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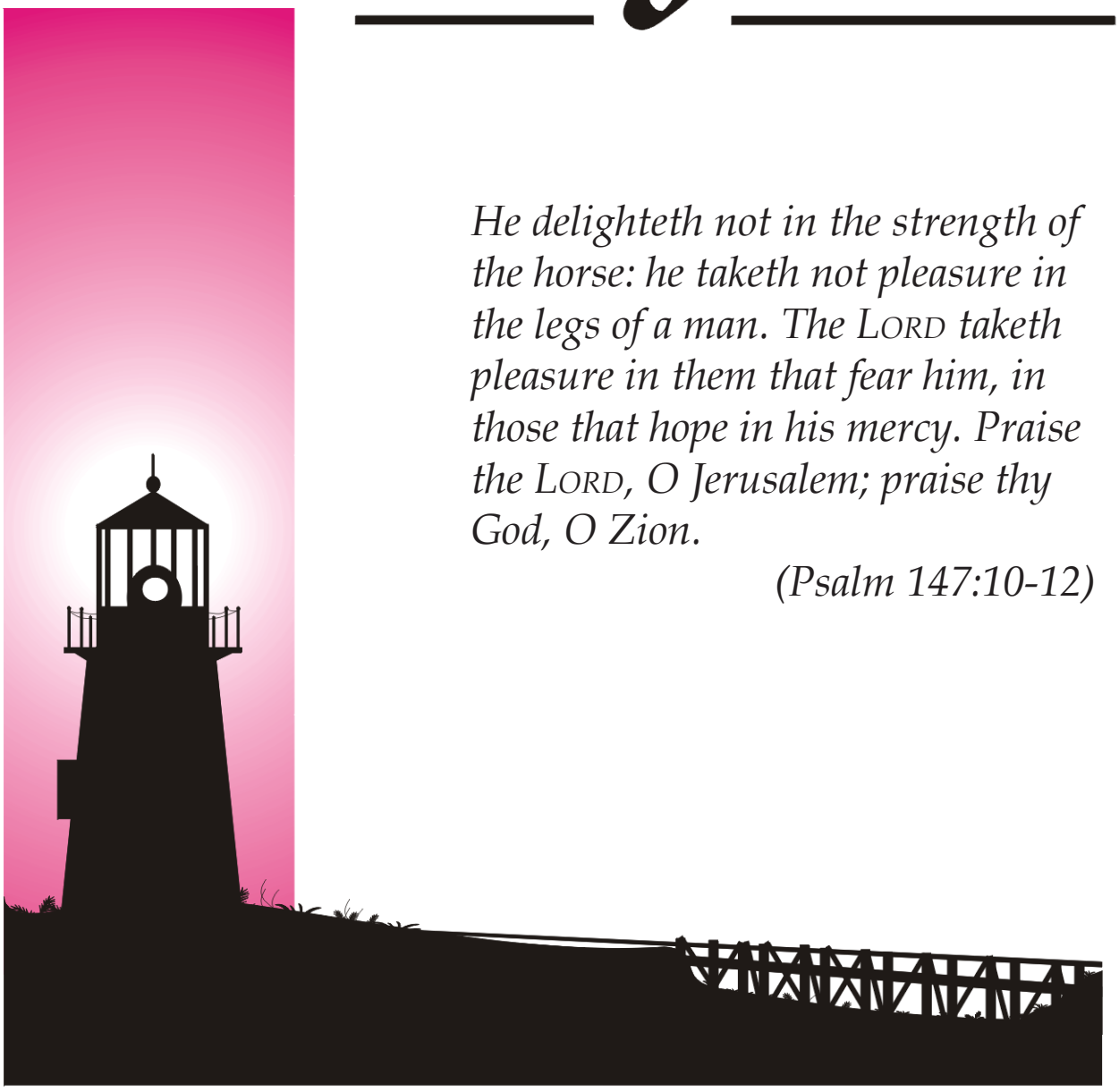

He delighteth not in the strength of the horse: he taketh not pleasure in the legs of a man. The LORD taketh pleasure in them that fear him, in those that hope in his mercy. Praise the LORD, O Jerusalem; praise thy God, O Zion.

(Psalm 147:10-12)

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The Body Fitly Joined Together (3) Learning from Those with Special Needs

by Ryan Barnhill

Last time we considered the sins of pride and envy in the church of Jesus Christ. The church is severely threatened where these sins are allowed to grow and develop. Instead, we are called to see the church as a body, with many members functioning in special, unique ways, all by the grace of God. This time we take a look at members whom we may think are weaker in the body—those with special needs.

You will not find many articles on special needs, especially in a series about church unity. Special needs members, however, play a very important role in the body. Since I am certainly no expert on what it takes to raise such a child, or exactly the role they play, I interviewed some parents who have raised special needs children. I will weave their responses to some of my questions throughout the article.

As we have seen before in this series, the church is compared to a body. Part of the title of this article comes from Ephesians 4:16, a passage that speaks about the church as a body. I Corinthians 12 is another outstanding chapter on the unity of the church as compared to a body. Here the apostle Paul tells us that God has placed every member in the body as it has pleased him.[1] Paul instructs us further: "the eye cannot say unto the hand, I have no need of thee: nor again the head to the feet, I have no need of you. Nay, much more those members of the body, which seem to be more feeble, are necessary."[2] This idea of a body is extended now into our study of the place of special needs members in the church.

It is clear that the church body of which we are a part accepts and loves special needs children and adults. Although some are confined to a wheelchair, or have less developed motor skills, or have a difficult time learning at the pace of other children, people love these kids and adults. The world, too, has recognized their physical and mental weakness and has changed certain things accordingly—handicap buttons which open doors, wheelchair ramps, and education tracks which match the students step for step in their learning disabilities. The church has realized this need—special needs education programs in the Christian schools, special outings and programs for the children, and a generous amount of love shown toward those with mental and physical handicaps.

Although we love them, there may be a temptation that we think of special needs children and adults as weaker in the church, in the sense that they may not play as much of a role as other members. As long as we live on this side of the grave, we are tempted to think of our usefulness and ability to serve in the church as based on our physical strength and mental abilities. Although we would never dare say that special needs people do not play a role in the body, we might still hesitate to think of a few concrete ways that they do serve. What about a boy confined to a wheelchair? What about a man who lives in a home where he must be dressed every morning and fed by others? In what way might they play an important role in the body?

1 I Corinthians 12:18
2 I Corinthians 12:21, 22

As God says in his word, he "taketh not pleasure in the legs of a man."[3] He does not view one's outward appearance or one's mental abilities as a standard of a person's place in the body. We considered this last time a bit with the sins of pride and envy. Man's standards and man's judgments on others are often faulty. Instead of taking pleasure in the legs of a man, God takes pleasure in them that fear him, in those of his people that hope in his mercy, as Psalm 147:11 states. And, so it is, God teaches us how to view others in a right way—according to his standards, and not our faulty judgments.

God indeed uses special needs people as vital organs and muscles in the body of Christ. So important are they that they can, in many ways, be our teachers. Below are some spiritual lessons that parents told me their child has taught them over the years.

