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*“Stand fast therefore in the liberty
wherewith Christ hath made us free,
and be not entangled again with the
yoke of bondage.”*

Galatians 5:1

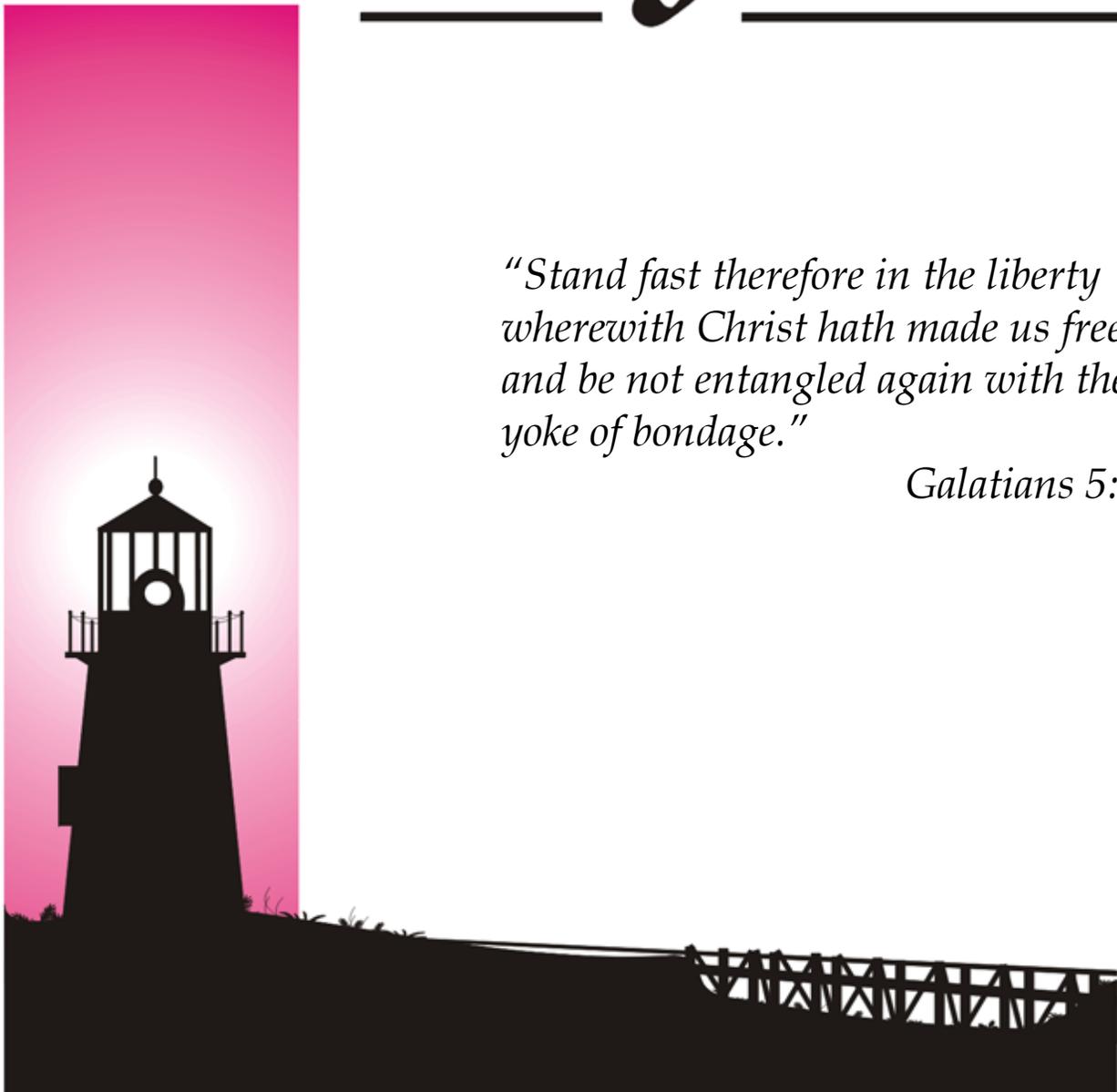


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Calvin Versus Sadolet

An Evaluation and Comparison of Cardinal Sadolet's Letter to Geneva and Calvin's Letter to Cardinal Sadolet

by Martyn McGeown

In March 1539, nearly a year after the expulsion of John Calvin and William Farel from Geneva, Roman Catholic Cardinal James Sadolet addressed a letter to that city to attempt, in the Reformers' absence, to win back Geneva to the Roman Church. The Council of Geneva, instead of responding to the Cardinal, forwarded the letter to Bern, where it was suggested that Calvin, then residing in Strasburg, should pen a response.¹

Sadolet's Letter

Sadolet's letter oozes flattery as he appeals to the Genevans to return to Mother Church, whom he can hear "weeping and lamenting at being deprived of so many and so dear children" (p. 31). He addresses the people of Geneva as his "very dear brethren in Christ," earnestly pleading with them to consider the immense value of their souls, which are safest, Sadolet argues, in Rome's bosom (p. 29). The Cardinal's fundamental argument is an appeal to antiquity. What is safer, asks Sadolet, to follow the unanimous opinions of the Church, or to heed:

innovations introduced within these twenty-five years, by crafty, or, as they think themselves, acute men; but men certainly who are not themselves the Catholic Church? (pp. 40-41)

Although Sadolet never names Calvin or the other reformers the letter is replete with insinuations and thinly veiled attacks on their persons and their motives. This is certainly a cowardly approach.

An important section of Sadolet's letter consists of two speeches which he presents as being delivered before the judgment seat of God. The first speech, in which Sadolet puts all kinds of perverse sayings in the mouths of his adversaries, is supposed to represent the reformers (pp. 4-45). The Cardinal attributes to them the base motives of "ambition, avarice, love of popular applause, inward fraud and malice" for their reformatory work (p. 45). The second speech, he imagines, is from a Roman Catholic who pleads before God that he simply trusted in the church. The clear implication is that, even if the church has erred (which Sadolet will not grant), God will show mercy to the sincere child of Rome, but will condemn the reformers for their presumption.

Calvin's Letter

Calvin's response to Sadolet is a "simple and dispassionate defense" of his innocence against the Cardinal's accusations (p. 51). He warns Sadolet that some of the things he will write "will sting" but that his intention is to defend the truth, not to attack Sadolet's person (p. 51). Although he prefers not to as-

¹ All quotations are taken from John. C. Olin (ed.), *A Reformation Debate: John Calvin and Jacopo Sadoletto* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2000).

cribe evil motives to the Cardinal, he is “compelled . . . to withstand [him] openly for only then do pastors edify the Church” (p. 53). As a faithful shepherd, although unjustly separated from his flock, he will not remain silent when he sees “snares laid” and “grievous peril impending” for the sheep entrusted to him (p. 51). He indignantly rejects the slander that he and his fellow reformers were motivated by greed, claiming that had he wished to consult his own interest he would have remained in the Roman Church (p. 57). Calvin agrees with Sadolet that the soul is precious, but he scolds the Cardinal for ignoring the glory of God. Sadolet’s zeal for eternal life, complains Calvin, “keeps a man entirely devoted to himself, and does not, even by one expression, arouse him to sanctify the name of God” (p. 58). For Calvin, the glory of God is vastly more important than the salvation of the whole world.

Calvin refuses to acknowledge the Cardinal’s definition of church. The church is not merely that body *which claims to be* guided by the Holy Spirit, but that body *which in reality is* guided by the Holy Spirit and the Word of God. Sadolet, writes Calvin, has affronted the Holy Spirit by separating him from the Word (p. 61). Against the Cardinal’s accusation that Calvin and his Reformed colleagues have sought to destroy the church which has the glory of antiquity, Calvin replies that first of all “[his] agreement with antiquity is far closer” than Rome’s, and that the aim of the Reformation is nothing less than an attempt to “renew the ancient form of the Church” which barely survives in ruins under the Roman hierarchy (p. 62).

Calvin defends the Reformed doctrine of justification by faith alone against the calumnies of Sadolet, who insinuates that the motive for such a doctrine is license (p. 44). Calvin insists that works are not worth “one single straw” in justification but claims “full authority for them in the lives of the righteous” (pp. 67-68). Where the doctrine of gracious justification is lost, writes Calvin, “the glory of Christ is extinguished, religion abolished, the Church destroyed, and the hope of salvation utterly overthrown” (p. 66). Besides, writes Calvin, “let judgment be given after comparing our conduct with yours” (p. 80). Such accusations against the doctrine of justification by faith alone, and against Calvin in particular, are absurd given Calvin’s insistence on a well-disciplined church. Indeed, it is because of such an emphasis on discipline (i.e., an insistence that those who refused to lead godly lives be denied church membership) that he had been expelled from Geneva in the first place. Rome, in comparison, was filled with iniquity of the grossest kind.

Calvin continues to deflect the charges that the reformers are sinning against antiquity. Masterfully, he demonstrates that Rome has so far degenerated from the pattern of the New Testament, that Sadolet’s appeals are in vain. “In all these points, insists Calvin, the ancient Church is on our side” (p. 74). In short, writes Calvin, “I will not permit, you, Sadoletto, by inscribing the name of Church on such abominations, both to defame her against all law and justice, and prejudice the ignorant against us” (p. 73).

Granted, for the sake of argument, that the accusations of the reformers concerning Rome’s errors are true, Sadolet insists that the unity of the church must so prevail in our minds that we do nothing to disturb her peace. Calvin rejects the accusation that he has sought to “dismember the spouse of Christ,” something Sadolet insists can scarcely be forgiven (p. 46). The reformers’ one desire is to “present her [i.e., the church] as a chaste virgin,” to “recall her to conjugal fidelity,” to “wage war against all the adulterers whom [they detect] laying snares for her chastity” (pp. 92-93). Calvin describes the leaders of the Roman church as “ravening wolves” who having “seized upon the pastor’s office” have exerted themselves to “scatter and trample upon the kingdom of Christ, filling it with ruin and devastation” (p. 75).

Calvin denies that the Reformers are “enemies of Christian unity and peace” as the cardinal alleges (p. 30). In his imagined defence before God, he appeals that he burned in zeal for the unity of the church provided the truth “were made the bond of concord” (p. 86). He complains of the unreasonableness of his opponents, who were not prepared to discuss their doctrinal differences on the basis of Scripture, but having vainly attempted to appeal to tradition, resorted to persecution. “Did they not instantly, and like madmen, fly to fires, swords and gibbets?” (p. 86) he writes. “Our Reformers,” writes Calvin,

offered to render an account of their doctrine. If overcome in argument, they decline not to submit. To whom then is it owing that the Church enjoys not perfect peace, and the light of truth? Go now, and charge us as seditious, in not permitting the Church to be quiet! (p. 94).

