Do we realize that all trials come at the hand of God, and that He will give to us the way of escape from them? Do we praise God in this realization? We must do that, you know. Remember to cast your cares upon him who careth for His people. Sing Psalter 145:6.

April 25 Read Psalm 53

Psalm 53:1 The word fool is a very strong word in Scripture. It is one which portrays a lack of knowledge about that which is godly. The book of Proverbs spends much time talking about the fool and the wise. This verse gives us a capsule definition of a fool. He is one that says that there is no God. A person who says this is a person who has no hope. He is on the way to hell. We must not lightly label someone a fool as Jesus tells us in Matthew 6. But yet we must never walk in foolish ways ourselves. We must never say there is no God. We must not say this with our mouths or show it in our lives.

God does good—His good, and by that good, he saves us from our sins. Sing Psalter 146:1.

April 26 Read Genesis 6:1-8

Psalm 53:2 The passage we read for today gives to us the history before the flood. In that history, God found little good upon the earth. David saw that God looked down upon men in his day. God found little that was good then. What about today? Does God still look down upon us? He most certainly does! He looks upon our every work whether public or secret. He judges every work because He is the supreme judge. We know that he sees little good in the world around us. It just takes a little looking at a newspaper to see how depraved the world is. What about in our lives? Do we find "grace in the eyes of the LORD?" The answer is yes, we do. By the grace given to us by Jehovah we find grace. We need not fear a flood to destroy the world. God has promised that he will never destroy the world by that means again. We must however live in the realization that he is coming "to judge the living and the dead." Sing Psalter 146:2.

April 27 Read Romans 3:10-23

Psalm 53:3 Paul quotes this text in his treatment of the doctrine of justification as we read today. Justification is that act of God in which we are declared righteous. To see how wonderful this idea is we must see what we were before being justified. According to this text and others like it, man by nature is dead in his sins. There is nothing that he can do to help himself out of sin's mire. There is not one little bit of goodness in us that would help us to become saved. This has been an unpopular truth in the church world in the past and still is today. Man does not want to bow before God's sovereignty and give to Him the honor He deserves for man's salvation. Man in his "I'm great" attitude wishes to claim as much credit for himself as possible. Let us confess that we are nothing and God is everything. Only with this attitude will God be pleased. Sing Psalter 146:3.

April 28 Read Isaiah 43:22-28

Psalm 53:4 In this verse David talks about the wicked not calling upon God. What about us? Do we call upon God daily? Do we pray prayers that are pleasing in His sight? God gives us all things. He cares for us so that not even a hair can fall from our heads unless it be by his will. God gives to us salvation and will take us to glory at his time. Do we pray to Him? Do we call upon him often? How do we pray? Are our prayers reverent, or are they prayers like the Pharisees. Praying to God is the chief means of thankfulness that He has given to us. Let us pray often. Let us pray properly. When we do that we can be assured that God will bless us and take care of us. Sing Psalter 146:4.

April 29 Read Proverbs 28:1-10

Psalm 53:5 At the end of yesterday's devotional, I stated that God would care for us. That truth is shown in verse 5 of Psalm 53. As David lived his life, he had many enemies who came up against him. David knew that these enemies were

God's enemies and were going against God. We must see that God's enemies come up against us. Then we must see that God will fight for us in these battles. Only in this way will we find deliverance from the enemy who tries to defeat us. We can confidently call upon God knowing that he will protect us from all who seek to do us hurt. Sing Psalter 146:5-6.

April 30 Read Psalm 53

Psalm 53:6 Yesterday we spoke of deliverance from God. In today's verse we see that it is sure. The salvation we seek comes out of God's church. We may be captive under the

powers of sin for a time, but like Israel God will deliver us from the Babylon and Egypt we face on this earth. This is certain as the verse states. We also see that the reaction of the child of God from such deliverance will be songs of joy to God. God has delivered us and is delivering us. People of God, are you singing? Are you singing the songs of Zion which make us glad? These are not the man-centered songs of the world. These are the songs which give to God all the glory and honor due his name. Sing and be glad, people of God, for our God has delivered us from sin and from Satan. Sing Psalter 146:7-8.

Watching Daily At My Gates

The Song of Zion

"A Psalter-Psalm Devotional of Praise to Our Sovereign Covenant God"
(Reprinted from May 1998)

Devotionals by Beth De Vries

May 1 Read Psalm 55:1-7

We cry to Thee, O Lord in our trouble. How often do we not feel the need to bring our many woes and trials before Jehovah! We have assurance in this Psalm that God will hear our cry and give ear to our prayer. We easily become overwhelmed in our troubles in this life, and these complaints we bring to our God. Our trust in God wavers when we become restless with moans and sighs. Is this good that we moan and sigh to our God who has given us life eternal? We know that we must trust in God to care for our problems; also that when we earnestly seek His presence in true prayer, he will hear us. Though our answer may not be what we want, may we rest in the Lord's sovereign will. Sing Psalter 148:1.

May 2 Read Isaiah 66:5-14

The enemies of God and His church will continually oppress the righteous. They are quick to speak and attempt to bring the people of God low. The wicked will use all means in their power to afflict those that are precious in God's sight. The Lord used these afflictions to teach his people to depend on Him. We see in this passage in Isaiah how the Lord will deliver his people from the hands of the wicked. The Lord shall be glorified in that His will will be completed when the wicked are brought to shame. The wicked love to see God's people in distress but God will be the victor in the final battle. May we in confidence believe this truth. Sing Psalter 148:2.

May 3 Read Romans 5:1-5

We often find pain in our hearts and it seems so difficult to ease that pain. When we think of death from the earthly point of view, it is a horrible event filled with despair. We can quickly lose sight of Christ our Saviour at these times and become as the ungodly. Psalter 148:3 brings out how we feel when we are overwhelmed by our troubles. May we then remember the comfort we find in the entire Bible as seen in Romans 5:1-5 where we see that God gives us these trials and tribulations to work in us patience, experience, and hope. May our tribulations throw us into the arms of our everlasting Saviour Jesus Christ. Sing Psalter 148:3.

May 4 Read Psalm 116:1-9

The rest that we receive at the Lord's hand is the natural result of our throwing ourselves into the arms of our Saviour. In our text we see the distressed Psalmist calling upon God and being brought back to the place of rest. In Psalter 148 we sing of the Psalmist searching like a bird in flight for a place of rest and peace far away from the tumults of the world. When we turn to Psalm 116 we find that place of peace to be a gift from God. We are called to follow this up with a godly walk. As we remain close to our Lord, we will cast our cares and burdens on him and he will continually give us the rest which we desire. Sing Psalter 148:4.