First, one parent told me that his child humbles human pride. These children as a whole show us that every breath we breathe, every basketball we have the ability to shoot, every shoe we tie, and every math problem we solve, are gifts of God. When we think that we have these things of ourselves, and do not acknowledge God as our creator and sustainer, we are proud of what we have and of what we can do. Special needs children, for example, who cannot walk or throw a ball, remind us that these things are gifts from God, and not things we create ourselves. God gives to each in the body different physical and mental abilities, and to some he gives more liberally than others.

Secondly, according to another parent, just as many of these children are completely dependent on their caretakers, so they teach us to be completely dependent upon our heavenly Father to provide us with all things. So often, as young people, we can find in our lives that we are so rushed and stressed out. Stress in our relationships, stress at work, searching for a college, trying to pay for college, striving to keep the grades up, and trying to squeeze in ten other commitments besides. We worry—"how will I keep afloat? How will I get through this?" And then we look at the young man confined to a wheelchair, barely able to tie his own shoes, and we learn to trust even as he trusts. We learn to look to Father in heaven, who surely provides for his precious people in Jesus Christ, just as he provides for the birds of the air.

We learn to look to Father in heaven, who surely provides for his precious people in Jesus Christ, just as he provides for the birds of the air.

Thirdly, one parent pointed out something about his daughter that made me really think. He said that he could see in her physical handicap that she was taken aside in a special way to live in fuller communion with God. If we are completely honest with ourselves, God is not allowed a lot of room in our schedules. Bible reading, prayer, and meditation on God's word barely squeeze in between texts, wall posts, work, coffee with friends, a biology lab report, and sleep. May we learn from those with special needs the necessity of taking time to commune with God.

May we learn from those with special needs the necessity of taking time to commune with God.

Furthermore, this parent told me that his daughter taught him and his wife contentment. She may have never ridden a bike by herself or heroically shot the three-pointer to win the game; she may never live the rigorous and joyful life of a mother, but she has the rich opportunity to live in fellowship with her God! In this way, she has contentment that you and I will likely never know. The pleasures and treasures of this

3 Psalm 147:10

earth do not have the hold on her soul as they have on ours.

Young people, may we learn from those with special needs! May we see their great value and importance in the body of Christ. The reasons listed here for their importance only scratch the surface. Do not hesitate to greet someone with special needs, to talk to them, and to show them by your actions and your conversation that they are very much a vital part of the body. One parent told me that simply saying "how are you" fills them with happiness. Learn from them. Pray both for those with special needs and pray for their parents, too, who sacrifice so much to bring up their children in the fear of the Lord.

Next time, Lord willing, we will consider the place of older members in the body of Christ. ❖

Gem of the Month

Black Cloudless Night

Black cloudless night
Earth turns and it gets Brighter
slowly slowly the Sun peeks
Over Horizon in orange and pinks

Shadows disappear and birds Fly
To greet the day as it goes by
Heads turn to feel the Warmth
as rays slant across an open page

A frail hand fingers the pages of the one
who defeated darkness–He brought light
to His people's hearts and Helps us
fight the shadow of sin

So she praises with the songs of birds
and learns the warmth of God's love
As her soul rises in thanks to Him
While birds sweep through clouds Above

—Annonymous

Pitching Away from Sodom: The Reformed Life of Antithesis (3)

by Jonathan Langerak

Because it negates any argument for antithetical instruction, indeed, is the sworn foe of all antithetical instruction; because it destroys the antithesis in the lives of the members of the church; because it devastates the safety of the church; because it brings the world into the church, the Protestant Reformed Churches—and every member of the Protestant Reformed Churches—rejects the failed fiction of common grace. Common grace is the mutual and bitter enemy of the antithesis; it is a worldview in opposition to the worldview of the Reformed.

Common grace is the mutual and bitter enemy of the antithesis; it is a worldview in opposition to the worldview of the Reformed.

For their unqualified rejection of common grace, and of its offspring of the well-meant gospel offer, the Protestant Reformed Churches have been charged as "Anabaptists!" In fact, the Protestant Reformed Churches are not Anabaptist, but Reformed. They are confessional. The proponents of common grace have absolutely no confessional basis whatsoever for their theory. Oh, in 1924, when the Christian Reformed Church adopted as official doctrine the "Three Points of Common Grace" the Synod of 1924 of the CRC pretended to give creedal proof! They did, by misquoting one article from the Canons of Dordt:

> There remain, however, in man since the fall the glimmerings of natural light, whereby he retains some knowledge of God, of natural things, and of the differences between good and evil, and discovers some regard for virtue, good order in society, and for maintaining an orderly external deportment.[1]

But that half-hearted attempt was only a charade, as the second part of this very same article—which was deliberately not quoted by the Christian Reformed Church at the Synod of 1924—exposes it to be:

> But so far is this light of nature from being sufficient to bring him to a saving knowledge of God and to true conversion, that he is incapable of using it aright even in things natural and civil. Nay further, this light, such as it is, man in various ways renders wholly polluted, and holds it in unrighteousness, by doing which he becomes inexcusable before God.[2]

Nowhere in the Canons, indeed, possibly, in all of the Confessions, is found a more damning rejection of common grace than Heads 3&4, Rejection of Errors 5:

> The true doctrine having been explained, the Synod [of Dordt] rejects the errors of those… Who teach that the corrupt and natural man can so well use the common grace (by which they understand the light of nature), or the gifts still left him after the fall, that he can gradually gain by their good use a greater, namely the evangelical or saving grace and salvation itself. And that in this way God on His part shows Himself ready to reveal Christ unto all men, since he applies to all sufficiently and efficiently the means necessary to salvation.
>
> Rejection: For the experience of all ages and the Scriptures do both testify that this is untrue. He showeth his word unto Jacob, his statutes and his ordinances unto Israel. He hath not dealt so with any nation: and as for his ordinances, they have not known them (Ps. 147: 19, 20). Who in the gen-

1 Canons of Dordt, 3&4, 4 in *The Confessions and the Church Order of the Protestant Reformed Churches*, 167.

2 Ibid.

erations gone by suffered all the nations to walk in their own ways (Acts 14:16). And: And they (Paul and his companions) having been forbidden of the Holy Spirit to speak the word in Asia, and when they were come over against Mysia, they assayed to go into Bithynia, and the Spirit suffered them not (Acts 16:6, 7).[3]

Indeed, the Protestant Reformed Churches are not Anabaptist in their rejection of common grace.

They are Reformed.

They are antithetical.

> …common grace as a way of living—as a worldview—has failed.