In a second imagined appeal to God, which some believe to be autobiographical in nature, Calvin laments that the state of the church compelled him to take action. The “true method of worshipping was altogether unknown to me,” he complains (p. 87). Only very reluctantly did he leave the faith of his youth: “Offended by the novelty, I lent an unwilling ear,” he confesses, and “only with the greatest difficulty I was induced to confess that I had all my life long been in ignorance and error” (p. 88). These words reveal his struggles. After he had availed himself of every means of salvation that Rome could offer he was still “far-off from true peace of conscience” and seized with “extreme terror” when he contemplated the holiness of God and his own sins (p. 88). Calvin’s defence is based on Scripture. The defence of Sadolet is (the errors in the church’s) tradition. Calvin bids Sadolet compare his defence with that of the reformers and hopes that the Cardinal will see that

the safety of that man hangs by a thread whose defense turns wholly on this—that he has constantly adhered to the religion handed down to him from his forefathers. At this rate, Jews and Turks and Saracens would escape the judgment of God (p. 90).

Final Evaluation

Having compared these two letters it is obvious that Calvin defeats all the arguments of the Cardinal, leaving him with no defence. It is remarkable that Calvin, a young pastor and relatively new to the faith, far exceeds Sadolet in knowledge of Scripture, church history and patristic literature, as well as skill in argumentation. It is little wonder that the Cardinal did not reply. It is also praiseworthy that Calvin, after being treated so poorly by the city of Geneva, was willing to write this response on their behalf.

God used this epistolary battle to restore Calvin to Geneva and further the work of Reformation in that city and, indeed, the broader work of Reformation in Europe. In his wise providence, the Almighty makes not only the wrath of man but also the craftiness of cardinals to praise him. ❖

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Story Time

The Man in the Cage

by Trisha Haak

Three days ago he had given himself over to insanity. Not the insanity of the schizophrenic or the deranged, but the mindless silence of a man past speaking. How long he had been in this cage he could not say. It was since the beginning of his remembering. And where remembering began he did not know. He could not see past that point.

At the beginning of his remembering the Enemy had bound his hands and taken him deep within the cave. He

could not forget the Enemy, fierce creatures of ghoulish design, of the earth yet unnatural. They kept their faces hidden from the sun, their bodies cloaked in long coarse robes. Only their skeletal hands could be seen. They tied his hands with rope and lead him deep into the earth through the cave of the mountain.

He looked up one last time at the sun and blinked against its glare before they lead him down to the abyss. He did not know how many days they traveled. It seemed

to him that the days rolled into weeks as they journeyed through caverns, large tunnels and small, past great hidden lakes and through corridors that lead to nowhere till finally they reached the center of the earth.

The Enemy brought him to a cavern as vast as the sanctuary of a cathedral but broader. The height of the ceiling seemed to go on forever so that even though he strained his neck he could not see the end of it. Yet the one force that engulfed him upon entering the cavern was the coldness that took a hold of him with a fierce grasp. It was the coldness of death and the grave.

There before him lay the hole of the abyss that almost covered the entire diameter of the cave itself. He felt the drafts of cold despair exhaling from its mouth. They lead him around the edge to the other side. There sat two cages, one on solid ground, the other hanging precariously in the air over the abyss. They threw him into the cage on solid ground and locked the door. Mind yourself they said. You may cry out here but no one will hear you. Then he watched as they marched away till the light of their torches faded to a dim nothing. He was all alone, the coldness and the silence his only companions.

And so the days went by but were they really days to him? In darkness what is the measure of a moment when the day does not chase the night? To him night and day blended into a melancholy one, the endless pitch dark ever before him.

Till finally that single moment came where he could not remember any light or the heat of the sun against his skin. He sat up and panicked. He rattled the bars of his cage and cried out into the silence but only the echoes of the cavern took notice. He could not forget! He had to remember, remember, remember the light! The ray of the sun flashed across his mind and was gone. The despair swallowed him till finally he sat in silence. For this man it was now eternal night.

Then one day the enemy returned. He did not get up to greet them but only watched their movements with the glass eyes of one who cannot see. Yet in the midst of the enemy he saw a pile of rags that reminded him of his own. He did not understand why they brought him rags. He had plenty of his own. Then he realized that the rags were not just rags but a man. His face was badly bruised, beaten and swollen with pain. The man appeared to be sleeping. Or were his eye so swollen shut that he could not open them?

The Enemy pulled on a rope that was tied to the cage hanging over the abyss. They pulled the cage to the edge of the cliff and when it was close enough they threw the man in the cage. They let go of the rope till it rested over

the abyss again. Then the Enemy left, their torches fading away and then were gone.

When they left he sat up and looked out into the darkness. He could not tell if the man was alive or, worse yet, slowly dying. And so he sat in silence and watched the man in the other cage. He did not know if he was staring at death or watching death happen.

As he sat watching the man sanity returned to him by taking a slow labored path. Maybe it was because he looked at human flesh that brought to mind his own humanity. The rags so like his own, the withered hands and feet, the torn flesh. Underneath the bruises and cuts of the man's face he could see the frailty and pain of starvation. Was he looking at his own face? This man was so like him.

"Water," said the man. He stared back at him. He could not remember how to speak.

"Water," the man said again.

"There is no water here," he replied.

"What is your name?" the man asked.

"I do not know."

"You have no name?"

"I can not remember my name," he said. "It is before my remembering."

"How long have you been here?"

"As long as always."

Then they sat in silence each man deep in his own thoughts. Till finally the other man said, "I remember my name. My name is Brother. I do not remember the last couple of days but I can remember before that. But, oh, how I wish I could forget! The Enemy came without warning. Our entire village was not prepared. They came in the night while we slept and they took everything. My family, my possessions, my land. They killed all the people of my village and burned everything to the ground. I hid in the forest and watched it all, willing myself to look away and yet I could not. I said to myself if only I could die right now, at this very moment. I can not carry this memory. Then I watched as their leader, the one they call Poison, sat on his horse and laughed at the destruction he had created. I died that moment and I shall die until the day my breath stops. There is nothing left. No one to return to."

As Brother told his story he felt a burning inside his head. Brother's words were so familiar to him. Was not this his story? He felt that he too had lost and suffered. He too had watched his everything destroyed. Brother did not need to describe the laughter of Poison. He could still hear the echo inside his head. The evilness of it all he recalled in a moment. Brother's story was his story.

As they talked they noticed that the room became colder than it already was. They watched as their fingers turned blue and their breath turned to ice before it even left their mouths. The coldness numbed their flesh and settled into the center of their hearts like a tape worm.

Out of the abyss rose the one that they call Poison. And the sight of him broke their hearts into a thousands pieces so that they had no courage within them. In his face was the torment of a thousand people and around his neck were the shards of the coffins of the dead. He had no fingers but the talons of hawk that were stained with the blood of the children and women who had fled before him. He smelled of death and all things unholy. He was known by others names, Despair and Desolation, but Poison was his most common.

In his talons he clasped a giant key upon which were carvings of that which is forbidden, skulls and snakes and all creatures that hide from the light. And words were written on the key that no one could read for it was a language not known to man.

He walked over to the cage on solid ground and tied the key to the rope. If you reach this, he said, then you are free to go. And as soon as he had spoken these words he vanished leaving behind the stench and the coldness.

And so a frantic sanity returned to the man in the cage. Here was his chance at last! He stretched out his hands to reach the key, almost, stretched farther, just a little more, there! The key was within his hand. A great joy swept over him. This was what he wanted more than anything else. He put the key in the lock—

“Wait,” Brother cried out. “Please, don’t. Look at the rope. Look up.”

He looked up to where Brother pointed and saw. His rope was tied to Brother’s cage. It was a trap. If he opened the door of his cage Brother’s cage would fall into the abyss and he would be lost forever.

“Please, please don’t. Can’t you see we are connected by the rope? If you open the door I will die.”

He felt a flash of anger surge through his entire body. Wasn’t it his right to be free? Wasn’t he given the key for a reason? What could be done for Brother? Nothing. Brother would die no matter what, he could not save him. Brother belonged to the dead but he! He could return to the living. He hated Brother for his weakness. Could not Brother die like a man?

And then they looked each other in the eyes and both men held the other’s gaze. Now was the moment for great things, the moment of light and of sun and of things noble. He would stay for Brother, he would. But then the key beckoned and he felt his resolve weaken.

He had to be free. So he looked away and turned his back on Brother.

And then he turned the key.

Christian liberty is a doctrine that at times is misused and even abused. It has become our “get-out-of-jail” card or hall pass that gives us the right to do those things which are not clearly defined by the Bible as good or evil. It has become a blanket under which we stuff all the secrets things that we do. When we do these things we say that this is my right, it is my Christian liberty to do this. I am strong in faith. I can eat the meats that have been sacrificed to idols.

When we use Christian liberty to promote the I above all else and assert individualism then Christian liberty is no longer Christian liberty...

But here’s the rub. When we use Christian liberty to promote the I above all else and assert individualism then Christian liberty is no longer Christian liberty but something else. Something that it shouldn’t be in the life of a Christian. After all, what doctrine that God has given us would ever promote the individual man at the cost of the organic whole? Then the approach to Christian liberty cannot be what can I get away with, what is my right, my freedom. Rather it’s a deep understanding of the most crucial aspect of this doctrine: what is my relationship to my brother in the church?

Christian liberty was never meant to be approached at from your angle. The question isn’t if you are happy, freely living the life of your choosing, able to do that which brings you the most pleasure. If this is your approach that you have missed the mark by more than ten thousand miles.

Look at the man in the cage. Here he sat in this world of sin yet he sat on solid ground. You could say he was the stronger man for it. Brother sat in a cage which dangled precariously over the abyss, over his death. Both men in the same place yet one had something more solid beneath him. Then temptation came to offer the man in the cage the key to his freedom. How he wanted to be free! Wasn’t it the most natural thing? Why would anyone deny him this? He wanted to escape the cage, to go be free as he

felt it his right to be. But then he saw (did Brother not cry out to him in anguish?) that his freedom meant the death of Brother. At that moment the liberty that he thought was his was no longer his liberty.

See, Brother died and the man in the cage stepped into a different cage. It was a cage that was made of guilt and the responsibility for the death of Brother. The only liberty he ever had was to protect Brother and that a liberty he did not choose.