May 5 Read Isaiah 4

We find many comforts when we are led to the place of rest. Isaiah speaks of the beauty that will be seen in that rest. The

branch that gives us this rest is Christ our Lord and Saviour; he produces the good fruit of the elect as is seen in Isaiah 4:2. This passage shows how the Lord will create a place of rest in mount Zion after purifying the church. There shall be a tabernacle, far better than the Old Testament type, which shall provide shelter for God's people in their time of need. In the New Testament, this shelter is communion with God through prayer. We no longer need to go to the tabernacle to commune with God. We are called, however, to go to God's house on the sabbath to hear His word preached to us. Christ and his body, the church universal, provide the place of rest in which we seek to be renewed from past battles and prepared for future ones. Sing Psalter 148:5.

May 6 Read Genesis 11:1-9

When we look at Genesis 11 and the history of the tower of Babel, we see how God allowed the wicked to progress in their ways. When he saw that they were advanced in their sins and attempting to be like unto Himself; then He confounded their speech and spread them throughout the earth. We read in Psalm 55:9, 10 how God confounds the wicked in their cities and allows them to increase in their sins. It appears as if he allows the wicked to prosper and increase but really they increase in wickedness and fill the cup of iniquity. God will judge them for their wickedness and cast them into eternal hell. We need to remember that when it seems as though the world's swelling tide is about to overtake us. God is ever faithful and His judgement shall be just. Sing Psalter 148:6, 7.

May 7 Read Psalm 55:12-15

This part of Psalm 55 is not versified in the Psalter though it speaks about a unique type of situation. The passage describes a child of God betrayed by a hypocrite, one that was trusted and loved. The pain of being despised by one with whom we walked in the house of God and kept holy company is very great and bears upon our soul. This demonstrates how the true children of God will show themselves during difficult times in the church. It is not for us to judge the heart, for God knows the heart of all men and will have His justice known. We read of this in Romans 1:28-32.

May 8 Read Psalm 137

We read in Psalm 137 of the destruction of God's enemies. The inhabitants of Babylon and the children of Edom are completely destroyed. This is the reward for their great sins. In this passage we see that God joys in His justice being accomplished even to the killing of the children. This judgement upon children demonstrates that we are all born in sin and responsible for Adam's sin. This is similar to in Psalm 55:15 where the text reads "Let death seize upon them, and let them go down quick into hell: for wickedness is in their dwellings, and among them." In contrast, Psalm 137 gives us the instruction to remember Jerusalem and God's city as our chief delight. If we do this, all will be well with our souls. Sing Psalter 148:8.

Devotionals by Mike Feenstra

May 9 Read Psalm 55:16-17

In marked contrast from the previous verse, we read that David says, "As for me, I will call upon God." And what a difference that is. When the wicked are punished by God with severe hardship or are frightened by the terror of death, they have nothing to turn to for lasting peace. They can only turn to the vain pleasures of this earth which are as the daffodil in the spring that fades away in a few short weeks. But for us it is different because we have the Word of God which stands forever. In that Word we are taught that we must pray to God when we are reproached and persecuted. When we do this, God will surely hear us and give us that eternal peace that passeth all understanding. Therefore, let us pray often, and let us follow David's example in our lives by not only setting certain times to pray but also praying in our hearts throughout the day. Sing Psalter 150:3, 149:1.

May 10 Read Psalm 55:18

Are you aware that at this very moment many of our fellow Christians are being severely persecuted? Some of these fellow saints are under an oppressive government, and some are mocked by their pagan neighbors or even their own families. In fact, some of you may even be in these situations. What should you think in this difficult time? And for us in the U.S. and elsewhere, what should we think about the coming dark days of persecution? Our text for today gives the answer. When the powers of this world are arrayed in great numbers against us, we must understand that we already have the victory in the redeeming blood of Christ. Therefore, we can say with David that we are "delivered in peace" for we believe that because our Lord Jesus died and rose again, we will be brought into the everlasting peace of heaven. Sing Psalter 149:2.

May 11 Read Psalm 55:19

In this verse David continues to sound his confidence in God. In verses 16-23 he confesses several times that God will surely deliver him and judge the wicked. How could he have such confidence? The answer is that David believed in the Eternal Living God, the almighty creator and sustainer of the universe who has in his control everything in all the earth and in all of time. But we must remember that David not only believed that God was *able* to save him but that God was also *willing* to do it *for him*. This was David's faith. He believed that the eternal, unchangeable God would certainly realize the promise of sending Christ to die for *his* sins. This is also our faith, although our faith by God's grace alone lays hold on Christ's finished work. Because God has given us this faith, we can believe that God will surely afflict and judge those men who mockingly persecute us while they themselves live in unthankfulness for their God-given success. Sing Psalter 149:3.

May 12 Read Psalm 55:20, 21

Do you know what the words, "...And break their plighted troth," mean? How often do we sing these words of Psalter

149:4 without knowing their meanings? If we do not take a close look at these words we may think that the man in the stanza broke a decayed feeding trough of a horse. Therefore, we must understand the true meaning of the stanza by first studying the Psalm text and then the word meanings. The corresponding passage to stanza four is verse 20 of Psalm 55. There we read of an evil man (note that the “he” is not God) who broke an important pledge, a pledge to live in covenant friendship with his fellow saints. To break one’s plighted troth is to do as this man because a “plighted troth” means a pledged pledge. To *break* one’s pledge to live in covenant fellowship with one’s fellow saints is very displeasing to God. Therefore, let us not follow the example of this wicked man but rather keep the promises that we have made to our fellow saints. Sing Psalter 149:4.

May 13 Read Psalm 55:22, 23

As we near the close of this Psalm we must remind ourselves that David here is in a desperate situation. After crying out in verse 4 that the terrors of death were fallen on him, he asks God in verse 6 for wings like a dove so that he can fly away into the wilderness, far from his trouble. Truly, each one of us would ask the same thing if we were in his shoes. Yet, we must not seek to fly away from our troubles, but look

to God as David does when he says, “Cast thy burden on the Lord, and he shall sustain thee.” By saying this, David confesses that God will give him the strength to bear his troubles. David here shows us the truth of Isaiah 40:31, that they who wait on the Lord shall mount up with wings as eagles. These are the wings of strength that only flow from the strength of Israel. With his strength, our burdens will never bring us down and crush us. Sing Psalter 149:5, 150:4.