Moreover, the PRC reject common grace because common grace as a way of living—as a worldview—has failed. The above-mentioned Rejection of Errors notes this: "For the experience of all ages…[testifies] that this [common grace] is untrue." It is a fiction. A failed fiction. Prof. David J. Engelsma writes:

> After 100 years, since the invention of the common grace worldview by [Abraham] Kuyper and Herman Bavinck, the worldview of common grace has proved to be a failure. It has not "Christianized" the Netherlands. It has not "Christianized" the United States. It has not "Christianized" Grand Rapids, Michigan. On the contrary, it has made the people, churches, and schools that advocate and practice it thoroughly worldly."[4]

Common grace has failed because common grace allows the world into the church. This is the honest admission of James C. Schaap, author of the official history of the Christian Reformed Church and zealous adherent to and advocate of Kuyperian common grace:

> I must admit that my own position as an Outward believer [which elsewhere in the book he paradoxically calls "Outward Antitheticals"—JL], one who places significant emphasis on the Christian's place in the culture at large…[that this] is the soft underbelly of the believer whose basic orientation is toward the world."[5]

It was through the "soft underbelly" of Mussolini's Italy that the Allied powers ultimately laid waste to the Axis nations in World War II.

Colorfully exposing this vulnerability of the churches and institutions who have swallowed common grace to inevitable invasion of those churches and institutions—especially schools and colleges—by the world, Prof. David J. Engelsma writes:

> They are attempting to live by a wrong and wholly inadequate power, as though a soldier would go to war with a squirt gun, rather than a machine gun, or would clothe himself with a nightgown, rather than armor. They are vulnerable to the destructive influence of the wicked world.[6]

Why is this so? Because common grace drives out the antithesis! And any philosophy which drives out, does not mention, or does not emphasize the antithesis is "not only false. It is also spiritually dangerous in the extreme."[7] "God has stamped upon common grace his 'Mene, Mene, Tekel, Upharsin.'"[8] If God so judges common grace—the failed fiction of common grace—is not his church obligated, indeed demanded, to do the same?

> Let us as members of the PRC repudiate the world's friendships, especially in our dating and marriages!

The PRC have done this in their history, in 1924. For their rejection of common grace, the PRC were cast out of the CRC and have been largely shunned ever since by the majority of Reformed and Christian Reformed theologians as Anabaptistic. We continue nevertheless to utterly repudiate common grace in our doctrine. Let us continue to do so in our life in the world. Let us as members of the PRC repudiate the world's friendships, especially in our dating and marriages! Let us thank God daily, on our knees, for the membership he in his sovereign and

3 Canons of Dordt, 4, Rejection of Errors, 5 in T*he Confessions and the Church Order of the Protestant Reformed Churches*, 171-172.

4 David J. Engelsma, *The Reformed Worldview on Behalf of a Godly Culture*, (Jenison, MI: Faith/Grandville PRC Evangelism Committees, 2005), 37; emphasis added.

5 James C. Schaap, *Our Family Album: The Unfinished Story of the Christian Reformed Church*, (Grand Rapids, MI: CRC Publications, 1998), 276.

6 Engelsma, *The Reformed Worldview*, 25.

7 Ibid, 40.

8 Engelsma, "The Failure of Common Grace (4)," 486.

particular grace has given to us in the midst of the PRC. Let us show this thankfulness by faithful and engaged church attendance; by eager participation in our faithful, antithetical catechism instruction both as instructors and instructed, and in our societies; by cheerful support of our missions and of our poor and of our own good, PR Christian schools. Primarily and emphatically—indeed, urgently—let us show our thankfulness by our diligent study of our PR distinctives and of our Reformed doctrines as explained and defended from all the ingenious lies of Satan's heretics in the Three Forms of Unity and in the good literature and periodicals published by the Reformed Free Publishing Association and other institutions. Let us know our own history, the record of how God has preserved us in the purity of these doctrines, especially in the teeth of controversy in 1924 (the rejection of common grace and affirmation of the sovereignty, particularity, and irresistibility of God's grace) and in 1953 (the condemnation of Arminianism in the covenant in the form of the conditional covenant and assertion that the covenant of God is gracious, with the elect children of believers in Jesus Christ only). Finally, let us live in the world, being faithful in our marriages and in our careers, living a full life in the world in teaching, in business, in medicine, in art, in music, in cosmetology, in the factory, and on the farm.

But let us not be of the world!

In but not of: this is how the Reformed believer shall live in the world.

This, and only this, is how the Reformed believer will avoid "pitching his tent toward Sodom"! This, and only this, is the power by which the risen Jesus Christ will preserve us in holiness toward God!

This, and only this, brings honor and glory to the name of Jehovah!

This is the antithesis! ❖

Jonathan is a member of Southwest Protestant Reformed Church in Wyoming, Michigan.

Our Young Peoples Federation

Books for Sale

Jesus' Beauty Shining in You — $8.00
An Exposition of Christian Liberty — $4.00
The Implications of Public Confession — $4.00

Requests for books can be made to the Business Office.

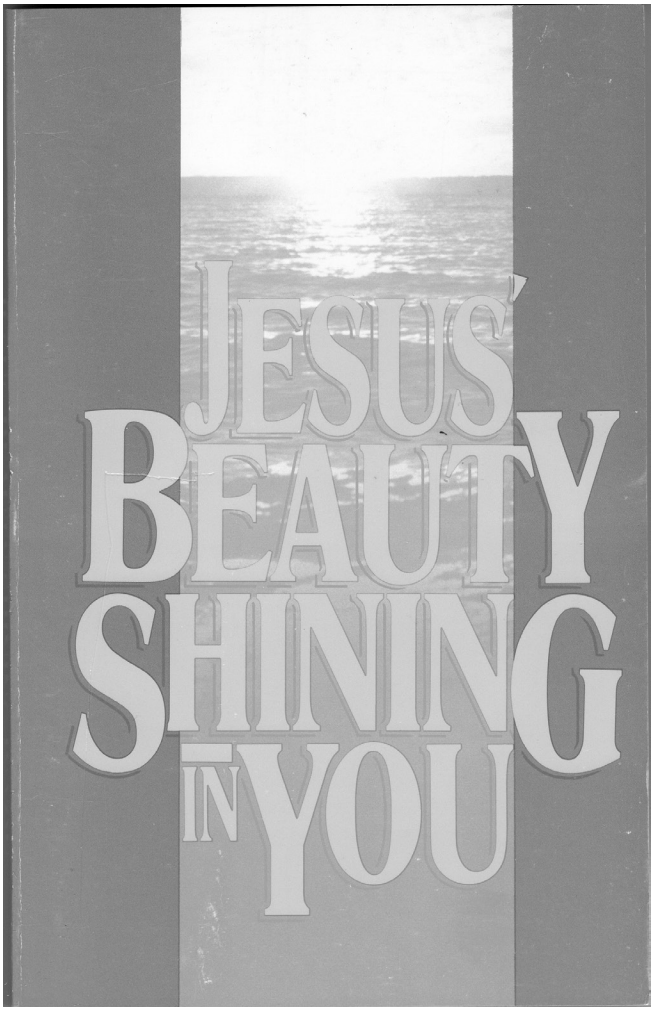
Jesus' Beauty Shining in You

Preface

In the fall of 1984, the *Beacon Lights* Staff and the Federation Board of Protestant Reformed Young People's Societies planned a series of articles to be written and to appear later in book form, on the fruit of the Spirit as given in Galatians 5:22-26. The Fruit of the Spirit first appeared in the *Beacon Lights* in the November issue of 1984 with an introduction written by Rev. Carl Haak. A triad of writers wrote, thereafter, on each fruit: Don Doezema wrote on the fruit shown in the life of Christ, Marybeth Lubbers wrote on the fruit shown in the life of a biblical or historical character, and Rev. Ron VanOverloop wrote on the fruit shown in the life of young people today.