We have to approach Christian liberty from this angle: what am I doing to promote the spiritual welfare of my fellow Christians? The life that we live as the body of believers is as intrinsic as our very own bodies. One thing affects the other. When you have a cold doesn't the rest of your body suffer as well, not just your immune system? That is how fragile our relationships with one another are. We think the things that we do affect no one but it isn't that simple. We live as a whole, we breathe as a whole, we die as a whole. When one man sins our whole body aches. When one man doesn't do what he can to promote the body the collective church sneezes

as the organic whole.

Once we prisoners chained so far down to the ground that we could not even free our faces to look up. We could only see the mud and the dirt of our own pain and suffering. Caged as we were, we could not see the suffering of those around. But now, because of the death and resurrection of Christ, we are able to look up and see those around us. What a liberty that is! Not the liberty of living for your own pleasure but the liberty of sacrificing for each other. Think of it! If Christ thought it no small thing to give his life for his people than what is it to us if we give up the things of this world for the spiritual benefit of each other? What is it to you to give up your "liberties" if it means that the burden of your brother is lifted and together you can encourage each other along the way?

Once you were in a cage. Now you are at liberty. So look up. ❖

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

Church Family

Covenant Education: Fellowship within Our Christian Schools

by Bonnie Boer

After reading through the mission statements and goals displayed on the websites for various Protestant Reformed Christian schools, I found that each statement directly related the development of these schools to the doctrine of the covenant as confessed by the Protestant Reformed Church. Since the children of believers are members of the covenant of God, parents have the duty to see that their children are "piously and religiously educated," as stated in the form for the administration of baptism. Protestant Reformed Schools were established to ensure that this demand of the covenant was upheld—our parent run schools provide an extension of the scripture-based instruction found within the church and home. Because children are included in the covenant, God demands that parents rear them in his fear, for "The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom" (Prov. 9:10a).

An article by Professor David Engelsma entitled "A Covenant School," states that the main purpose of Christian education is that children grow up to serve God and praise him. Even though our Protestant Reformed Schools are not meant to be the complete source of moral teaching for covenant children, godly instruction cannot help but include the doctrines contained in the scriptures and our Reformed confessions. Our christian schools must teach children how to live in their relationships with God; this in turn should lead children to see how they must live in relation to one another.

Although the doctrine of the covenant is clearly explained and connected to christian education in respect to the baptismal duty of parents to properly instruct their children in the truth, I feel that the idea of the covenant needs to be applied to a different aspect of education. While all of the mission statements of our Protestant

Reformed Schools carefully explain how the schools are an extension of the home, and thus, are integral in the covenant education of our children, not many speak of the covenant in respect to the bonds of friendship and fellowship that are so vital in the Christian's life. A Protestant Reformed education allows students to develop friendships within the sphere of the covenant, and makes it possible for older generations to share their knowledge of God's word with a new generation that is in desperate need of the truth.

One of the greatest benefits of christian, covenantal education is the relationship created between different students. Attending a good, christian school allows solid friendships to be formed. Some of our churches do not have the numbers and resources to develop a specifically Protestant Reformed school for their covenant children, but for others, children have the blessing to receive a Protestant Reformed education from kindergarten to 12th grade. During these years, important relationships are made. At a time when children are developing in their faith, our christian schools allow them the freedom to grow spiritually within the safety of a solidly Reformed setting. When the child matures, graduates, and leaves the confines of their christian schools, Lord willing, they will have been trained in the way that they should go, and will not depart from that instruction (Prov. 22: 6). They will have a friend base that reaches beyond their home church, including members from other Protestant Reformed churches, and by God's grace, these friendships will outlast the post-school years and provide them with the benefits of the communion of the saints.

Covenant education teaches children that their relationship with others is just as important as their relationship with God. Children are taught to love, fear, and obey God, and in this obedience, to love their neighbors as they love themselves. This is taught as early as kindergarten when they learn the "golden rule." They must treat others as they would like to be treated (Matt. 7:12). This implies that the sporty student must treat his 'less coordinated' neighbor with respect; the straight 'A' student must not look down upon the average student; the Hollister-clad stud must not mock the skinny boy in a faded t-shirt.

It would be wonderful if we could say that none of the above instances happen in the Protestant Reformed schools. It would be nice if we could say that every student that has grown up with a christian education will graduate with close-knit, god-fearing friends. Yet, the truth of the matter is, we are not free from the same sins as the world. We cannot turn a blind eye and assume that we are above this. A christian school is not sinless, but it

can and must discipline for such sins. The covenant that we have with God is unchanging. It remains despite all of our shortcomings; still, a covenant without conditions doesn't give us the option to sit back and allow sins to fester. If we confess to be part of the Covenant of God, we must live in a way that shows this.

The doctrine of the covenant is not complete without the doctrine of the antithesis. Covenant education allows students to walk the antithetical life. In the Covenant, God called us apart from the world. "Love not the world, neither the things that are in the world. If any man love the world, the love of the Father is not in him" (I John 2:15). In the midst of a sinful world, we must live to praise God. As God's friend-servants, we must live a life that shows our love and devotion to God despite the world around us. The causes of Christ's kingdom need to come before our desires.

Our friendships must be formed within the church, home, and school realm. The antithesis requires separation from the wickedness of the world, and that is especially important in our relationships. There are so many instances in scripture where friendships with the world create disaster for the people of God—look at Lot and his wife and the Kings of Israel. Yet, it is the beautiful friendships between believers that are a blessing I Samuel 18 speaks of the covenant made between David and Jonathan and the joys that their friendship gave them in the midst of their trials; look at Mary, Martha, and Lazarus, as they labored through their imperfections and together learned the importance of God's word. Friendships based on common beliefs and doctrines are so special for the children of God. Covenant education allows for this.

Beyond the friendships that are developed between students, the fellowship between teachers and students is also vital in covenant education. Teachers must establish a relationship with their students that permits their wisdom to be freely shared between the generations. Psalm 78 emphasizes the importance of this when it speaks of the older generation sharing the works of the Lord with the present generation and the generations to come. It's crucial that teachers are examples of godliness for their students in their relationships with other members of the staff. The covenant requires teachers to view each of their students as a child of God, and therefore, the covenant teacher has the high calling to watch for the souls of his students and give account of their performance in that duty (Heb. 13:17). They must not only share the liberal arts, but incorporate Christ into each of those subjects.

It is from covenant homes, the church, and especially the schools, that children learn how to respect those in

authority over them. Every day children must open their minds to the instruction given them by their teachers. Since both teachers and students are laboring for the common goal of glorifying Christ, from early on, a special form of fellowship is created. This respect by children for the generations that have come before will prove beneficial in their lives as members of their individual church congregations. Covenant fellowship as taught in the schools will be reflected within the communion of the churches these students and teachers belong to.

The doctrine of the covenant is the basis for our Protestant Reformed christian schools as it gives the requirement for parents to train their children in the Truth; but even more so, the covenantal bonds of friendship and fellowship between students and teachers clearly demonstrate how vital covenant education is for the christian. In the end, as children continue in the things they have learned in the Holy Scriptures, they will become wise unto salvation through their faith in Jesus Christ (II Tim. 3: 14, 15). ❖

Bonnie is a member of Protestant Reformed Church in South Holland, Illinois. This article was written as a Protestant Reformed Scholarship essay.

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Lord to Lo Debar, God of Galilee

*Lord to Lo Debar, God of Galilee
 I cannot walk, but You sent for me.
 I am Mephibosheth – "Son of Shame."
 I cannot walk, for I am lame.*

*I am from Lo Debar,
 Sent for from afar
 To eat at the table of Israel's King.
 I am a dead dog ... dead, yet always suffering.*

*To walk I am unable
 And crumbs from the Master's table
 I could not even obtain.
 Yet each new day I am fed again.*

*To walk I am unable
 Of no good am I capable;
 But, a recipient of grace,
 I do not scrounge for sustenance.*

*Lord to Lo Debar, God of Galilee
 Help me to walk, for You've sent for me.
 I would sink and would forever falter;
 Yet by Your power I walk on water!*

*Before You came I only fell. But, Lord to Lo Debar,
 King of Israel – with You – I become, again,
 – Maribaal!*

—Rebecca Kunst

(Written after Rev. Haak preached on Mephibosheth and Peter.)

¹ Fighter of idols (Mephibosheth's name before a fall rendered him lame)

Watching Daily At My Gates

The Song of Zion

A Psalter-Psalm Devotional of Praise to Our Sovereign, Covenant God
(Reprinted from October and November, 2000)

by Skip Hunter

October 4 Read Proverbs 4:20-27

Young people and children, today's section also deals with wisdom and evil. But I want to focus on the first six words of verse 20. Do you heed the words of your fathers, both physical and spiritual? Do your dad's words echo in your minds as you leave the house? Do you ponder the minister's words after catechism? Are the teachers' exhortations considered for more than just a grade? You must do this because these figures of authority have been placed over you by God himself. They are not just arbitrary figures in your lives. They are there for a purpose, and that purpose is to teach you the wonderful Word and works of Jehovah. Pay attention to them, listen to them, and then most importantly do what they say. The reason is found in verse 22. Read it! Sing Psalter 343.

October 5 Read Proverbs 5:1-6

Parents, do you let your children and young people hear wisdom from the lips of a strange woman? Solomon was concerned about who taught the covenant seed in his day. He knew that instruction from Satan would bring disastrous results to covenant children and young people. In this chapter we see many examples of such instruction. How about us? Do we turn our children over to the strange woman of television? Even the "innocent" children's television programs have much evil in them. This is to say nothing of the drama which fills much of the other programming. The videos which are so easy to obtain often have the strange woman portrayed on the cover. The internet allows the strange woman easy access to our young people's lives. Parents, we must guard our children and young people especially in these areas. Let us not dishonor God in the instruction of the covenant seed. Sing Psalter 146:1-6.

October 6 Read Proverbs 5:7-13

Look at verse nine again. Our honor is something we cherish greatly. We are quick to take offense when someone impugns our honor. In the Middle Ages taking someone's honor usually meant a duel that might end someone's life. Are we jealous for our spiritual honors? Are we ready to defend the honor that has been imputed to us by God? This takes work on our part. It is something that must be defended every day and every hour of that day. We cannot take a "time out" from this task. Walking in evil ways only causes us to lose our honor. By losing our honor we will come to the day when we will regret what we have done. Eventually that day will be the judgment day. People of God, keep from evil because it will only bring horrible results in to our lives. Sing Psalter 278.