May 14 Read Psalm 55:22-23

In our verses for today we see the great truth of the antithesis as it applies to the eternal destiny of the righteous and the wicked. In order to see this truth we must understand first that in Adam all men are conceived and born in sin. As such, man is wholly incapable of doing any good and inclined unto all wickedness. If a man is never delivered from this bondage, God will surely bring him down into the grave, or pit, of destruction. My fellow believers, we deserve to be brought down into that horrible pit, a pit from which no mere man can escape. Praise God, that He has sent his Christ to conquer the grave and reconcile His people unto himself, the rock. When the elect are in that Rock, they shall never be moved or utterly cast down into destruction. What a contrast this is to the end of the wicked. Let us thank God for that contrast! Sing Psalter 149:6.

Our Young People’s Federation

Greeting from the Federation Board

Another year has passed, and the Federation Board has again been busy working on many projects. From planning different mass meetings and singspirations to overseeing the Scholarship Committee and the *Beacon Lights*, we’ve been following in the footsteps of those who came before us. We’ve been trying hard to continue to make these events and institutions both useful and interesting to the young people of our churches.

In addition to these yearly duties, we’ve also taken up a large project concerning our standing as the Federation Board. We are in the yearlong process of making the Federation Board 501C3 certified. We have long stood in a bit of a gray area with the IRS, and after much discussion and investigation, we decided to take this step to move onto firmer ground. Basically, we are registering with the IRS as a non-profit agency to clear up any potential confusion that may have arisen.

Also, something that we are looking forward to—and I’m sure that you’re looking forward to as well—is the Young People’s Convention this summer. Grandville Church will be hosting the convention at Beulah Beach Christian Camp and Retreat Center—a great-looking facility located in Vermilion, Ohio. The theme for the convention will be “Living Sacrifices of Thankfulness,” based on Romans 12:1, 2. For pictures of Beulah Beach, information on the convention, and more, visit www.prconvention.com.

As we look forward, we really hope to see all of you at the Easter Singspiration and Mass Meeting, Lord willing. Keep the Federation Board in your thoughts and prayers as we continue to meet and work for you.

In Christ,
Kyle Thompson, President ❖

My Friends: A Reminder Past Due

by Stefan Griess

About a year and a half ago, I attended a young adults summer retreat hosted by Redlands Protestant Reformed Church. During that retreat, Rev. Vander Wal spoke to us, warning us not to give in to the temptation to use our God-given talents for ourselves and our glory. Prof. Gritters also gave a speech, instructing us about how we young adults should be seeking to serve the church in specific ways. At the end of his speech, Prof Gritters asked if somebody would volunteer to email us all later in the year to remind us of how we need to be serving the church. I'm afraid that nobody has reminded us all, and if they have, I must have overlooked the reminder. In either circumstance, I am writing to give us this reminder with an added perspective of our friendships. I also want to include the young people of our denomination in this reminder because friends are very important to us as young adults *and* young people (which is a good thing). Also, it won't be long and you young people will be young adults, and this reminder is applicable to both young adults and young people. So I want to remind us of what our friendships should be like and how we young people and young adults need to be serving the church and not ourselves.

Let's look at Jonathan and David who show us what a real friendship should be like. The first thing we hear about Jonathan and David's friendship is that "the soul of Jonathan was knit with the soul of David, and Jonathan loved him as his own soul" (I Sam. 18:1). The first part of this passage can also be translated as "the *life* of Jonathan was bound up with the *life* of David." Immediately, these two young guys became friends who would stick closer than brothers, brothers born for adversity (Prov. 18:24, 17:17). These two knit-together hearts were bound by God.

While it cannot be doubted that David and Jonathan's hearts were knit by none other than God, we should also

notice when and how God bound their hearts. David had just finished defeating Goliath in front of Israel and the Philistines, and now he sat in the presence of King Saul. Saul asked him, "Whose son art thou, thou young man?" and David responded with, "I am the son of thy servant Jesse the Bethlehemite." Now, notice what happened next. "...when he [David] had made an end of speaking unto Saul, that the soul of Jonathan was knit with the soul of David" (I Sam. 17:58-18:1) In the instant that came immediately after David finished speaking, Jonathan not only had taken a liking to David, but his life was immediately bound up with David's life. Amazing! Why did this happen after David spoke? What was so special about David simply identifying himself so that immediately Jonathan's soul was knit with David's after David spoke?

It wasn't necessarily what David said but the manner in which he answered Saul that caught Jonathan's attention. There was evidently something special about David. What was so special about David was his godly character that radiated from his heart to all those around. When he spoke before King Saul, General Abner, and Jonathan, his godly character was all over him. Jonathan's attention was probably also caught by the common interest that could only be shared by two young but brave warriors—battle tactics, equipment, training, etc. However, it was Jonathan and David's godly character, which immediately bound their lives and souls together, that was central to their friendship.

Let's compare our friendships with Jonathan and David's friendship. What is the basis of our friendships? We probably have friends "in the church" and we date within the PR church just like our parents told us because we're brought up with the same doctrines. But is that faith, that common godliness, the center of our friendships and dating relationship? Read I Samuel 18:1-

4, 19:1-6, and all of chapter 20. Whether David had joyful circumstances or hard afflictions, Jonathan was always bringing David to God. I know that there are different levels of relationships—our date, our closest friend(s), other not-as-close friends that we just don't see as often. We probably don't talk much about "the deep stuff" with some of our not-as-close friends and therefore don't speak much about our common faith with them. But do our close friends' or boyfriend's/girlfriend's godly character cause a certain bond between us because we share the same faith, just like Jonathan and David's friendship?

A very good way to gauge what really is the basis of our friendships is what we talk about.

A very good way to gauge what really is the basis of our friendships is what we talk about. I am aware that God never commands us to have a Bible study or to engage in a deep discussion about something like the theology of worship, every time we go out with our friends. In fact, I think that God *doesn't* want our faces to be always frowning in deep thought when we're with our friends. Leave that for when the time calls for it. Let's go to Bible study, meeting our Father over His Word night and day, crying with our friends who are crying, and encouraging them with the Word. Let's have fun, laugh it up, keeping it light, keeping it real (i.e., be genuine, be real). God *wants* us to enjoy being around each other, doing all these things at the right time and in the right way. He is not opposed to us busting a gut over something that is *truly* funny (Eccl. 3:1, 4). But my question to myself and to all my fellow young people and young adults is this: what are you and I talking about and laughing at when we are with our friends?