Our prayer is that God will use this book to encourage Reformed young people to live in love, joy, peace, gentleness, meekness, longsuffering, faith, goodness, and temperance. As Rev. Haak wrote, "The work of the Holy Spirit is to conform us to the image of Jesus, so that His love, His joy, (etc.) shine out of us from glory to glory." May God graciously show forth the fruit of the Spirit in our lives.

Beacon Lights Staff
David Harbach, Editor-in-Chief



An Exposition of Christian Liberty

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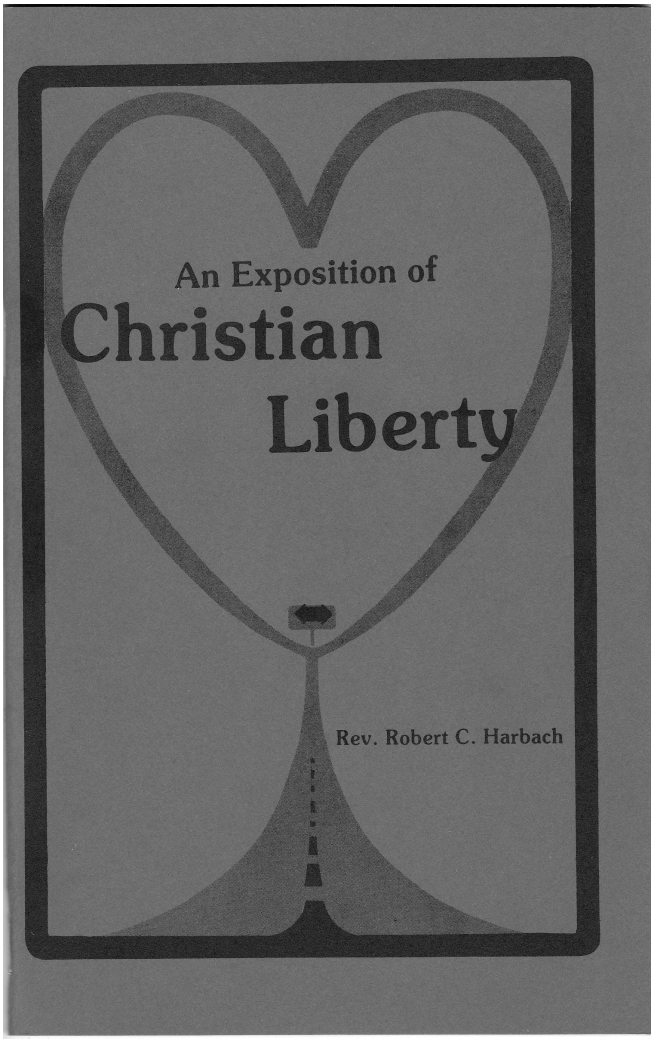
The Implications of Public Confession

Preface

In the past few years, a couple of people approached the editor of the *Beacon Lights* with the idea of re-printing Abraham Kuyper's book *Implications of Public Confession*. The staff quickly agreed to reprint the book and search was made to determine what copyrights still existed on the book. Through the help of a few friends, it was determined that the copyrights on the book had expired, which meant that the Federation of Protestant Reformed Young People's Societies was free to reprint the book. As far as can be determined, the sixth edition



in 1934 was the last printing of the book. The Federation of Protestant Reformed Young People's Societies is therefore happy to provide this excellent work for reading and study by our churches and by our young people.

The main reason for reprinting this excellent work is to provide our young people who will make or who have made public confession of faith with reading and study material on the implications of making public confession in our churches. By reading and studying this book our young people will be made more aware of the responsibilities that become theirs upon confession of their faith. By the encouraging words of Abraham Kuyper, those who make confession of faith will appreciate even more the Reformed faith to which they have confessed agreement.

As Abraham Kuyper says, "…Now she (your church, DH) is willing to admit you to the holy supper, to let you take your place at the Lord's table with the other members, provided that you are willing to confess that their confession is yours…." And also, "Bring that confession to the congregation of believers, and begin to fight one identical warfare with them. They too have nothing of which to boast in themselves…. God is all the praise and honor."

David Harbach editor, *Beacon Lights*

About The Author

Abraham Kuyper was born in the Netherlands. He was a Modernist when he assumed his first charge, but was led, through the influence and prayers of a saintly woman in his congregation, to see that he was feeding his people husks.

He saw the truth of salvation through the blood of Christ and responded by preaching the Gospel with unusual power.

Abraham Kuyper was an outstanding theologian, famous particularly for his Stone lectures. He led the Dutch political party and was prime minister of the Netherlands.

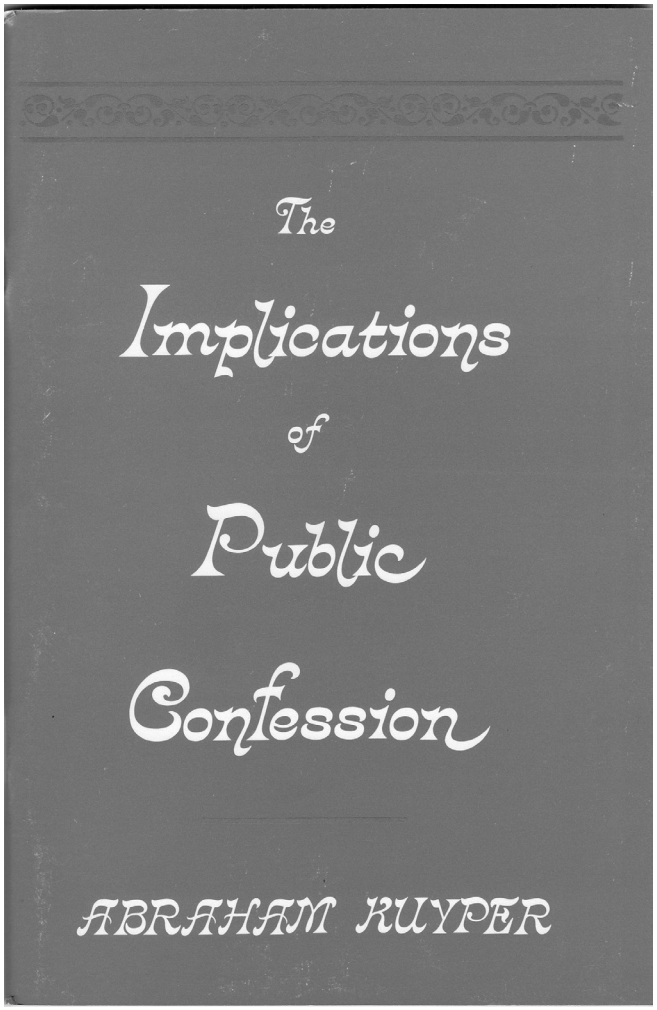
About the Book

Here is a stimulating volume for young people of Reformed persuasion answering the disturbing question, "What is expected of me after I make confession of faith?" Interestingly written and easily understood, this book gives adequate answer to that perplexing question. In a challenging way, Dr. Kuyper reveals how full Christian life does not end but begins with confession of Christ as a personal Savior.