October 7 Read Proverbs 5:14-23

These verses give powerful instruction concerning marriage and the seventh commandment. The idea of verse fifteen is that we not leave our wives and seek other women for our own pleasure and

enjoyment. We must know that our wives are given to us by God. They are not material possessions to be discarded at any whim. The reason for such admonition is two-fold. First of all we must honor the institution of marriage because it is God's institution. Secondly we see that this sin is not just against our mates but also against God who seeth all things. Like other sins this one has horrible consequences for the sinner and those around him. Young people, as you ponder marriage think about these things even in your dating practices. Dating must have as its goal to find the mate God has prepared for you. If we sin when we date, we probably sin in marriage. Marriage is a beautiful picture of Christ and his church; let us honor that picture. Sing Psalter 360.

October 8 Read Proverbs 6:1-5

In these verses Solomon warns us about the use of our tongues. We must not give promises lightly. If we do this to strangers, we become obligated to them and maybe to an evil way of life. If we do this to friends, we may alienate our friend and cause us personal troubles. Friendship is a wonderful thing. We have a pattern for friendship from Christ. Read the book of John to understand this pattern. Christian friends are a blessing to us. We need to cultivate those friendships. Be careful about with whom you become friends. This, too, is part of wisdom. Sing Psalter 68.

October 9 Read Proverbs 6:6-11

Monday morning rolls around again. Did you pray for help against laziness this morning as you began your school or work week? Laziness is a sin which seeking after God's wisdom will help prevent. Students, you need to make this part of your prayers as you work in school today and this week. Laziness can happen when you do not pay attention as the teacher is talking. You may be lazy as you do the work that you were assigned. Guard against that sin and work to avoid it. Parents, become examples for your children in this matter. Don't let your words around the house show that you may be lazy in the workplace. Don't be lazy there either. Fleeing laziness is a sign that we seek the wisdom which comes from above. Sing Psalter 97.

October 10 Read Proverbs 6:12-19

We might say after reading these verses that they do not apply to us. We might say that we are not naughty persons and would not do anything that the Lord hates. We might say such things but we would be fooling ourselves and making our sins ten times worse. Paul in Romans writes that "All have sinned and come short of the glory of God." Take a look at the seven abominations again. We must examine our lives and see that we must flee from these evils. We must see how we do these things and work to not do them. This can only be accomplished by the grace of God wrought for us by Christ. Let us pray daily for sin's forgiveness, to not be led into temptation, and for deliverance from temptation. Sing Psalter 253:1-5.

October 11 Read Proverbs 6:20-29

There are two main thoughts found in this section. First of all Solomon admonishes his son and us to keep the commandments of our fathers. This is not because our fathers were so great, but rather that our fathers were God-fearing and told us God's commandments. He tells us to obey these commandments at all times. This is a repeat of the instruction found in Deuteronomy 6. There the emphasis is upon parents' responsibility. Here the emphasis is on the responsibility of children and teenagers to keep those commandments. The second part of the section teaches us that in walking in these commandments we will stay away from sin. It makes a special point that sin is as dangerous as a hot coal. Handle it and you will be burned! Walk in sin and you will suffer the consequences. Let us heed the admonitions found in this part of God's Word. Sing Psalter 321.

October 12 Read Proverbs 6:30-35

We see a contrast between sins. Solomon does not excuse the sin against the eighth commandment, for he says that that person must repay. But he shows that thievery, because it is basically outward, does not wound another like adultery. When adultery is committed, there are many who are wronged. There is the woman who is taken in adultery. There is her husband who has been defrauded. And, Solomon states, there is the soul of the adulterer which cannot be soothed with many gifts. Husbands and wives, you must keep yourselves pure from this sin. Young people, in your dating practices, you must be chaste and honorable. If you are not, you will bring suffering on others as well as great grief to your own soul. Walk as the bride of Christ and seek no other. Sing Psalter 83.

October 13 Read Proverbs 7:1-5

Again we find admonitions of Solomon about the keeping of God's law. Notice how close we must keep them. There are five figures of speech found here: "As the apple of thine eye," "bind them upon thy fingers," "write them upon the table of thine heart," "thou art my sister," and "call understanding thy kinswoman." I see two ideas to which we must pay attention. First of all that law must be as close to us as possible. Secondly we must love that law as we love those women whom God has placed in our families. We are to cherish that law and take great pains toward it. Why must we do that? We must do it because that law will protect us and help us to flee from sin. Sing Psalter 42.

October 14 Read Proverbs 7:6-23

This long section shows to us in very graphic language the insidiousness of sin. Sin will seek the child of God out in any way possible in order to cause him to sin more. Sin is sweet and promises many good things. These good things turn out to be the snare which entraps us daily. Satan is as a "roaring lion," but sometimes that lion is dressed in the clothes of the candy man. Flee sin and live. Sing Psalter 157:1-3; 7-9.

October 15 Read Proverbs 7:24-27

After describing the way that sin leads the young people of God, Solomon once more tells them to listen to him. He tells them that sin has taken even those who appeared to be strong. There is no escaping the evil that sin brings to those who walk in her ways. He finally warns the young people that the way of sin is the way to hell and to the stronghold of Satan. Are you listening, young people? Are you heeding the wise advice of Solomon and your parents, ministers, elders, and teachers? Were you listening, sleeping or being absent from the pew today? Christ speaks to us through the preaching. Were you listening? Listen and do not fall into the way of sin for it has a

terrible end. Sing Psalter 217.

October 16 Read Proverbs 8:1-11

There are some who say that this is the chapter which defines all of Proverbs. In it we see wisdom personified, and we find that Christ is wisdom. Let us look at verse nine for a few minutes. Read it again. First of all we see that to understand wisdom and Christ does not take someone of super intelligence. Wisdom's words are plain to the people of God. There is nothing that may confuse them in the Word of God. Secondly we find that those words are right. They are never wrong. The truth found in that wisdom is plain, straight-forward and never changing. Seek that wisdom, people of God, and you will be seeking something that is better than all the riches of this earth. Sing Psalter 40:1-4.

October 17 Read Proverbs 8:12-21

There are many pearls of truth found in this section. Take a minute and find one that you can wear today. I like verse 17. First of all we see that wisdom is not just some cold dead fact. Wisdom is alive and vibrant. But then, wisdom is Christ. And Christ loves his people with a covenantal love. What a thing for us to treasure! Secondly we must seek wisdom early. There is no having fun when we are young and then finding wisdom. Oh, this may happen, but it is not desirable. We should not condone the sowing of wild oats by our young people. We should encourage them to sow wisdom's seed. Love wisdom and seek wisdom, people of God, and we will be blessed. Sing Psalter 377:1-3.

October 18 Read Proverbs 8:22-31

In these verses we further see that wisdom and Christ are synonymous. We also find proof for creation. Not to believe in creation is not to believe in Christ. You also cannot believe in some creation and some evolutions as the theistic evolutionist does. To believe a little in creation is to try to believe a little in Christ and that cannot be! Each of these verses shows that God's work of creation which was done by the Word was thorough and all-encompassing. Creation is a beautiful truth and cannot be ignored. It is either creation and salvation or neither. Sing Psalter 377:4-7.

October 19 Read Proverbs 8:32-36

The final verses of this chapter serve as a conclusion to all that is taught in the chapter. First of all, notice that even our children are commanded to walk in wisdom's ways. This means that we as parents must instruct them in those ways and see to it that they walk in them. We cannot condone their sins by our compliance or ignorance. Secondly, children and young people, you must not refuse the instruction of your parents, teacher, elders, or ministers. These men and women have been placed in authority over you by God. You must listen to them or you refuse to listen to Christ. Thirdly, seeking wisdom is a full time occupation. We must always be seeking wisdom. Finally, to seek wisdom is to seek eternal life with Christ in heaven, and not to seek wisdom is to seek death in hell, far removed from him. Let us seek wisdom whatever age we are and in whatever station or calling we are. Sing Psalter 322.

October 20 Read Proverbs 9:1-12

The first part of this chapter speaks of the house of wisdom. This is no more than the church of Christ. Notice the number seven in the first verse. Seven is the number of the covenant that God has within himself and also with his people. Do you live in wisdom's house, people of God? If you do, than you must heed the instruction of that last part of this section. This instruction tells us not to have anything to do with the reprobate. Oh, it does not encourage world flight but

rather it encourages us not to mingle with the wicked more than is necessary. Verse ten once again states the theme of the book. We must be seeking the fear of Jehovah and the only way we can do that is to live in his house with his people, our brothers and sisters. Are you doing that tonight, young people? You will not find dancing, movies, or drunken parties in wisdom's house. You will find fellowship with brothers and sisters of like faith. Seek wisdom and seek her house tonight. Sing Psalter 36.

October 21 Read Proverbs 9:13-18

Did you escape the foolish, clamorous, simple woman last night, young people? Did you escape her wiles and traps? They were all around you because they are the traps of Satan. Notice that she sits where she can be seen. She is on her front porch and at the social meeting places in town or in the country. You might be going where you should be but she will find you there as well. What about tonight, young people? How will you prepare for the Sabbath and worship? If you fall into the simple woman's clutches, you will not be prepared for either. She will not find you if you are with your family in your home. She will not find you if you are with a group of covenant young people who have determined to be home early. Prepare for the Sabbath and stay out of Satan's hands. Sing Psalter 61.

October 22 Read Proverbs 10:1-9

Did you notice the pattern found in these nine verses? If not, read the section again. Notice that each verse is made up of two parts connected with the word but. This is a Hebrew poetical device called antithetical parallelism. The first part of the verse tells us what we should and must do, while the second tells us what we should and must not do. While these verses may appear disjointed there are several things which tie them together. The first is the grammatical construction. The second is that the first part of the verse is only done through wisdom. Where can you get this wisdom, people of God? You get it from him, and today you get it by being found in his house. The worship of Jehovah is a wise thing and something that will be blessed. Seek wisdom and you will seek the path of life. Sing Psalter 387.

October 23 Read Proverbs 10:10-17

We go back to school or work today; this being Monday. Let us take notice of verse 12. In school we have strife. This is displeasing to God and a grief to our parents and teachers, but it happens because of the old man of sin that lies within each of us. What do we do about strife? There are two possibilities. If we hate the person with whom we have a difference, we will constantly stir up that strife. But if we love that person, we will cover that strife with the love of God. This is not easy and can only be accomplished by the grace of God. Notice that to cover sin does not mean to hide it but to forgive it as Christ covered our sins with his blood at the cross. Seek forgiveness and seek to forgive, people of God, and strife will be lessened in our lives. Sing Psalter 24.