I would be dishonest with myself and you all if I thought I was nit-picking the little things. I fear for us, young people and young adults, because the "little things" have added up. We *are* consistently talking about the wrong things; our conversations are suddenly taking those quick twists and we delve into some sinful and empty subject. We *are* gossiping about other people's sinfulness and foolishness, whether that be from our own life or from watching our TV or computer screen. We're eagerly throwing it out and around to anyone who will

"get a load of this" juicy bit of news. Worse yet, by all our laughing and talking about these things, we're enjoying exactly what Satan wants us to enjoy—wickedness. And to top it all, plenty of our conversation is littered with profaning the name of God, cursing and swearing, and filthy words. We're *laughing at and enjoying sin*, and we're loving it. The problem isn't that we're laughing or talking; the problem is what we're laughing at and talking *about*. I know I've been guilty of all these things time and again. My friends, we have messed up. You've messed up, *I've* messed up.

It would be easy for us to make excuses for our sins like, "Yeah, wow, my friends and I, we're just talking, and suddenly the conversation takes a turn and we're on some topic that's, well, ...pretty worthless." Or, "Man, the things I watch on the TV screen and the 'innocent' magazines I read they just so deceptively twist my idea of what is truly funny and what is really important." Or, "You know, I just have been hooked on watching this TV show, and because it was just 'my kind of show,' I let all the other bad stuff get into my mind. I know I gotta stop." We kind of blame our sins on ourselves, but mostly on what "just gets thrown at us, you know!" We think we're kind of helpless, and we like it that way. But you and I can't make those types of excuses and expect to change. We need to be honest with ourselves.

The root of this problem isn't with this sinful world or the devil. No doubt they are our "mortal enemies" who attack our sinful natures day in and day out, presenting tons of opportunities for us to feed our flesh. But we can't blame others, not even our enemies. Our *root* problem lies in ourselves—our *selfishness* (look up LD 52, Q&A 127). We need to look inside our hearts and do some serious self-examination. The first thing I find when I look at my own heart is my own *selfishness*. Only the Lord knows how deep my selfishness lies! I've gone to somebody's house or whatever the place thinking that this time is "my" time and I've failed to even think of serving God and my neighbor, even the very neighbor I call "best friend." We've gone with our friends to gain whatever we can in the sight of men, and we certainly don't go with the proper mindset of seeking to serve and enjoying the joy of others. We've gone out on dates or out with our friends with the goal of me, myself, and I. We've forgotten that we must first deny "self" before we can take up our cross and follow Him (Matt. 16:24). The vain and sinful things we laugh at and talk about are just our selfishness that has crept to the surface, from our hearts to our mouths.

The vain and sinful things
we laugh at and talk about
are just our selfishness that
has crept to the surface,
from our hearts to our
mouths.

Now our selfishness is leaving a wide-open way for the world's and the devil's weapons to continuously be unleashed upon us. We're hurting ourselves, but the consequences for our selfishness don't stop there. Those consequences impact our friends so much so that to the extent in which we selfishly seek ourselves we also persecute our friends. Imagine that! By not encouraging holiness in each other while enjoying sin, we're openly persecuting our friends! (James 4:1-3). We're causing them to sin, and we're definitely not seeking their good. Further yet, ...well, it's too painful to think of the kind of witness we're spreading to our neighbors around us.

However, I would also be deceiving myself and you all if I didn't tell you that we have every reason to hope even though we've been selfishly seeking ourselves, persecuting our friends, and destroying the glory and name of God. That reason is Christ's humiliation and the power He gave to us described in Philippians 2:5-7a. This passage seems to be one of the best places in the Bible to help us to begin chiseling at our selfishness. The passage reads, "Let this mind be in you, which was also in Christ Jesus: Who, being in the form of God, thought it not robbery to be equal with God: But made himself of no reputation, and took upon him the form of a servant...." Paul is pointing to Christ to show us young people and young adults the kind of mind, the kind of heart-attitude, we should have. He washed our feet by making "himself of no reputation," meaning that He "emptied Himself."² Our King Jesus, who is fully and holy God, having every blessing and possessing every piece of creation, took it upon Himself to empty Himself of everything that was His in heaven to come to earth to *serve* us. We can't understand the depths of that grace and mercy! The Son of God came down to wash *our* feet, even us young people and young adults! He left the perfect fellowship He had in God Himself, and He forsook His throne as the Son in Heaven to take on our flesh and triumph over our sins. And He did it all by emptying Himself and washing our feet, going the whole way to the cross. And now Paul can say, "Let this mind

be in you," because Jesus Christ merited for us this powerful gift of a self-emptying mind by His own self-emptying life.

So, let's empty ourselves. Let's remember what we are on this earth for Him and His kingdom. Let's throw out our desires for the fake satisfaction of what the devil and the world throw at us and rely only on Him for all our joy, all our life, all our laughs. "Wait," you say, "did you just say rely on Him for all our laughs?" Yes, I did.

...let's live the laugh-full life
of joy and love by not
seeking self or the praise
of men, but by seeking to
serve.

We want to laugh? I mean, really laugh? Then let's live the laugh-full life of joy and love by not seeking self or the praise of men, but by seeking to serve. By always seeking to serve, we will have plenty of joyful things to laugh about. Having the mind of Christ and washing other peoples' feet won't make everything funny, but He does give us a joy that no man can take away (1 Cor. 2:16, John 16:22). And I *know*, without any doubt, that even when you don't feel at all like smiling, singing, or laughing, when you are in the sorest of afflictions, or you are wounded and discouraged in the battle of faith, God will give you joy (see Acts 16:23-25, and 5:41). In that joy, the joy that no man can take away, you can always look up to your God in the heavens and smile knowing that your Creator is sovereign and provides you with everything you need.