Not only should young people find this book valuable but also Christian parents and church officials will find it desirable for answering questions such as these:

- Why should confession of faith be made publicly?
- Who should make confession of faith?
- Should training be given in preparation for this confession?
- Of what should the preparation consist?
- Is Catechism necessary?
- Is it necessary to examine candidates for Confession?
- What is the relation between confession and being received into the church?

This excellent and worthwhile volume will prove itself indispensable indeed — and will assure interested young people all the facts and "implications of public confession." An ideal gift book (see presentation page). ❖



Watching Daily At My Gates

by Chester Hunter

November 3 **Read II Corinthians 13:1-6**

As Paul comes to the close of this epistle he comes back to two thoughts that he has addressed before. First of all, he shows them that sin cannot go uncorrected. In today's day and age no less than in the day of this epistle, people are allowed to stay in their sin. Paul was not going to allow this to happen in Corinth, and neither may we do this in our homes or churches. Sin is repugnant to God and should be to us as well. Secondly, he speaks of the power of Christ. This truth is the heart of the gospel. Do we seek that heart? Do we promote that heart? Let us fight sin by the power of Christ. Sing Psalter 83.

November 4 **Read II Corinthians 13:7-14**

As Paul closes this epistle to the Corinthians, he reminds them of several things. First of all,he writes about the truth. God's people must walk in the truth and must try all things against the truth. This is the only way that we must live. Secondly, he reminds them of the purpose of this writing. It was not to hurt them but rather to edify them and show them the right way of sanctification. Even when he was sharp, it was for their good and God's glory. Finally, notice in his farewell remarks that he reminds them to live in peace and unity. This was the most evident fault of the Corinthians. We, too, must learn from this. If we do not live in unity with all of our brothers and sisters in the Lord, we will not walk in the truth. Let us think on these things each day, and let us walk in peace and the truth. In this way we will find blessing in the eyes of almighty God. Sing Psalter 369.

November 5 **Read James 1:1-8**

This small book has many practical and informative discussions in it. James writes to Christians who were persecuted in the Roman Empire, but he writes to Christians of all ages. It appears that these Christians were Jewish by lineage and not the Gentiles of Paul's ministry. You notice in this first small section that James addresses several items. First of all there are temptations. The word temptation here probably means trials. Through these trials we are led into a more perfect faith. But in that faith we must have the wisdom described in the book of Proverbs. James also exhorts us to pray. We find that here, and we will come across that same subject later in the letter. These prayers must be by faith and not in our own strength. Those prayers asked in our strength will not be heard by our heavenly Father. Let us pray for wisdom and let us do it by faith. Sing Psalter 202.

November 6 **Read James 1:9-16**

We have two main thoughts in this section of Scripture. First of all,we have the thought concerning humility. Both the Old and New Testaments speak of this sin. It is man's nature to think more of himself than his neighbor or even God. This was the first sin of Satan, and from it proceeds all the other sins. This is the sin that leads church members into so many difficulties. James shows to us that pride gets us nowhere as we all will die like the flower of the field. Secondly, we see the theme of temptations and trials. Temptations and trials are different in that temptations come from Satan and trials from God. A temptation may lead to a trial, but that does not erase the sins committed in the temptation. James wants his brethren and us to not err in this matter. We must not ascribe to God the evil works that are from Satan. Rather, we must fight temptation through the grace given to us by God. Sing Psalter 366.

November 7 **Read James 1:17-21**

James is laying the groundwork for the various admonitions that he is bringing to the church scattered throughout the world. These admonitions have their basis in the fact that good gifts come from God who not only created the whole world and all that is in it, but also formed for himself a people to show forth his glory. Because we have been ordained by God for this purpose, we should live that kind of a life. We must listen to our brother, and we must control all of our actions toward that brother. Our anger does not cause God to be glorified. This section is finished with an admonition to walk the sanctified life of the child of God listening and doing God's Word that is given to us. As Christ said, "He that hath ears to hear, let him hear." Sing Psalter 133.

November 8 **Read James 1:22-27**

After admonishing us to keep ourselves unspotted from the world, James commands us to be doers of God's Word. He first of all explains what that statement means. We are to pay attention to what we both read and hear in that Word. He uses the figure of a person looking in the mirror, seeing a dirty face, and then walking away without washing it. We must look into God's law, see who we are by nature, and then walk in the way of sanctification. The last two verses give to

us practical applications of this truth. We are, first of all, to watch our tongues. James will have more to say on this later so we will wait until then. Secondly, we are to visit and have fellowship with those who are needy in this world. He identifies the orphans and widows. They are only representatives of all who need our fellowship. Let us be diligent to walk with those who truly need us in this world. Sing Psalter 24.

November 9 Read James 2:1-13

The problem that James describes here is one that is ongoing even today. We break the second great commandment which is "to love thy neighbor as thyself." by showing partiality to certain groups of people. We are discriminatory to other groups because of some characteristic that they exhibit. Here James points out that discrimination has appeared because of economic differences. But it could be race or nationality or any other trait. When we have respect of persons, we break God's law. Not only do we break the moral law, but we break the law of Christian liberty which allows us to worship and glorify God completely. We need to pray for the grace to show mercy to all kinds of people so that God may be glorified in our walk. Sing Psalter 69.

November 10 Read James 2:14-26

Those who claim that this passage teaches justification by works are wrong. This passage teaches sanctification. Faith is made manifest by the works of the Spirit in the hearts of the elect child of God. The persons spoken of in this text are already justified. Both Abraham and Rahab, though their faith became visible in a different way, were already elect children of God when the events pointed to in this text took place. The point here is that we cannot just say we are elect and then not live a life permeated by Spirit generated works. Paul called this "quenching the Spirit." It must be our duty and goal in life to glorify God in all that we do, and seek to bring our faith to life. Otherwise, we will live the life described in verse 26. Sing Psalter 326.

November 11 Read James 3:1-7

James, like Solomon in the book of Proverbs, addresses many situations in life and in the church. In this passage of Scripture, he addresses the issue of our speech. He is not looking at profanity in these first verses of the chapter, though that would be an issue that affects the child of God; he is looking at how we use the tongue in relation to our neighbor. One of the ways in which we transgress the commandments is to use our tongue. When words leave our mouth they are impossible to call back. We must be careful about what we say to and about our neighbor. Like a small flame a single word or phrase can incite great damage. We need to ask for grace to control our tongues at all times. Sing Psalter 330.