October 24 Read Proverbs 10:18-24

There are two thoughts that could be considered in today's portion of Scripture. We could consider the sins of the tongue. Or we could consider verse 23. We will have occasion to do the former later on in our study. Let us look at verse 23. We have seen how wisdom and the wise are the main themes of this book. Their opposites are the "antitheme." If we are not wise, we are fools. How many times do you do something, young people or children, which is wrong; and when you are rebuked for it, your reply was, "It was fun." That is the answer of the foolish. The measuring stick which God will use is not our fun but his glory and wisdom. Learn to use that stick and you will

avoid the stick of his wrath. Seek to do good and know wisdom and you will find happiness now and in eternity. Sing Psalter 91.

October 25 Read Proverbs 10:25-32

Notice verse 28. There are some who look at and use the book of Proverbs as a fountain of nice sayings which can guide a person in life. If this is all that we see in this book, we are sadly mistaken and have missed the point. The book of Proverbs is a guide upon the way to eternal gladness. We are on a journey, people of God of all ages, and on this journey God has given to us a guide. Let us follow that guide through our lives or we will have no hope of happiness at all. To use Proverbs as one might use the tales of Aesop is to completely miss the point. To do that is not wise but very foolish. Sing Psalter 28.

October 26 Read Proverbs 11:1-6

The first verse of this section is often used to condemn evil business practices. That is a proper use of the text, I believe, but not the whole use. God has placed each one of us in some labor. It may be that we work at some business, either for ourselves or for someone else. It may be that God has placed us in the home caring for the covenant seed. This is a high calling and one our young women should desire. It may be we are placed in the school room responsible to learn about God's creation and his works. In each of these callings we must not use a false balance. We may not cheat in any calling, but must give an honest account of ourselves and the abilities that God has given to us. To do otherwise is foolish and an abomination to God. Let us consider our calling and see how we can delight him in it. Sing Psalter 95.

October 27 Read Proverbs 11:7-11

A general theme found in this section of Proverbs is the walk of sanctification of the righteous. God calls us to walk in a way pleasing to him. This is done by obeying his commandments as found in his Word. Is this our desire, people of God? Are you planning to do this tonight, young people, as you seek entertainment with your friends? You notice that a benefit of such right living is the well-being of the place where God has placed us. God gives to us a place of peace as we walk in his ways. Otherwise he will add to us woe because of our refusal to seek him and to walk in his ways. Live a life of sanctification, people of God, and serve him in all that you do. Sing Psalter 136.

October 28 Read Proverbs 11:12-16

What did you hear last night? This is a common question asked by people of all ages. Sometimes the news is good and bears repeating. Sometimes it is an account of sin and someone's downfalls and failures. Verse thirteen can serve as a guide in such matters. First of all, we should never speak the lie. That is out and out condemned in the ninth commandment as well as other places of Scripture. Secondly, when we know of someone's sin, we should not spread it around to other people. Paul's words to "speak the truth in love" serve as an excellent guide in these kinds of situations. If there is any talking to be done in this situation, let it be done in accordance with Matthew 18. Let us not be talebearers but rather those who seek to build up the saints around us. Sing Psalter 25.

October 29 Read Proverbs 11:17-21

Young people, to whom have you shown mercy lately? "Mercy?" you might ask. "What is that?" Mercy is one of God's attributes which we must imitate each day of our lives. When we see someone in trouble and we can help them out, we must not miss that opportunity to reflect this attribute of God. Mercy is shown when we comfort

those who have been hurt by grievous words. Mercy is shown when we make sure someone is not omitted in our activities. Today, we saw the deacons taking the offering. They are sometimes called the ministers of mercy as they help those whom God has ordained as poor. They do this in their official office. But because we are members of the church of all believers we have the office of believers. One way we carry out that office is to show mercy to those around us. Sing Psalter 69.

October 30 Read Proverbs 11:22-26

Young women, what do you expect to gain with your earthly apparel and outward adornments? Young men, do you seek after the young women who has the best outward apparel and adornments? If the young woman seeks to gain favor with young men or to glorify herself with her outward appearance, she might, but she might also bring herself into ruin. If the young man seeks the young women who looks the best, he might receive her to his own despair. Verse twenty-two has a striking parallelism. This type is called synonymous parallelism. Get a word picture in your mind, young people, and then consider what you want for yourself or for your mate. Just a note of warning, young men. In this day and age the fair woman in the verse could be changed to a handsome man. Young men must watch their desire of appearance as well. Young men and women, cultivate discretion in your lives and then you will be beautiful and handsome in God's eyes. Sing Psalter 113:1-4.

October 31 Read Proverbs 11:27-31

Sometimes we may look at verse 30 with great puzzlement. This talk about soul-winning is foreign in our thoughts. But taken in the right context this verse can give to us much instruction. In these first eleven chapters of Proverbs, we see constant instruction to seek wisdom and to walk in wisdom's ways. If we do this, those around us will notice us. God will use our godly walk to bring others to him. This is the testimony of Scripture and also of the Heidelberg Catechism in Lord's Day 32. Our walk of sanctification is a necessary walk both in how we appear toward God and toward others. Today is a good day to look at this truth. What will you celebrate tonight—God's Reformation Day or Satan's Halloween? Parents, you must direct your children and young people in this matter. Help them to walk a walk of sanctification which is antithetical. Scripture says by "their fruit ye shall know them." What is your fruit like? Sing Psalter 96.

November 1 Read Proverbs 12:1-7

We are approximately two months into the school year, the catechism season, and for many, young people's society. We would do well to heed the admonition found in verse 1. Do you love knowledge, young people? Are you applying yourselves wholeheartedly into your studies and doing as Paul admonished Timothy to: study to show yourselves approved before God? This is your calling, beloved young people and children. Do not fritter away your time in these activities and show yourselves slothful in these endeavors. To do this is a sin against the eighth commandment. Parents, are you making sure your children and teenagers are diligent in these works? This is your calling in this matter. To love the instruction and knowledge of the Lord is the calling of all of God's people. Let us not hate the reproof of those whom God has placed in authority over us and the reproof of God. Let us not be brutish and ignorant. Sing Psalter 213:3-4.

November 2 Read Proverbs 12:8-14

Not only does Solomon admonish us to study, he also in verse 11 admonishes us to work diligently at whatever we place our hand to

do. He expresses a truth which seems, and is, straight-forward. When we work diligently, we will be rewarded. This may come in the form of a crop or a paycheck. Oh, sometimes the crop or paycheck may not be what we desire but it will be that which God desires to give to us. Our young people need to hear and heed this admonition as they begin their first forays into the work world. They, and we that are older as well, also need the admonition of the second part of verse 11. We may want to team up with the idlers at our jobs and give less than a full hour's work for an hour's pay. Let us not go this way but let us put our whole heart into our work as God has commanded throughout Scripture. Sing Psalter 24.

November 3 Read Proverbs 12:15-22

Several verses in this section speak of our tongue and its use. This is a subject which can be found in the Old and New Testaments alike. Just think of James 3 for example. How are you using your tongues, people of God of all ages? What about lying? It seems to be a very easy matter to tell a lie. Even the youngest of our children can be very proficient in this sin. Parents, do you teach your children to lie by example or by permission? This is very easy to do in order not to suffer the consequences of some words or actions. One of the Psalms is very succinct in this matter, "Let the lying lips be put to silence." Guard your tongues, young people. Parents, guard the tongues of your children and young people because, as James says, the tongue can start the fires of hell in our lives. Sing Psalter 343.

November 4 Read Proverbs 12:23-28

The words of verse 27 are very applicable in today's society. How much material wealth ends up in the landfills of the world? How much do we have that we just throw away because we do not want it any longer? Just examine the practices of our homes, schools, and churches to see the truth of these words. Our material wealth is a gift from God and should not be wasted. All that we have must be used for his service and is not to end up in the trash. To fall into the sin examined in this verse is to sin against the eighth commandment. The Westminster Shorter Catechism in its exposition of eighth commandment makes it plain that we can sin against the eighth commandment by misusing what God has given to us. Let us heed the admonishment found in this verse. Sing Psalter 27.

November 5 Read Proverbs 13:1-6

In verse three we have more instruction about the tongue. Here the instruction covers a broader area. Are you fond of telling about the misfortunes of one of your neighbors? This is wrong whether the story is true or false. Paul tells us to "speak the truth in love." We do well to heed that admonition. Are you fond of saying swear words that are either vulgar or profane? This seems to be a trade mark of young people and even children of this age, and to my sorrow our children and young people seem to delight in this practice. We as parents, ministers, elders, and teachers need to be on guard to root this sin out of our children and young people's lives. Let us help them keep from destruction and walk in the way of life. Sing Psalter 391.

November 6 Read Proverbs 13:7-12

This book speaks often of wisdom. This wisdom is the wisdom which comes from above. But part of that wisdom is wisdom about our earthly life. Part of that wisdom means that we do not become proud about our accomplishments in this life. Have we become successful in business? To whom do we give the credit? Are we doing well in some aspect of our school work? Do we give to God the glory due to his name? According to verse ten, pride causes contention. How true this is in many aspects of our lives. We contend with our neighbors to be number one at something and we begin to fight and

bicker about it. Let us be well advised and follow after the wisdom which warns us to flee pride. Sing Psalter 81.

November 7 Read Proverbs 13:13-18

Verse 13 can serve as a theme verse for this section of chapters in the book of Proverbs. The “word,” of course, is the Word of God as we have it in the Bible. The synonym as found in the second half of this antithetical parallelism is also God’s Word. We are commanded to not despise the Word of Almighty God. In that Word we can find instruction on all of life’s situations. I challenge you to find one thing that is not addressed in Scripture. Let us flee destruction and seek the reward that God gives to those who obey his Word in all things. Sing Psalter 338.

November 8 Read Proverbs 13:19-25

Parents, who are your friends? What kind of example are you providing your children with your friendships in this world? Those with whom we keep company affect our lives in many ways. They shape our patterns of speech and our choices of entertainment. If we do not show discretion in our choices of companions in this life, neither will our children. We will have no one to blame for their bad choices but ourselves. When we mourn their choice of a life’s mate, we must remember who taught them to pick. If we walk with fools, we face destruction. If we teach our children to walk with fools, we should have the millstone spoken of by Christ hung about our necks. Sing Psalter 170.