So what does emptying ourselves look like for young people and young adults like us? Let's be specific. At night, let's let go of our favorite feeding-the-flesh movies and TV shows to serve whomever. We're going to get our godly creative juices flowing and use whatever talents we have to glorify God and seek to serve. If we think we have nothing to do, let's take a walk or run through creation. Chances are it's been too long since the last time we really enjoyed God's handiwork. After the Sunday morning service, let's quit gorging ourselves with Sunday dinner (while deeply discussing the latest sports news) and sleeping the whole afternoon away to "catch up" on sleep. We can use that Sunday afternoon to taste heavenly fellowship with God and His people, get some physical rest, and diligently labor to enter into

His spiritual rest (Heb. 4, esp. v. 11). We can visit our grandparents or other elderly people with our friends on Sunday. Let's sing with them, talk with them, learn from them. Whether we are over 21 years old or not, let's quit drinking too much alcohol for our belly's sake and start drinking a little for our stomach's sake or to enjoy God's abundant blessings to us. And pray, Oh let's pray! We're going to pray to God that He would be pleased to shine His glory through us. We're going to rely on God's strength for selflessness and for a Christ-like, self-emptied mind. Without gaining His strength through prayer and relying on Him there is no way we can glorify God by serving Him and His church (John 15:5).

When we live with hearts full of love and empty of self, God's glory and beauty shine through us to change ourselves and those around us by our seeking to serve. By His power of seeking to serve, He will work through us to transform our and others selfish hearts into hearts that respond to His love. We won't make excuses for our sins any more, but we will seek the Holy Spirit to show us our sins so that we can repent *quickly*. We will delight

in encouraging spiritual growth in our friends as Jonathan and David did, and we will be prepared for every good work (John 14:12, 7:38). Do you see what hope we have together with Christ's self-emptying power within us? It's not easy to see how ugly our sins are, but "faithful are the wounds of a friend" (Prov. 27:6). My friends, "it is of the Lord's mercies that we are not consumed, because his compassions fail not." This we recall to our minds, and therefore we have hope (Lam. 3:21-22). ❖

Endnotes

¹ The King James Version of the Bible. Reference Edition. Thomas Nelson Publishers. Nashville: 264 Alternative translation in the reference section.

² Prof. Engelsma preached a sermon on Dec. 10 based on Phil. 2. In that sermon, he said that the phrase "made himself of no reputation" in Phil. 2:7a actually means in the Greek "emptied Himself."

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

Memoir of Rev. C. Hanko

Rev. C. Hanko

Chapter 22

Prof. Schilder Comes to America

edited by Karen Van Baren

Editor's Notes—Prof. Schilder of the Netherlands was unjustly cast out from his churches over various doctrinal differences, just as Rev. Hoeksema had been from his. The two men formed a bond because of this common ground. When Dr. Schilder came to this country, as Rev. Hanko tells us, the rest of the denomination also received him as a friend and a brother, even though he differed with our churches on the covenant. This friendship later soured, but too late to save the churches a great deal of grief.

In 1939, Prof. Klaas Schilder of the Netherlands was invited by William B. Eerdmans of the well-known Eerdmans Publishing Company, and another promi-

nent member of the CRC to come to the USA. A rather extensive schedule had been arranged for a preaching and speaking tour through our country.

Now for some time discussions had been carried on in the Netherlands by means of pamphlets and brochures on such subjects of self examination, the two natures of Christ, the covenant and common grace. As to the last two subjects, those of common grace and the covenant, Prof. V. Hepp of the Free University of Amsterdam, who represented the segment of the followers of Dr. Abraham Kuyper, and Prof. Schilder of the Kampen Theological School, who represented the segment that followed the Afscheiding of 1834, were engaged in a discussion.

When some of the professors of Calvin Seminary became aware of Dr. Schilder's coming, they were afraid that sleeping dogs would be aroused, especially in regard to the subject of common grace. They published a notice in the church papers, *The Banner* and *De Wachter*, warning the churches not to allow Prof. Schilder on their pulpits.

The result was that when the professor arrived in America, he discovered that most of his scheduled appointments had been canceled. Somewhat in disgust, somewhat in frustration, he called upon Rev. Hoeksema to have a talk with him, since Hoeksema did not agree either with Dr. A. Kuyper's common grace. The result was that a conference of our ministers who were in the area, was held in Rev. Hoeksema's living room. A very pleasant evening was spent especially in exchanging experiences in the conflict our churches had experienced here in America and the struggle that was going on in the Netherlands. Soon a number of speaking engagements were arranged by our various churches.

Thus it came about, quite unexpectedly, that Prof. Schilder came into contact with all of our ministers and congregations. He was a congenial person, pleasant to have in our homes; we all enjoyed his visit. Also the members of our congregations were impressed by his speeches. True, he had a speech impediment, which, along with the fact that he spoke in Dutch, made it a bit difficult to follow him, but it was refreshing to hear him. He was well received.

I was still in Manhattan at the time of his visit. He did come and speak for us there. In one of our conversations he said, "I despise your covenant view." I said to him, "That's mutual." I figured our churches would never get along with him for any length of time. Yet it appeared that the ministers of classis west were especially impressed by his friendliness and his intelligence. One of them made the remark that it grieved him to see that a greater light than Rev. Hoeksema had risen among us even while the latter was still living.

Rev. Hoeksema was no less attracted to the professor. It should be understood that in a sense Rev. Hoeksema was a loner. True, this was partly due to his character, his determination to be well prepared for any important event, and his peculiar position in defense of the truth. He was virtually a lone warrior, and he was very much aware of it. At times he would complain, "I'm all alone. I have no intimate friend, none whatever." His closest colleague was Rev. Ophoff. He loved him dearly, admired him for his faithful and determined stand for

the truth, and would defend him when anyone tried to say anything against him. Yet Rev. Ophoff was younger than he and did not think himself equal to his colleague. All the other ministers were younger, with the possible exception of Rev. Vos, but he also was his former student.

Prof. Schilder was attracted to our pastor, who in turn was drawn to a man who was well versed in doctrine and had much in common with him, even when it came to the conflict in which Prof. Schilder was engaged in the Netherlands. There were some fundamental differences between them in regard to God's covenant, but these fell into the background while other vital interests were discussed.

These differences on the covenant were hardly referred to in Prof. Schilder's first visit. He regarded the covenant as a framework, a sphere in which God gathers His church in the line of successive generations of believers. He held that all baptized children of believing parents are included in the covenant and *receive the covenant promise*: "I will be thy God." But this is a *conditional promise*. If a baptized child dies before he comes to the years of discretion, he is saved on the basis of the promise. Covenant parents often stated in the obituary of one of their children, "Our comfort rests in God's promise." But, having come to years of discretion, the child must embrace the promise and give expression to this by making public confession of his faith. If, after due admonition, he refuses to do so, he is regarded as a covenant breaker. The promise still stands, but, if he dies without embracing the promise, he is lost forever.