November 12 Read James 3:8-12

After the opening remarks on the power and nature of the tongue, James turns to how we use our tongues with respect to the neighbor. He uses several figures to show to us what must not be in our lives. Just as a well does not issue forth good and bad water, so must our tongues not issue forth good and bad words about our neighbor. Just as plants only have one kind of fruit, by nature, so must our tongues have only one type of speech. In these verses he also addresses profanity. We must not speak profane words about others or to others. With our tongues we have the ability to praise God and to speak good about the neighbor. What comes forth from our tongues? Do we obey the third and ninth commandments? It takes grace to speak well of both God and the neighbor. Let us ask for that grace daily. Sing Psalter 25.

November 13 Read James 3:13-18

As you read this section of Scripture, did you notice a similarity to James' words and the words of Paul to the church at Corinth? There was strife and conflict within both groups of people. Look at verse 14 again. See where the trouble starts? It does not start with the other person; it starts within our hearts. When we bear a grudge against someone, it blossoms into confusion and evil works. James again draws his audience back to the words of wise Solomon. He draws them back to true wisdom. This is where we must go as well. We must open our Bibles and examine the wisdom that is from above. We must embrace it, and when we do, we will have the peace within and with our brothers that characterizes the true child of God. We will have a small bit of that peace that will be ours in heaven. Sing Psalter 113:1-6.

November 14 Read James 4:1-10

Among God's church at times comes a spirit of contention. James begins this chapter by examining the source of such contention. That source is from within. Our old man is covetous of what others have and desires those things. Or those in the church desire friendship with the world and that leads to controversy. The solution to such things is humility given by grace. This is not a solution found within our natures. We must go to God and ask for the grace to be humble in all situations. The commands given in verse 7-10 are not popular in this world of "me first". Notice the reward in verse 10. True humility in the sight of God results in being lifted up to his throne of grace. Let us seek that humility and walk in peace with our neighbor and especially those who are in the family of God. Sing Psalter 113:7-12.

November 15 Read James 4:11-17

Many of us are planning people. Some will plan for a part of a day; some a whole day; some a week; and some much longer than that. Some plans will be very general, and some will be very detailed. For some, if their plans do not work out, they become very discouraged or even angry. This passage of James speaks to that situation. When we make plans, we should always remember the Latin phrase *Deo Volentie,* or as we see it often D.V. It has the same meaning as verse 25- in short God willing. We must remember that God has made all of our plans for us. It is he who directs our way. Would we

want it any other way? If we, who are tainted with sin in all of our being, make plans, they will be and are flawed from the start. But God, who directs all things for our good and his glory, will cause all to turn out for good. Let us remember this as we plan. Sing Psalter 95.

November 16 Read James 5:1-6

Many of the church members of that day lived in persecution. There is a question about which rich men are being addressed in this part of Scripture. Obviously they are wicked, but are they within the church or without? Really it does not matter. The Word comes to all wicked leaving them without excuse. The riches of this world do not lead to salvation. The wicked use of those riches leads to damnation. Some of God's people then and now are oppressed by wicked rich. In contrast to the picture painted here, James in the next section will bring a word of comfort to the church. Let us not live for the things of this world. Let us live for he who comes on the clouds of heaven. Sing Psalter 156.

November 17 Read James 5:7-11

The first part of this chapter contains a dire warning to the wicked rich who would persecute the church. This section contains words of comfort for the people of God. It returns to a theme found in chapter 1. Go back and see if you can find those verses. James calls the church to be patient and to wait for Christ's coming again. In that day we will be delivered from all the trials and tribulations brought upon us by wicked men. In that patience we must not take out our frustrations upon those in the church around us. This is a very natural happening. We must remember that we, too, will be brought before the almighty judge, God himself. James reminds the church of the examples of the Old Testament. He talks about the prophets and also Job. Let us wait with patience for the coming of him who has pity and mercy upon his people. Sing Psalter 163.

November 18 Read James 5:12-15

As James finishes this epistle, he turns to many practical spiritual matters. He begins by admonishing the church not to swear oaths that cannot be kept. This is part of the meaning of the third commandment. He tells us to say yes or no and to keep our word. Then he goes on to another spiritual matter. This matter is the condition of our hearts. No matter what the condition there is a remedy or solution to that condition. We should be quick to pray knowing that God has given to us this means to bring all our needs to the throne of grace. If we cannot pray on our own, then our duty is to call those who can pray for us. In this way God's name will be glorified and our condition can be alleviated. Sing Psalter 143.

November 19 Read James 5:16-20

James concludes the epistle and this section with instruction on prayer and forgiveness. In chapter 4 he talked about the strife that can be found in the church of Christ. Now he shows the remedy for that strife. Christ's church must be a forgiving church and a praying church. Those two activities will bring peace to God's people. We must confess the sins that we commit against each other, and we must bring those sins to God in prayer for forgiveness from the Most High God. When we do these two things, we will walk in harmony with each other and with God. If we do not, we will not be walking in the truth, and we will be in danger of leaving that truth. Let us forgive one another and let us pray often. Sing Psalter 140.

November 20 Read Psalm 1

Even though the Psalms are familiar and have been written about often, there is something that draws us back to them. That something is that they give to us comfort and help in our daily life, and more importantly, they speak of Christ. As we once again go through the Psalms may they speak to us as they have spoken to the church of all ages. Sing Psalter 2.

November 21 Read Psalm 2

In this Psalm we see the history of the world, and we see the promise of a Savior. The world ever since the fall has looked to do away with God's people. Think of Cain and Abel. Satan would like to eradicate the "mother promise" of Genesis 3. In all their raging God sits on his eternal throne in heaven. His counsel will be carried out; his Son will reign supreme and save his people from all their enemies and sin . As we look at events at history, we can see the heathen raging. Do you almost here God laughing at their futility? Let us take comfort in this Psalm and know that the day of our Lord Jesus Christ will come and he will take us all to heaven. Sing Psalter 4.

November 22 Read Psalm 3

Notice the title to this Psalm. If it is correct, and we have no reason to doubt that it is, David was in a situation that no one would wish on another. He was fleeing from his son. This was a son that he loved, even loved to excess. Now he had to flee his beloved Jerusalem. David does this for the good of his people and God's church. He could have stayed and fought, but he had learned to trust in God during the many months of fleeing from Saul. We see his trust in God in both verses 5 and 8. Do we have this kind of trust? Do we love God and his church so much that we do not worry about any situation and put our trust wholly in Jehovah. This takes grace, people of God. Let us approach the throne of grace and seek help in the time of our need. Sing Psalter 5.