November 9 Read Proverbs 14:1-7

Young people, but also people of all ages, how easy is it for you to leave someone who shows himself a fool by his words? Can you leave someone who with his mouth speaks evil words? Can you refuse to socialize with one who denies the God of the Bible? We must realize that our presence with this kind of a person condones what they say. We may say we are trying to witness but the best kind of a witness in such a circumstance is to leave this person, tell him why you are leaving, and do not keep company with him until his manner of speech changes. Notice that Solomon does not give this as a suggestion; it is given as a command. Leave the presence of such persons, people of God, and be blessed. Sing Psalter 369.

November 10 Read Proverbs 14:8-14

We might be inclined after reading verse 12 to say that we are capable of making decisions that are right and prudent. This is not the testimony of Solomon to his son and to the church of all ages. Man’s nature, which we have, is inclined to all evil. We make decisions that we might justify, but are wrong. We must examine our chosen way in the light of Scripture and see that our way is in accord with God’s Way. It may seem oh so right to us, but really oh so wrong. Our way may end up leading to eternal death in hell. Let us not walk in that way but rather walk in the Ways of God. Sing Psalter 16:1-3, 7-8.

November 11 Read Proverbs 14:15-21

Verse 21 is another example of antithetical parallelism. First of all we are admonished not to despise our neighbors. While the verse does not tell us exactly what form this despising might take, we can tell from the second part that it is not helping our neighbor in distress. This distress may be monetary, emotional, or spiritual in form. According to the second half of the verse, we are to have mercy upon those who are poor. People may be poor in any of the three ways mentioned above. Are you merciful to the poor, people of God? Children, do you show mercy to all in your class who may need your mercy? Young people, how merciful are you? Parents and

other adults, what kind of examples are you toward your children and young people in this matter? Let us show mercy because we have been shown mercy by a merciful God who sent his Son to die on the cross in our place. Sing Psalter 305

November 12 Read Proverbs 14:22-28

In verses 26 and 27 Solomon comes back to the main theme of this book—wisdom as expressed in the fear of Jehovah. He does this because it is only in the fear of Jehovah that we can flee all types of sin. Each of the sins that he warns against in this book can only be avoided by the grace of God. These are comforting words to parents. Parents who worry daily about their children’s salvation can rest assured that in the fear of Jehovah they and their children have a refuge. Parents can also take instruction in that they must hold the fear of Jehovah before their covenant seed. There is no refuge in the devil’s practices; do not teach them to your children, God-fearing parents! Children and young people, you, too, have the assurance of a refuge in the fear of Jehovah. Seek that fear and walk in it. Sing Psalter 88.

November 13 Read Proverbs 14:29-35

Verse 29 speaks volumes to God’s people. To be slow to anger is a characteristic we must cultivate in our lives. We must teach this to our children and young people by word and by example. Young people, you can exercise patience. You must exercise patience. To lose one’s cool or temper is to fall into Satan’s snare. To do this is to break the sixth commandment and murder whomever we are angry with. We must think first and speak or act second. Counting to ten may not be enough; maybe we need to count to one hundred and if that does not help, we should fall upon our knees in prayer for help in this matter. Seek to be known for great understanding and flee the folly of flying into a rage. Make this part of your daily meditation and prayers. Sing Psalter 51.

November 14 Read Proverbs 15:1-7

Stop and ponder verse three.... Are you finished? Do it again.... The truth of this verse should excite in us a prayer for help from our God. If his eyes are in every place, He sees all of our sins. We know that he hates sin and requires it to be paid for. We cannot hide from the all-seeing God. Jonah tried; he found out that it was impossible. Ananias and Sapphira tried and look where it got them. Little children, you cannot hide from God for he sees all that you do. Young people, the darkness does not cover your sins. Walk in the light as found in the Bible. Adults, show your children and young people that God sees all of your works too. Confess your sins and walk wisely. Sing Psalter 384.

November 15 Read Proverbs 15:8-13

After sin came into this world, God instituted outward forms of worship of himself. The way of the bloody sacrifice was the way that he prescribed to find assurance of the forgiveness of sin. Cain tried to change that method and God was not pleased with his sacrifice. Many people have tried to sacrifice in their own way. God is not pleased with them either. Verse eight tells us that a wicked sacrifice is an abomination to the Lord. This sacrifice does not delight him as the prayer of the righteous. Let us learn how to pray, let us teach our children to pray, and let us seek to delight the Lord in our prayers knowing that he will hear them through the sacrifice of his Son. Sing Psalter 9.

The Antithesis and Witnessing (4)

by Prof. Herman Hanko

I have been at some pains to say that the most powerful, God-blessed and divinely approved witnessing for the Christian is the witness of a life of obedience to the will of Christ.

I insisted on the fact that the key to Christian witnessing is I Peter 3:15: “But sanctify the Lord God in your hearts: and be ready always to give an answer to every man that asketh you a reason of the hope that is in you with meekness and fear.” Peter is talking about good works as a witness. Good works are implied in that absolutely necessary prerequisite for giving a defense of our hope: sanctify the Lord God in your hearts.

Good works are also implied in the fact that *people ask us a reason* for our hope. They will not ask if they do not see something different—that is, see good works, in us.

But good works are also specifically mentioned in Jesus’ remarks about letting our light shine before men (Matt. 5:14-16); good works are mentioned in the Heidelberg Catechism as being *necessary* for the Christian to do so that “by [our] godly conversation (life-style), others may be gained to Christ” (HC 32/86).

Not, in the first place, is speech important; one’s life is the crucial thing.

* * * *

Because *genuine* (not frothy, sentimental, outward) good works are the stream that flows from doctrine, the prerequisite of witnessing is a firm and correct knowledge of the truth of Scripture. People make a serious mistake when they complain from the pew that preaching is too doctrinal and not practical. The cry is heard so often that it makes ministers uncomfortable. I am not saying that faithful ministers are never practical in their preaching. Surely, we all agree that a minister ought to be careful to show God’s people just how the truths of Scripture apply to concrete situations in life. But to show how truth applies to life means, it seems clear, that one has to talk about the truth and preach the truth.

This is quite sobering. I am convinced that the church of Ephesus received from the Lord such a sharp warning about the imminence of the demise of the church that had lost its first love, because in Ephesus could no longer be

found a *love for the truth* (Rev. 2:1-7). That love for the truth was Ephesus’ first love.

The Lord makes clear that Ephesus was strong in fighting heresy and standing for the truth revealed to them by Christ. They even censured heretics and excommunicated them when these heretics did not repent. But the trouble was that the people had no love for the truth.

When Paul wrote a letter to the church in Thessalonica, he warned them about the Anti-christ and described in one of Scripture’s clearest teachings about Anti-christ that those who followed this man of sin would be punished terribly by a strong delusion so that they believe the lie and are damned (II Thess. 2:1-12). But this dreadful punishment is sent on them because “they received not the love of the truth” (verse 10).

A head full of cold and abstract knowledge of the truth will not do for witnessing. Knowledge of the truth must be present in a witness—of course; but more is needed. He must love the truth. That is something more.

Witnessing is less than the foam on top of a glass of coca-cola if it is only a friendly hand sake and a white-toothed smile accompanied by some reference to Jesus as one’s personal Savior, when it all is a gloss over an ignorance of Scripture and the truth revealed in it. And witnessing means nothing and is fundamentally impossible when it covers a shameless disregard for the truth.

If I do not love my wife passionately and exclusively, I am not going to defend her good name when it is attacked. If I do not love the church of Christ of which I am a part, I will not come to the defense of the denomination and congregation when it is slandered. I love my wife because she is what she is. I love God because he is what he is. I love the truth because the truth is God. And a defense of what we love is, after all, what witnessing is all about.

We gain such a knowledge of and love for the truth in church on Sunday when the minister preaches, in catechism class when the shepherd of the flock instructs the lambs and young sheep, when we spend time at home reading books that tell us of the truth, and when we spend part of the day in devotions. How can one know

the truth and love it, without these spiritual exercises? I say it again: How can anyone witness when he is remiss and unfaithful in these basic things?

So, if we love the truth we are faithful to the truth—as a man is faithful to his wife because he loves her;—and because we are faithful to God because we love him. Faithfulness to God is faithfulness to his truth. That is the way it is. One cannot change that no matter how one tries. Preparation for witnessing is not a special class on how to meet and talk to others; it is rather a class in Reformed doctrine.

Is this so difficult to understand? It ought not to be. The antithesis means, among many other things, that we stand for the truth over against the lie. “Let your light so shine among men. . . , Jesus says. The truth is that light! The lie of this world is darkness. We even speak of the light of the truth and the darkness of the lie. Let us then take that seriously.

The trouble is not so much that we do not know these ABCs of life; the trouble is that we do not want to take the time to learn the truth. It seems to us to demand effort that lies beyond our energies, and the knowledge of the truth seems to require a concentration on boring things

when life’s pleasures are all out there with our buddies beckoning with enticing words to come and have some fun once. There is little sense in talking about witnessing when such an attitude of indifference to truth clamps its icy fingers around our throats.

The questions we ought to be asking ourselves before we become overly eager to witness are these: Do I know the heritage of the Reformed faith? Am I acquainted with the distinctives of Protestant Reformed doctrine? Can I defend the truth of sovereign grace against Arminianism in all its forms? Creationism against the deadly lie of evolutionism? Do I *love* that truth? That is, am I willing to give up everything I have for the sake of the truth?—as countless martyrs have done before me? Does that truth mean so much to me that I will die for it? Love of the truth is love for God, is it not? If I love him, I want to be faithful to him in all my life.

Then, and then only are we ready to become witnesses. ❖

Prof. Hanko is professor emeritus of Church History and New Testament in the Protestant Reformed Theological Seminary.

From the Pastor’s Study

Scripture’s Teaching Regarding Alcohol (7)

The Gospel’s Remedy Against Drunkenness

by Rev. Douglas Kuiper

“And be not drunk with wine, wherein is excess; But be filled with the Spirit.” Ephesians 5:18.

Drunkness is sin. This is not only my idea; God says so. Not only that, but it leads to more sin; in drunkenness is “excess.” As we noted in our last article, this means that one who is drunk is living as one who is not saved. It means further that no drunkard will be given eternal life, except he turn from his sin in true repentance.

Young people, do you understand the implication of this for your lives? Getting drunk is not something to

do for fun; it is not an acceptable way to pass time with one’s friends!

Yet God’s people do fall into this sin. Some have fallen into it only a few times; others are drunkards, who live in the sin, being addicted to alcohol. Being God’s people, and having the life of Christ in them, they hate not only the consequences of the sin, but the sin itself, and desire never again to commit it. But the power to turn from it, they do not find in themselves. The sin holds them in bondage, and though they have resolved never

again to commit it, they do fall into it yet again!