Prof. Schilder spoke to a large audience in the First Church Grand Rapids, which had a seating capacity of over 1200 persons. The auditorium was packed, all available space was taken, people sat on the platform and some listened by means of loud speakers in the basement.

Prof. Schilder felt that there was a possibility that the breach between us and the Christian Reformed Churches could be healed, if only there could be an open discussion. So a conference was arranged in the Pantlind Hotel of Grand Rapids to which all the ministers of our denomination and all the ministers of the CRC that were in the area were invited. Our ministers came out in goodly number, but there were only a few CRC ministers. The meeting was opened and the question arose as to how to proceed. Rev. Hoeksema suggested that he had prepared a paper that he would like to read at this conference, thus setting some guidelines. A committee was appointed

to decide whether or not this paper should be read. When it was finally decided that this should be allowed, Rev. Hoeksema read his paper, addressing the question whether a reunion of the two denominations was desirable and profitable. He went on to explain that if this were to be attempted, common grace should be discussed. A silence followed. Dr. Schilder urged the ministers of the CRC to respond, but the silence hung heavy in the air. A few voices of warning were raised that they would be opening a can of worms, or something similar to that. No matter how much Prof. Schilder pleaded with the ministers of the CRC, they refused to speak for or against what was read. Finally, the suggestion was made that we should adjourn and give the ministers of the CRC opportunity to prepare an answer. This second meeting never happened.

In 1939, World War II broke out and all communication with the Netherlands was broken off, especially after the German invasion of the Lowlands. Nothing was heard of Prof. Schilder, nor about him, except that Rev. Hoeksema received a card on which was written only the words: "Our friend is Acts 16:23." This could mean but one thing. Prof. Schilder, who had strongly opposed the Nazis, even comparing them to the Antichrist, was incarcerated by the Germans. Later we were to learn that he had been released but that he had gone underground to escape further persecution by the Nazis. It was when he was underground that the Synod of Sneek-Utrecht deposed him from office in the Gereformeerde (Reformed) Church of the Netherlands. This was the beginning of the churches that we now know as the Liberated Churches, of which Prof. Schilder was the leader.

At our synod meeting of 1947, the name of Prof. Schilder was brought up again. Some correspondence had been restored after the war and Rev. Hoeksema, eager to meet his friend again, made a motion on the floor of synod that he be invited by our churches to speak for us. An objection was raised that we did not agree with him on his view of the covenant, but Rev. Hoeksema said that he had full confidence in our men that they could certainly hold their ground, if the matter of the covenant would be brought up.

Prof. Schilder came, visited and spoke in all of our churches. He was even given permission to preach in some of our pulpits. He had gone through some bitter experiences during the invasion of the Nazis in the Netherlands, and in many ways enjoyed our way of life. On one occasion he was asked just before sitting down for a meal, "Are you hungry, Professor?" To which he re-

sponded, "No, I have never been hungry again, not after being in the concentration camp." He even talked of coming again, the Lord willing, at which time he would like to learn to drive an automobile.

A conference was held in First Church, which was attended by a number of our ministers. The subject of the covenant was brought up on this occasion, but Rev. Hoeksema was still recovering from the stroke he had experienced in June, which hindered him greatly in speaking. Prof. Schilder did not seem to think that our opposition to his covenant view would deter immigrants from his churches from joining us.

Rev. Hoeksema and Prof. Schilder addressed each other as Herman and Klaas. When the latter was ready to return to his homeland, Rev. Hoeksema and his wife accompanied him to New York.

But all this changed soon afterward. When Prof. Schilder was back in the Netherlands, he wrote an article in *De Reformatie*, in which he expressed his agreement with Prof. Heyns in regard to the covenant, a view which Rev. Hoeksema in previous years had strongly condemned as Arminianism applied to the covenant. You can find Hoeksema's disagreement with Heyns discussed in the book *The Believers and Their Seed*.

Some of our ministers felt very strongly drawn to Prof. Schilder and his conditional promise in the covenant. There were various reasons for that.

There was a growing resentment against Rev. Hoeksema and his leadership. Some, while realizing that his advice on many matters was needed, took offense that he usually took the leadership in discussions, and that his opinions were rarely challenged. Some even secretly considered him a dictator.

Although Rev. Hoeksema had suffered a severe stroke in June of 1947, he had recovered sufficiently that he could carry on his work in the churches. He preached once a Sunday, expounding the truth of the Heidelberg Catechism. He also continued to write in the *Standard Bearer* and performed many of his former duties. God had remarkably restored him.

There was unrest and dissatisfaction among many of our ministers. They were unhappy about the lack of growth in the congregations, eager to have their flocks increase in numbers. They took offense from much that Rev. Hoeksema wrote, particularly when he spoke of being distinctively Reformed. That term no longer appealed to them. They resented his leadership, desiring to assert themselves in many ways.

There was also a spirit of complacency among the members of the churches, an attitude of having attained, with nothing more for which to strive. Among others there was discontent. The preaching was too doctrinal, the sermons too long, the society meetings too dry. They wanted more life, more entertainment, more relaxing companionship.

As a result, many ministers were avoiding doctrine in their preaching. They chose texts and prepared sermons that were more practical, more appealing, yet at the same time lacking in distinctiveness. One could not say that the sermons contained heresy, but neither were they positively Reformed in content. As a result, every effort toward starting our own Christian schools was stifled.

There was also a desire among some to assert one's self, to be independent. The synod had adopted catechism books to be used in our churches, but one minister made his own catechism books. In Michigan we had our weekly church paper called "The Church News" which was sent throughout the churches. The mid-west started their *Concordia*. In Michigan we had our "Reformed Witness Hour" with stations added throughout the country; they began their "Sovereign Grace Hour."

In First Church, those who were supporters of Rev. De Wolf tried to isolate a part of the congregation that they thought was theirs. And there was a time too, when they talked about withdrawing peaceably. They had a proposal to start a new congregation, but we were afraid that if we let them withdraw, we'd have a congregation that wasn't Reformed and nothing could be done about it.

In 1948, two of our ministers paid a visit to the Netherlands and met there with the contact committee of the Liberated. They informed this committee that the immigrants were welcome in our churches, because we had no official stand on the doctrine of the covenant. Thus, their view of the covenant would be accepted in our churches. It is true that we had never officially adopted the covenant view developed by Rev. Hoeksema, but it is also true that this view is based on the fundamental truth of the sovereignty of our God. This means that there is no room in our doctrinal stand for a conditional promise in the covenant.