November 23 Read Psalm 4

Even though the title does not indicate it, this seems to be a companion to Psalm 3. There is a similarity of thought found in it. David realizes, as we must, that salvation, safety, and comfort come only from God. Notice the number of times he uses the word LORD which is actually Jehovah. David has the confidence that he is part of God's covenant, and in that covenant he finds comfort. This should be our comfort as well. Even as God has friendship within himself so we can find friendship like none other in the covenant. When the day is over, David confesses that he can sleep the blessed sleep

of the righteous for he knows that he is comprehended in the covenant of God. May God bless us and keep us in our way that is ordained by him. Sing Psalter 8

November 24 Read Psalm 5:1-6

As we read through the Psalms, we will see how many times David calls upon God in prayer. David learned that this was a valuable experience for the child of God. Have we learned this lesson? Do we understand the importance of prayer in our lives? We should learn this at very young age. The practice of children praying at mealtime and before going to bed is important. Do our teenagers continue such a practice? Are we as adults faithful in our prayer lives? As we learn to take our needs to God's throne of grace, we will learn of the value of that practice. We will be confident in a time of need to pray. Let us heed Paul's admonition, "Pray without ceasing." Sing Psalter 11.

November 25 Read Psalm 5:7-12

Along with prayer David reminds us of faithful church attendance. If we are not faithful in our attendance, we will find no blessing from God. Only in that way may we be assured that God will lead us in his righteousness. To miss church is to miss our spiritual meals. There may be times that God prevents us from attending church, but those should be the only times that we miss. In the way of faithfulness we will find occasion for joy in the name of God. That joy will sustain us throughout the week. Not only will we feel that joy but we will experience the blessing and favor of God as he cares for us at all times. Sing Psalter 10.

November 26 Read Psalm 6

The Psalmist is in the midst of correction from sin. The evil doers are all around him vexing him greatly. He finds no comfort in sleep or his bed. But then he turns to God in prayer. God hears his prayer and gives to him an answer of peace. He has confidence that that will be so as we see in verse 9. Do we remember to turn unto our God in prayer? As we wallow in doubt and despair, this is what we must do. Even as we lie sleepless on our beds at night, we can go to God in prayer with confidence because Christ sits at his right hand. Let us remember this; let us go to our God in prayer. Sing Psalter 12.

November 27 Read Psalm 7:1-9

This seems to be a song and prayer that David offered as he was fleeing from Saul. Try to put yourself in that situation. The king of the country you love and have helped often now chases after you with one goal. He wishes to kill you. David could do nothing but trust in the Lord his God. He had nowhere else to turn. God did that for a reason. That reason was that David would learn the ability to trust in God alone. God sometimes puts us through situations that should make us learn this ability. Are we learning? Do we put our trust in God alone? Let us ask for the grace to trust and obey the one who saves us from all our foes. Sing Psalter 13:1-4.

November 28 Read Psalm 7:10-17

As David finishes this Psalm, he looks at the plight of the wicked. God judges all men; those who do not turn from their evil way will face the final judgment of hell. It seems that it does not matter what happens to them; they refuse to turn. This shows their true character as it is ordained by God. They have been reprobated by God and cannot turn. We, like David, must see this happening in the world around us. When we see it, we must be instructed to not walk in such a way. And, like David, we must give God the glory as we read in verse 17. God is righteous in all that he does; of that, there is no doubt. Sing Psalter 13:5-7.

November 29 Read Psalm 8

There are Psalms that speak to the child of God in a way that nothing else can. This is one of those. David extols the name of God and realizes that there is no name like it. He also knows that there is no God like Jehovah. He is made aware of this as he looks at the world of nature. David spent his early life out in that natural world as a shepherd. He saw the spacious heavens and the celestial bodies they contained. He heard them speak the name of God to him. He saw the world of animals and knew that man had been placed in dominion over them. The natural world awed him and he realized that it was humbling that God had placed man in that creation. May we look at creation and thank the creator for the grace he has given to us each and every day. Sing Psalter 15.

November 30 Psalm 9:1-10

No matter what may trouble us in this life, we have this confidence. Jehovah God will endure forever. Not only will he endure, but his promises do as well. Because of this we need not fear. During this life he provides for us a refuge in any storm. Whether it be physical, mental, or spiritual, he will be our fortress. We can trust that God will care for us because he does not forget us. At the end of time judgment will come. For God's people this will be a time of rejoicing as they approach the throne of judgment secure in the knowledge that their Savior will plead for them. With these two thoughts let us rest in assurance that all will be well. Sing Psalter 17.

December 1 Read Psalm 9:11-20

Singing provides to us God's Word in a way that lifts up our hearts and strengthens our minds. It does not matter what situation in which we find ourselves, the songs of Jehovah will give to us the comfort that we need. God has given to us the songs found in the book of Psalm for that help and comfort. When we learn them well, they will come flooding over us in our time of need. David in this Psalms obviously was facing some kind of enemy. In his troubles he stops and says, "Sing praises unto God." Do we want this confidence? Then we must learn the Psalms and they will bring to us comfort in our distress. Sing Psalter 16:5-9.

The Heidelberg Reformers: Too Young?

by Joshua D. Engelsma

The work of God in history is always an amazing and awe-inspiring thing. But there are certain times in the history of the church that truly make the believer's jaw hit the floor in astonishment at the wonderwork of God.

"God did what?"

"He did this when?"

"He used that man? Of all people, that man?"

One of the outstanding examples of this is the Heidelberg Catechism. Would you believe it, young people, if I told you that our beloved Heidelberger, the creed you learn in the catechism room and hear preached from the pulpit every Sunday, was written by two young men not much older than you are now? "Impossible!" you say. Yet, in his infinite wisdom, God chose two men, one twenty-eight years old and the other twenty-six, to write one of the most beautiful statements of faith that has ever been written, a statement of faith which is still in use almost 450 years later.

The first man was Zacharias Ursinus. Ursinus was born on July 18, 1534, in the city of Breslau to poor parents. When he was about fifteen years old, he left Breslau to study in the great Reformation city of Wittenberg. There his enormous God-given talents caught the eye of one of the professors, Philip Melanchthon, who was a great friend and co-laborer of Martin Luther. The two became fast friends. Under Melanchthon, Zacharias learned a great deal about the faith of the Reformation, the faith which he later encapsulated into the Heidelberg Catechism.

Zacharias Ursinus

After his studies in Wittenberg were complete, Ursinus traveled throughout Europe sitting under the feet of many great teachers, including Calvin himself. Calvin even gave the young traveler a signed copy of his written works. Ursinus eventually came home to teach in his native Breslau. But soon there was trouble there. The Lutherans in the city were upset that their son was leaning in the direction of the Reformed view of the Lord's Supper. The backbiting reached such a pitch that Ursinus eventually left his hometown and went to the city of Zurich. From Zurich he was called by Frederick III, ruler of a region called the Palatinate, to come and teach in his school in the capital city of Heidelberg.

The decision to move to Heidelberg was not an easy one. By nature, Zacharias, although extremely gifted, was shy and reserved. His desire was to find a quiet corner in which he could study in peace. He did not want the scrutiny and attention which he was sure to get in Heidelberg. In this way he was very much like another young man we have looked at—John Calvin. But Ursinus went anyway. God had a great work for him to perform there.

The second man was Caspar Olevianus. Olevianus was born in the Roman Catholic city of Treves on August 10, 1536. Unlike his future colleague Ursinus, Olevianus' parents were more well-to-do. They could afford to send their son to the best schools in Europe. So off he went to Paris at the age of fourteen to pursue a career in law. While in France, young Caspar came into contact with the Huguenots, those faithful French Protestants who were persecuted so severely for their faith. Caspar even attended some of their secret meetings. Their staunch stand for the faith no doubt made a mighty impression on the young man.