Such must not despair. God has a word for them in the gospel. The gospel provides a remedy against drunkenness.

* * * * *

That remedy comes in the form of a command: “be filled with the Spirit.”

At first glance, such a command might seem strange to one who understands the doctrines of man’s total depravity and God’s sovereign, irresistible grace. Is it not impossible for us to fill ourselves with the Spirit? And if this is impossible for one who is not a drunkard, is it not doubly impossible for the one who is a slave to alcohol?

Of course we cannot fill ourselves with the Spirit. But that is not what the Word of God requires us to do, either. Let us examine the command more closely and explain it in a way that is consistent with the doctrine of sovereign grace.

Notice first that the command comes to the church and saints of God in Jesus Christ. Specifically, it comes to the saints at Ephesus. It comes, then, to God’s people in every age, who have been delivered from the bondage of sin by Jesus’ death, and who have in them his new life.

Second, the command is passive. We are not told to fill ourselves with the Spirit, as though salvation is man’s work; rather, we are told to “be filled.” God fills us with the Spirit.

Third, though the verb is passive, it is imperative; it is emphatically a command to God’s people. It requires of us continual activity—“keep being filled with the Spirit” is the idea.

To be filled, or keep being filled, with the Spirit, is first to live as one who is controlled by the Spirit. To be controlled by the Spirit is not to let God work in one, as if it is in our power to resist God. Rather, it is to seek from God all the blessings which the Spirit gives, and to live all one’s life in obedience to God’s law, in the power of the Spirit.

To be filled with the Spirit is also to use the means God has provided to stay spiritually strong, so that one finds in himself the power to live a godly life.

Verses 19-21 tell us concretely what we do, being filled with the Spirit. First, we speak to each other the praises of God, in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs. These songs (all of which, I’m convinced, refer to the 150 Psalms; in the Hebrew Psalter, they were arranged under the three headings of “psalms, hymns, and spiritual songs) will be found on the lips of those filled with the Spirit. Second, we will give thanks always for all things

to God in the name of Jesus Christ. Third, we will submit ourselves one to another in the fear of God.

All of this we will do together! That is, the child of God is not to carry out this command all by himself; he does so in communion with the whole church of Christ! To be filled with the Spirit requires prayer, singing, studying the Scriptures, not only individually, but also at church!

Being filled with the Spirit in the way of fervent prayer and use of the means of grace, the child of God experiences God’s power in him to fight sin.

* * * * *

That this is an effective remedy against drunkenness is indicated by the text’s sharp contrast between being filled with wine on the one hand, and being filled with the Spirit on the other. To be filled with the Spirit, and manifest such by an antithetical life, is an effective way to guard oneself against drunkenness.

The Ephesians needed to hear this. One gathers from Ephesians 5:1ff that many were guilty of drunkenness—some physically, and others spiritually, living under the power of spiritual darkness. Yet they were “saints” (1:1) and “dear children” of God (5:1)—they were delivered from sin in Christ, and had the power to live a new and godly life. So God calls them to live an antithetical life, separate from sin, promising them that in the power of the Spirit they could indeed “walk as children of light” (5:8). And now he commands them to “be filled with the Spirit.”

What encouragement to us!

It is encouragement to us who face temptation to become drunk. To such it is a reminder that, although no man can fight temptation in his own power, God gives his people divine, spiritual power to fight temptation. It is a reminder that, in the way of prayer, we will find the power to escape (I Corinthians 10:13), and that in the way of godly living, we will find sin to be less attractive.

It is also encouragement to those children of God caught in the snare of drunkenness.

First, it reminds them that until they turn to God for help, they will continue to be in the bondage of this sin. No man can fight it in his own strength. We need God’s power; we depend on him alone. And this God who delivers his people is not merely any god, or some unnamed or impersonal higher power, but the triune God of whom Jesus Christ is the personal revelation, and whose Spirit works in his church. One practical implication of this point is this: anyone who uses the 12 step program of Alcoholics Anonymous to help overcome their sin of drunkenness must confess that only the one true God,

Jehovah, has the power to deliver them.

Second, it reminds God's children caught in the snare of drunkenness that the way to experience deliverance is the way of confession of sin and finding forgiveness in the blood of Christ. For only by the Spirit can we do such things, and by the Spirit God assures us that our prayers are heard and our sins are forgiven.

Third, it reminds them that in the keeping of the law is true happiness. Men turn to drunkenness to find happiness, but do not actually find it; only in the way of obedience will true happiness be enjoyed.

Confess your sins, then! If you succumb to the charms of alcohol, confess this to God, and cry out for his mercy! Or, if you pride yourself on never having been drunk in the body, yet you lack spiritual sobriety so that in other ways you have lived as one not saved, confess this, and seek his grace!

He will give grace to his people!

* * * * *

How lovely, the life of one who is not under the bondage of alcohol! How desirable, the life one lives who is filled with the Spirit!

As wine beckons us to enjoy its charms, so the Spirit causes God's people to see that true happiness is found in obedience to God's law. And as wine repays those who drink it by mocking and making a fool of us (Proverbs

20:1), so the Spirit repays us—but with a great blessing. We bring forth the fruit of the Spirit—love, joy, peace, longsuffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness, temperance, against which there is no law (Galatians 5:22-23).

Still more: while the drunkard is excluded from the kingdom of God, the promise of the gospel is that the true believer who by God's grace is filled with the Spirit has a place in that kingdom now, and will enjoy a place in that kingdom to all eternity—earned by the blood of Christ. So the true believer lives in hope! And in that hope, he watches soberly for the coming of his Lord, obeying God's law.

We conclude our examination of Scripture's treatment of alcohol by remembering how John concluded his first epistle: "Little children, keep yourselves from idols" (I John 5:21).

Young people, and children of God, keep yourselves from idols. One idol from which we must keep ourselves is alcohol. We may use it properly; but we may never serve it.

Rather, be filled with the Spirit! Serve God! ❖

Rev. Kuiper is pastor of Randolph Protestant Reformed Church in Randolph, Wisconsin.

Church History

I Remember Herman Hoeksema: Personal Remembrances of a Great Man (1)

by Prof. David J. Engelsma

It is my purpose with this short series of articles to relate some of my remembrances of Herman Hoeksema. I do not intend to write a biography. I do not claim that the events I describe were of any special importance for the church. But I do think that these recollections may be of some benefit to the members of the Protestant Reformed Churches, especially the younger members, who never knew the man. The remembrances will show something of the man to those who know

Hoeksema only as a theologian and an author.

The occasion for the remembrances is the long span of time between the life of Hoeksema and the majority of members of the Protestant Reformed Churches today. Hoeksema died in 1965, more than forty years ago. No one under forty five years of age has any personal recollection of the man. Among the ministers, at the time of this writing I am the last man in the active ministry to have had all three years of his seminary training under

Herman Hoeksema, indeed to have had any part of seminary training under him. Few even of the active ministers remember him. The memory of the man fades fast.

The reason for the remembrances is that Herman Hoeksema was a great man. He was a great man of God on behalf of the Protestant Reformed Churches. He was a great man of God for the Reformed faith in the world. He was a great man of God in and for the church of Jesus Christ.

Many will dispute this judgment as the biased esteem of a former pupil and ardent, if not blind, disciple. But they will be wrong. For one thing, after forty-five years in the ministry, having read widely in the history of the church and of the world, having observed closely events ecclesiastical and civil, having experienced much in the covenant and in society, and having learned to make judgments in light of Scripture, the creeds, and the history of the Christian church, I am a blind disciple of no man (if ever I was), including Herman Hoeksema. For another thing, my judgment of Hoeksema's greatness is based on solid, objective, indeed incontrovertible evidence. Christ will display the true greatness of the man—as his own work of grace—in the final judgment, when the last in the judgment of men shall be first by the judgment of God.

Theologian of Sovereign Grace

Hoeksema was a great man of God in that he knew, confessed, and taught by word and pen the truth of the word of God as rightly and authoritatively set forth in comprehensive and systematic form in the "Three Forms of Unity." He confessed the truth particularly with regard to its central message: salvation from sin by the sovereign grace of God in Jesus Christ alone.

Even his theological and ecclesiastical foes acknowledged Hoeksema's soundness in the Reformed faith and his unswerving commitment to the gospel of sovereign grace as confessed by the Synod of Dordt in the Canons. When in 1924 the Christian Reformed Church condemned the doctrine that Hoeksema taught, preliminary to deposing him, they themselves testified that he was Reformed in the fundamental truths of the



Herman Hoeksema while a pastor and writing to the boys fighting in WWII. See these letters and responses online at www.beaconlights.org

Reformed creeds. Unwittingly, indeed contrary to their intention, they increased their praise of him when they added that he had a tendency towards "onesidedness." For they meant that he was "onesided" in his magnifying of the sovereignty of the grace of God in salvation. What a glorious epitaph!

In a long and frank discussion of Hoeksema and the Dutch Reformed theologian, Klaas Schilder, the doctrines they taught, and the churches they served that I had with Professor J. Douma of the Reformed Churches in the Netherlands ("liberated") in the early 1980s at the Kampen Seminary, Dr. Douma freely acknowledged that a difference between the two theologians was that "your man [Hoeksema] consistently applied predestination—election and reprobation—to the covenant, whereas my man [Schilder] did not." Consistency, particularly regarding

divine predestination as source and cause of all salvation, is not a defect in a Reformed theologian.

In his theological memoirs, the famed Dutch Reformed theologian, G. C. Berkouwer, informed the theological world that he deliberately framed his own theology in (an adversary) relation to the theology of Herman Hoeksema. Hoeksema's theology was Berkouwer's foil. Berkouwer went on to assert that Hoeksema developed all his theology in harmony with God's eternal decree of predestination as no other theologian had done.

Whether this is indeed the case may be questioned. Calvin certainly developed his (biblical) theology in basic harmony with predestination, as did others in the Reformed tradition.

Nevertheless, Berkouwer's judgment is the highest praise of Herman Hoeksema, regardless that Berkouwer did not mean it so. It recognized Hoeksema as a great man in the Reformed churches, for whatever theology harmonizes with and extols predestination is the truth, whereas whatever contradicts or obscures predestination is the lie.