But as a result of the statement of those two ministers, a professor in the Netherlands wrote to the immigrants in Chatham and Hamilton, Canada, that they should join our churches because they would be allowed to maintain their covenant view.

I labored among them during one summer. These folk were very willing to receive visitors who could speak Dutch, because they felt like strangers in a new country. They also freely talked about their Liberated views, which weighed heavily with them because of their recent struggle in their home land. I was welcome in all their homes, was served many cups of tea, and had no difficulty in stirring up a discussion on our differences in regard to the covenant.

It rather surprised me, and yet I accepted it as being sincerely meant, that when a certain man went out with me to meet new immigrants he would say: "You know, we are now Protestant Reformed. In our covenant view we completely lost sight of predestination. The PR ministers have opened our eyes to that fact, so that now we also embrace God's sovereign predestination." On another occasion another man was speaking about the true church. They had so strongly maintained that the Liberated Churches were the only true church. But now he said that the PR Churches were the true church in America. I asked him what he would do, if he were to return to the Netherlands, in regard to the true church. He informed me that then he would be compelled to organize a PR church in his homeland.

I made one interesting visit to a new arrival, a woman, who said as soon as I introduced myself, "You speak a good Dutch, but you were not born in the Netherlands." She invited me in, but immediately demanded an answer to three questions. "Did the CRC refuse their pulpits to Dr. Schilder?" "Did the PRCs open their pulpits to him?" "Do the PRCs disagree with him on the covenant?" When I answered each question in the affirmative, she said, "You are an honest man. I'll serve you a cup of tea." It appears as if she had spoken to some people who had not been honest with her.

In the meantime, the mission committee was confronted with the fact that many of these immigrants from the Liberated Churches were seeking admission into our churches. It was also evident that they stood firmly on their idea of the covenant and the conditional promise to all baptized children. Therefore the mission committee presented a request to the Synod of 1950 to make a declaration that would define in no uncertain terms our convictions in regard to common grace, the general and well-meant offer of salvation and God's covenant. As was later clearly expressed in the document, this was intended to assist in mission labors.

This Declaration of Principles was drawn up and accepted, with but one dissenting vote, by the Synod of

1950 to be presented to the churches for approbation. Our missionary declared that he could work with it, although he later opposed it. This one person who voted against it felt very strongly about it, even to the extent that immediately after the session he said to some of his colleagues, “Now you have put a noose around your necks, and they are going to hang you.”

Some of our other ministers opposed it as a fourth form in addition to our other three creeds, complaining that they were being restricted in their preaching. They began to preach the error of conditions unto salvation.

At the 1952 Synod, this Declaration of Principles was ratified by the churches by a very narrow margin. At this time, we had twenty five churches and twenty eight ministers.

I was present when Rev. Herman Veldman was chosen to be minister of the Hamilton congregation from a duo that also included Rev. John Heys. Judging by the conversations I overheard, I thought Rev. Heys would receive the call. Some seemed very vehement about not calling Rev. Veldman. Yet when the votes were counted, Rev. Veldman was chosen. He labored there a year, and by that time it became evident that they wanted to break away from us. Many troubles arose there.

It so happened that Rev. John Blankespoor and I had been appointed as church visitors that year. As we were traveling to Hamilton, John asked: “What will you report to classis if we find that Rev. Veldman is responsible for the trouble there?” I assured him that we would report exactly according to our findings. The consistory was fully prepared for our coming. They had evidently decided to be very frank and open to the church visitors. I led the meeting. Soon an elder, the man who said they had become PR, read a paper in which he strongly defended the Liberated view of the covenant over against our view. When he was finished, I asked him, “When were you lying, when you went out with me and told the people you had become PR, or now?” He boldly answered: “Then, of course.” Another elder also had a paper he wanted to read. This was another long document in defense of the Liberated doctrine of the covenant. When he finished, I reminded him of what he had said about the true church. He heartily agreed, but admitted that he never meant what he said.

Finally, after it had grown late, I asked them, “Is Rev. Veldman to blame for the disagreement here?” To that they answered, “Actually, not at all. He told us in advance that he would preach most emphatically the truth of the covenant as he believed it. He gave us double bar-

rel, but we could have expected that.” Obviously, they had deceived us because they wanted to use us until they were able to organize a congregation that maintained the Liberated view. Not Rev. Veldman, but the Declaration had soured them.

There was also a strong reaction against this Declaration in the Liberated Churches in the Netherlands. Much to Rev. Hoeksema’s dismay, Prof. Schilder immediately and publicly declared that his friendship with our pastor had come to an end.

Various ministers from our churches began to defend a conditional theology, stating that Scripture taught conditions unto salvation. An article appeared in the *Concordia*, which defended a so-called teaching of conditions in Scripture. Ultimately an article appeared that defended faith as a condition unto salvation. The writer had not only completely ignored the teachings of Scripture that faith is a gift of God’s grace, but also ignored our Confessions, particularly Canons of Dordt III, IV, 14, which states:

“Faith is therefore to be considered as the gift of God, not on account of being offered by God to man, to be accepted or rejected at his pleasure; but because it is in reality conferred, breathed, and infused into him; or even because God bestows the power or ability to believe, and then expects that man should by the exercise of his free will, consent to the terms of salvation, and actually believe in Christ; but because he who works in man both to will and to do, and indeed all things in all, produces both the will to believe, and the act of believing also.”

A serious conflict had arisen within our churches.