Of course, Reformed theologians and churches that shy from "onesidedness" in the direction of honoring God's sovereign grace in salvation, as though this "onesidedness" were the greatest of all doctrinal evils, will

understand Berkouwer’s judgment as disparagement of Hoeksema. These are the theologians and churches that are “onesided” in the direction of the responsibility of man, not only in that responsibility is their main message, but also because in their sermons and writings “responsibility” challenges, contradicts, and denies divine sovereignty. Such is the popular doctrine of an impotent love of God for all without exception in the preaching of the gospel, a frustrated desire of God to save all by the preaching of the gospel, and a resistible grace that goes out to all men in the preaching of the gospel.

Development of the Truth of Grace

Hoeksema was a great man of God in that the Spirit of Christ used him to develop the gospel of grace. Not all good and faithful ministers of the word also develop the truth. Herman Hoeksema did.

There is development of dogma in the history of the post-apostolic church. This is the work of the Spirit of truth leading the church to an ever richer, deeper, fuller, and purer understanding of the revelation of Holy Scripture. The Spirit uses theologians for this work. He used Hoeksema.

Hoeksema taught the particularity and sovereignty of God’s grace in the preaching of the gospel. Before him men had confessed the particularity and sovereignty of the grace of God (having its source and standard in divine predestination) in the salvation of the elect sinner with regard to the atoning death of Christ, conversion, justification, and the preservation of the saints. These aspects of the truth of sovereign grace were taught by Augustine, Luther, Calvin, and the Synod of Dordt. Hoeksema applied the truth of God’s particular, sovereign grace to the preaching of the gospel—the actual power that realizes the purpose of election, bestows the benefits of the cross, and accomplishes conversion, justification, and preservation. Not only was the cross particular, sovereign grace (“limited atonement”), not only is the grace of regeneration, justification, and preservation particular and sovereign, not only is Jesus Christ himself in his office as mediator of the covenant and in all his work as Savior particular—a Jesus Christ for the elect only, not for all men—but also the preaching of the gospel of this Jesus Christ, of this cross, and of this salvation is particular, sovereign grace.

As Berkouwer noted, Hoeksema viewed the preaching of the gospel in the light of God’s predestination. God has the gospel of Jesus Christ preached promiscuously and without discrimination to reprobate and elect. By the gospel, he shows all—in their heads and even some-

times in their emotions—reprobate and elect, their great need of salvation and the only way of salvation, namely, believing on Jesus. In the preaching, God commands, or externally calls, all to repent and believe, promising that everyone who does believe will be saved. But his gracious purpose, his loving will, his saving intention, his sincere desire, his effectual “wish” is to save the elect in the audience, and them only. The Spirit of Jesus Christ makes the preaching a mighty power of grace in the hearts of the elect, and them only.

Predestination governs the preaching of the gospel. The preaching of the gospel is grace to the elect, and to the elect only. “As many as were ordained to eternal life believed” (Acts 13:48).

In keeping with the rigorous historical fact that development of the truth always occurs by means of controversy, Hoeksema developed the truth of the preaching as sovereign, particular grace against the teaching that the preaching is a “well-meant offer of grace” to all who hear. This is the teaching that, although God’s grace is particular in predestination, in the death of Christ, and even in regeneration, in the preaching of the gospel it suddenly, strangely, and utterly contradictorily becomes universal. The preaching of the gospel is grace for everybody, reprobate as well as elect. In the preaching of the gospel God wants to save everybody, reprobate as well as elect. In the preaching of the gospel, God loves everybody, reprobate as well as elect. In the preaching of the gospel, God actually tries to save everybody, reprobate as well as elect. Inasmuch as God’s grace in the preaching is universal, it is also necessarily resistible. Grace no longer is sovereign.

This doctrine of preaching—the “well-meant offer”—prevailed in the Christian Reformed Church. The first (and main!) point of that Church’s official decisions of 1924 adopting the theory of common grace as binding church dogma confessed—and confesses—the “well-meant offer.” Today, the doctrine and practice of the “well-meant offer,” which flatly contradicts, weakens, and eventually corrupts everything these churches profess concerning salvation by grace alone, prevail in virtually all the Reformed, Presbyterian, and “Calvinistic” churches in North America and Great Britain. ❖

(to be continued)

Prof. Engelsma is professor emeritus of Dogmatics and Old Testament in the Protestant Reformed Theological Seminary.

Church News

BAPTISMS

“He is the LORD our God: ...He hath remembered his covenant for ever, the word which he commanded to a thousand generations.”

Psalm 105:7, 8

The sacrament of Holy Baptism was administered to: Sophie Marie, daughter of Mr. and Mrs. Eric Armendariz—Cornerstone, IL

Addylee Alyse, daughter of Mr. and Mrs. Josh Dykshorn—Cornerstone, IL

Tyce Evan, son of Mr. & Mrs. Grant Klein—Doon, IA

Alaina Joy, daughter of Mr. & Mrs. Steve Uittenbogaard—Faith, MI

Seth William, son of Mr. & Mrs. Bill Leep—Grace, MI

Dixie Delight, daughter of Mrs. Patricia Brundage—Grace, MI

Kimberly Ellen, daughter of Mr. & Mrs. Peter Boverhof—Grandville, MI

Caleb Randall, son of Mr. & Mrs. Jared Looyenga—Holland, MI

Brielle Joy, daughter of Mr. & Mrs. Kevin Van Overloop—Holland, MI

Annika Lilly, daughter of Mr. & Mrs. Jonathan Kamps—Hope, MI

Ellie Grace, daughter of Rev. & Mrs. Gary Eriks—Hudsonville, MI

Jonathan Ian, son of Mr. & Mrs. Joshua Hoekstra—Hudsonville, MI

Everett Leon, son of Mr. & Mrs. Goerge Kamps—Hudsonville, MI

Keira Se-ha, daughter of Mr. & Mrs. Brent VanderKolk—Hudsonville, MI

Kenton James, son of Mr. & Mrs. Brad Butler—Hudsonville, MI

Jared Steven, son of Mr. & Mrs. Jason Holstege—Hudsonville, MI

Shane Derek, son of Mr. & Mrs. Derek Cnossen—Hudsonville, MI

Claire Michelle, daughter of Mr. & Mrs. Kelly VanVoorst—Hull, IA

Kalaya Grace, daughter of Mr. & Mrs. Nelson Oostra—Hull, IA

Jaylynn Sky, daughter of Mr. & Mrs. Adam Santistevan—Loveland, CO

Drew Martin, son of Mr. & Mrs. Robert Knecht—Peace, IL

Annette Beth, daughter of Mr. & Mrs. Michael Vermeer—Peace, IL

Liam Austin, son of Mr. & Mrs. Tomm Heyboer—Providence, MI

Emily Kate, daughter of Mr. & Mrs. Mike VanderVeen—Randolph, WI

Brielle Carol, daughter of Mr. & Mrs. Josh Feenstra—Redlands, CA

Hunter Louis, son of Mr. & Mrs. Ryan Regnerus—South Holland, IL

Oliver James, son of Mr. & Mrs. Ryan Lathrop—Spokane, WA/Loveland, CO

Eli George, son of Mr. & Mrs. John Kamps—Trinity, MI

CONFESSIONS OF FAITH

“Teach me, O LORD, the way of thy statutes; and I shall keep it unto the end.” Psalm 119:33

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

Brian Landheer—Byron Center, MI

Craig Horvat—Cornerstone, IL

Patricia Brundage—Grace, MI

Mandy Hanko—Lynden, WA

Leah Regnerus—Randolph, WI

Jonathan McKelvey—Redlands, CA

Katie Jabaay—Redlands, CA

Elizabeth Van Drunen—South Holland, IL

Dale Schipper—Southwest, MI

Adam VanDyke—Trinity, MI

Keith VanOverloop—Trinity, MI

Stacy Pastoor—Trinity, MI

Tracy Pastoor—Trinity, 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. Paul Morin and Miss Joy Oosterbaan—Byron Center, MI

Mr. Jahn Huizing and Miss Rachel Tolsma—Edmonton, AB, Canada

Mr. Chad Noorman and Miss Melanie Haak—Georgetown, MI

Mr. Joshua Engelsma and Miss Courtney Rus—Hope, MI

Mr. John Hopkins and Miss Emily Hoekstra—Hudsonville, MI

Mr. Dustin Boven and Miss Nadine Mast—Hudsonville, MI

Mr. Brian Brummel and Miss Faith VanBruggen—Edgerton, MI/Souix Falls, SD

Mr. Michael Brands and Miss Jenna Tolsma—Loveland, CO

Mr. Chad Kamminga and Miss Paula Kooienga—Loveland, CO

Mr. Michael Oosterhouse and Miss Sara Groen—Randolph, WI

Mr. Bart Grochowski and Miss Michelle Zandstra—South Holland, IL

Mr. Dan Boverhof and Miss Lindsey Zandstra—Southwest, MI

Mr. Matthew Jabaay and Miss Kristen Looyenga—Southwest, MI

"LITTLE LIGHTS"

... let it shine!

by Connie Meyer

God Is in Control

Riley sat by the window and watched as the sun slowly dropped behind the trees. Tears dripped down her face as she thought about the day's events. Today during story time their teacher had read them a story about a man that died.

The story was about a man who had cancer and was struggling with it for a couple of years. His wife was always by his side, comforting him through all the trials that he faced. They were very Christian people and through all of their trials and tribulations they not once doubted the will of God for them in their lives. His wife sat at his bedside constantly praying that God's will be done.

Riley sat and pondered this and then walked over to her mom.

"What's wrong, sweetie?" asked her mom as she placed a dish in the sink and set down her rag.

"I was just thinking about the story my teacher read to us today, about a man that died from cancer," replied Riley. "How could God let a man die like that, with all that pain?"

Riley watched as her mom walked over to the shelf and slid out the Bible. She guided Riley to her favorite chair, where they sank into it together.

"Riley, God gives us many trials in our lives, but he is in control of all things. He is constantly watching over his people. He loves his people and would never give to them more than what they can handle."

"So God has our entire lives planned out for us?"

"Let me read to you one of my favorite verses. It is Jeremiah 29:11. 'For I know the thoughts that I think toward you, saith the Lord, thoughts of peace, and not of evil, to give you an expected end.' The Lord has our entire lives planned out and we are not to worry about what is going to happen. We are in God's hands.

"God loves us. So no matter what happens in our lives, God is in control."



Find the underlined words in the puzzle below:

"For I know the thoughts that I think toward you, saith the Lord, thoughts of peace, and not of evil, to give you an expected end." Jeremiah 29:11.

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

This Kid's Page was written by Lisa Kraker as a submission from Mr. Scott Van Uffelen's Senior Writing class at Covenant Christian High School, Walker, Michigan. Lisa is a member of Hudsonville Protestant Reformed Church in Hudsonville, Michigan.

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