Editor’s Notes—The year 1953 was a trying one for the PRC and its members. The cost of schism is high. Rev. Hanko paid with his own health. The stress of dealing with a divided consistory and congregation took its toll. His son remembers that after consistory meetings, his father sat up late at night, munching on soda crackers to calm his churning stomach. Was the cost too high? Rev. Hanko answers that question with a resounding “NO.” After the split, the churches could confess with Job, “But he knoweth the way that I take: when he hath tried me, I shall come forth as gold.” ❖

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

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:

- Benjamin James, son of Mr. & Mrs. Jason Elzinga—
Byron Center, MI
Karissa Margaret, daughter of Mr. & Mrs. Michael
Klaassens—Edmonton, Alberta, CAN
Zachary James, son of Mr. & Mrs. David Korhorn—Faith,
MI
Katelyn Joy, daughter of Mr. & Mrs. Scott VanUffelen—
Faith, MI
Alex Jay, son of Mr. & Mrs. Jason VanOostenbrugge—
Faith, MI
Aiden Levi, son of Mr. & Mrs. Eric VanDyke—Faith, MI
Jared Michael, son of Mr. & Mrs. Kevin Gritters—
Hudsonville, MI
Caleb Joseph, son of Mr. & Mrs. Sam Carson—Loveland,
CO
Brady Scott, son of Mr. & Mrs. Scott VanderGriend—
Peace, IL
Caleb Michael, son of Mr. & Mrs. Michael Vermeer—
Peace, IL
Claire Larae, daughter of Mr. & Mrs. Brian Bruinsma—
Peace, IL
Cadance Bethany, daughter of Mr. & Mrs. Justin
Verberg—South Holland, IL
Nicole Marie, daughter of Mr. & Mrs. Mark Lenting—
South Holland, IL

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:

- Pamela Klaassens—Edmonton, Alberta, CAN
Joshua Mulder—Edmonton, Alberta, CAN
Matthew Jabaay—Redlands, CA
Miranda Buitter—Southwest, MI

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. George Barendregt and Miss Rebecca Klaassens—
Edmonton, Alberta, CAN

The Protestant Reformed Scholarship Committee is offering scholarship awards to prospective Protestant Reformed teachers and ministers. If you are interested in receiving a packet, please contact Melinda Bleyenbergh at 616-453-8898 or e-mail darylmel@altelco.net by April 2, 2007.

Martin Luther (7):

The truth of justification by faith alone became fixed in the heart of Martin Luther, and as he studied the books of Psalms, Romans, and Galatians, he was led to see more and more what this truth meant. This was no small doctrine. The whole understanding of Scripture is unlocked with this key. The Holy Spirit led Luther to use it and open the door.

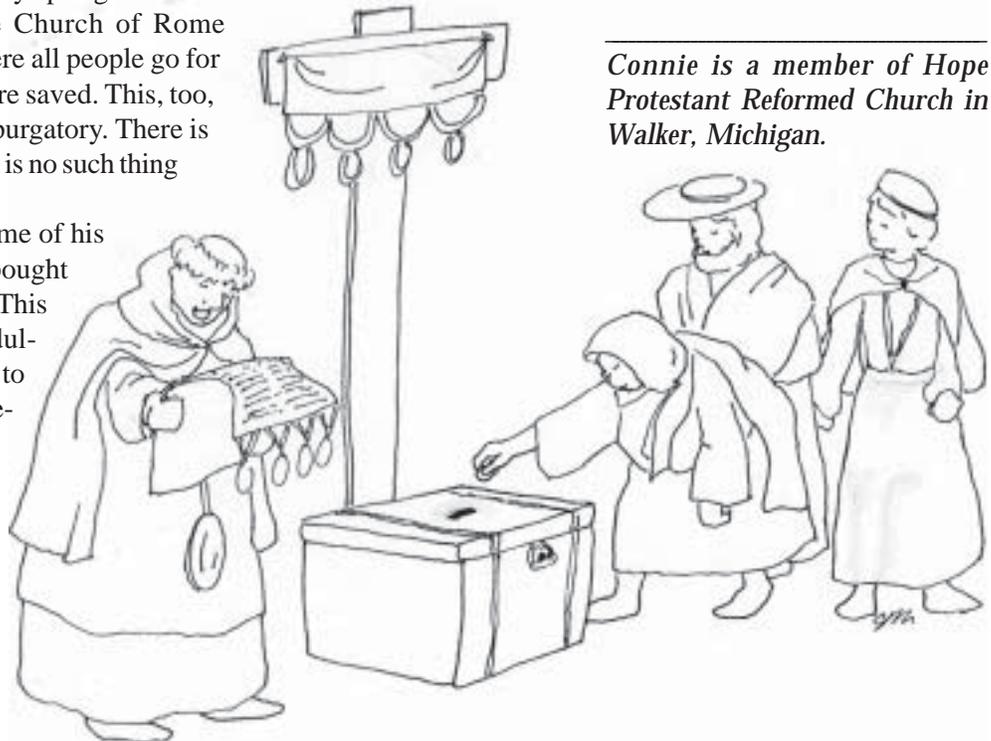
Yet there was a problem. The Church of Rome, the only Christian church at that time, held no such key. In fact, she firmly shut that door and threw the key away. The Catholic Church offered indulgences to the people instead. Indulgences were a kind of forgiveness, or justification, one could earn by being sorry enough for sin and confessing enough, visiting enough relics, and giving enough money to the Church. What was enough? As the popes and bishops needed more money to build their luxurious palaces and churches, or to buy their way into positions of authority, the price of indulgences went up. Being sorry for sin wasn't even necessary any more, just as long as the people gave a lot of money!

One of the most bold and outspoken preachers—or sellers—of indulgences was named Tetzel. He came very near the borders of Wittenberg, telling the people they would be forgiven as soon as they contributed their money. This was his slogan: “As soon as the coin in the coffer rings, the soul from purgatory springs.”

Purgatory is a place, so the Church of Rome teaches, that is like hell, but is where all people go for a time after they die, even if they are saved. This, too, is false. There is no such thing as purgatory. There is no such thing as indulgences. There is no such thing as buying forgiveness.

Luther heard about Tetzel. Some of his own flock from Wittenberg had bought some of the forgivenesses he sold. This was too close to home. That indulgences were a lie became clearer to Luther, and that he must do something about it became clearer, too.

He would post a set of theses, or in this case problems that he had with indulgences, on the door of the Castle Church in Wittenberg. This was common practice. Often professors from the university would put an item



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by Connie Meyer

for discussion on the door there. It was a convenient place for fellow scholars to notice it. Yes, Luther would protest the sale of indulgences on the door, and maybe something would be done about this shameful practice.

Find the underlined words from Galatians 3:11 in the puzzle below:

“But that no man is justified by the law in the sight of God, it is evident: for, The just shall live by faith.”

R	V	L	I	T	E	T	E	L
O	N	L	F	B	H	S	V	J
F	A	A	A	G	T	U	I	S
W	Y	H	I	L	F	J	D	F
J	U	S	T	I	F	I	E	D
V	O	A	H	V	M	A	N	Y
T	A	H	T	E	H	M	T	B

Connie is a member of Hope Protestant Reformed Church in Walker, Michigan.

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