Caspar Olevianus

There was one experience in France that affected Olevianus like no other. A fellow student, who just so happened to be the son of Frederick III, fell out of a boat commandeered by a bunch of drunken boys. Caspar dove into the water to try to save Frederick's son, but he was unable to reach him. In fact, Olevianus himself almost drowned. At that moment, Caspar promised that he would preach the Reformed faith in his hometown of Treves if God would spare his life. Olevianus survived, and he never forgot that promise. And Frederick never forgot the boy who had tried to save his son's life.

Once his studies were completed in France, Olevianus traveled throughout Europe just as Ursinus had done. He met such great reformers as Calvin, Peter Martyr Vermigli, Theodore Beza, and William Farel. It was Farel, that fiery servant of God who had detained Calvin in Geneva, who ordered Caspar to return to Treves to preach the gospel there. Caspar obeyed and was eventually tossed into prison by the Catholic authorities. It was only after much pleading by Frederick III (and the transfer of much gold) that the bold young preacher was released and taken to Heidelberg.

So, Frederick III now had the bold preacher Olevianus and the brilliant teacher Ursinus both in Heidelberg. But why? The simple answer is that the city of Heidelberg was divided. It had officially declared itself for the Reformation in 1546, but there was so much infighting, especially between the Lutheran camp and the Calvinist camp over the doctrine of the Lord's Supper. The animosity had even escalated to the point where a Lutheran minister and a Calvinist deacon grappled over the communion cup in full view of the entire congregation! Things had reached a head, and Frederick III knew it. He himself had studied the matter and was convinced that the Calvinistic view was in accordance with the teaching of Scripture. But what to do about all the fighting?

Frederick had a solution. He wanted his land to be united in a common confession of the truth, including the truth of the Lord's Supper. Therefore, he commissioned his young scholars Ursinus and Olevianus to draw up a confession which all preachers and teachers would have to hold to. The two young men began their work in 1562, and by the start of 1563 the beautiful Heidelberg Catechism was complete. One historian writes,

> The peculiar gifts of both, the didactic clearness and precision of the one [Ursinus], and the pathetic warmth and unction of the other [Olevianus], were blended in beautiful harmony, and produced a joint work which is far superior to all the separate productions of either. In the Catechism they surpassed themselves. They were in a measure inspired for it.[1]

The two young men began their work in 1562, and by the start of 1563 the beautiful Heidelberg Catechism was complete.

The Heidelberg Catechism was not only intended as a means of uniting the citizens of Frederick's kingdom under a common confession. Rev. Hoeksema writes, "From the outset…the Heidelberg Catechism served the double purpose of catechetical textbook and symbol of the Church."[2] The Catechism was intended as a means to instruct the youth of the church. It was meant to be used in the catechism room, just as it is still today in our Protestant Reformed Churches. This is evident from what Frederick III wrote in his introduction to the Catechism:

> …we also have ascertained that by no means the least defect of our system is found in the fact, that

1 Philip Schaff, *The History of the Creeds*, vol. 1 of *The Creeds of Christendom* (New York: Harper & Brothers, 1919), 535.

2 Herman Hoeksema, *The Triple Knowledge: An Exposition of the Heidelberg Catechism* (Grand Rapids: Reformed Free Publishing Association, 1970), 1:12. Emphasis mine.

> our blooming youth is disposed to be careless in respect to Christian doctrine…
>
> …it is essential that our youth be trained in early life, and above all, in the pure and consistent doctrine of the holy Gospel, and be well exercised in the proper and true knowledge of God.[3]

The Catechism, therefore, was written by two young men for the children and young people of the church.

As was mentioned at the beginning, it is a wonder of God's grace that two men in their twenties wrote the Heidelberg Catechism. First of all, it is a wonder because of the doctrinal clarity and depth. All of the doctrines of Scripture are clearly laid out in the 129 Questions and Answers. This level of understanding is uncommon in twenty-something year olds. Secondly, the writing of the Heidelberger is a wonder because of the way in which it is laid out. It is not laid out logically like the Belgic Confession, but rather it proceeds from the idea of comfort and traces the experience of the believer from sin, to deliverance, to thankfulness. It all begins with that soul-stirring first Question and Answer:

> Q. What is thy only comfort in life and death?
>
> A. That I with body and soul, both in life and death, am not my own, but belong unto my faithful Savior Jesus Christ; who, with His precious blood, hath fully satisfied for all my sins, and delivered me from all the power of the devil; and so preserves me that without the will of my heavenly Father, not a hair can fall from my head; yea, that all things must be subservient to my salvation, and therefore, by His Holy Spirit, He also assures me of eternal life, and makes me sincerely willing and ready, henceforth, to live unto Him.

The wisdom and comfort in this approach is also uncommon in young people. But, it attests to the fact that God is pleased at times to work amazing things through young people such as Caspar and Zacharias, and you and me.

To his Name be all the glory! ❖

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

3 Quoted in Fred Klooster, *The Heidelberg Catechism: Origin and History* (Grand Rapids: Calvin Theological Seminary, 1989), 150-151.

Quiz from Acts

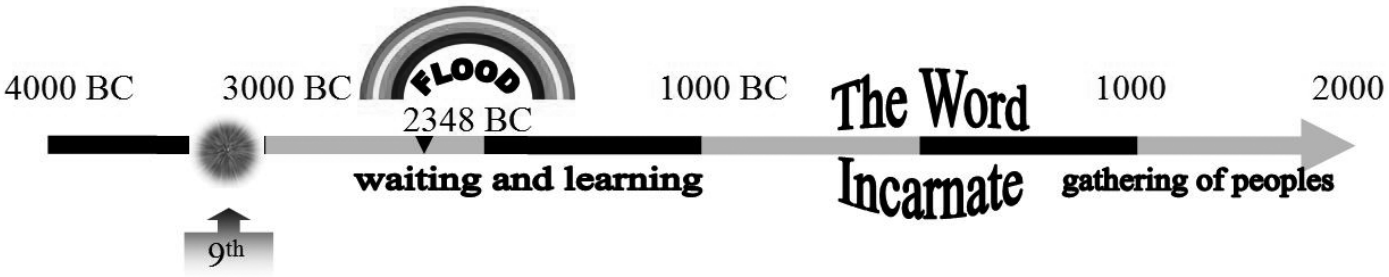
1. Why did the Apostles, in a meeting described in the first chapter of Acts, hold a sort of election?
2. When Peter and John were "Straightly threatened" by the council, why did they refuse to heed the warning?
3. Why did Gamaliel advise that Peter and John should be allowed to continue preaching?
4. Why did Paul set out from Jerusalem to go to Damascus?
5. Until Barnabas went bond for him, the church at Jerusalem refused to accept Paul. Why?
6. After Herod had "killed James the brother of John with the sword," he arrested Peter also. Why?
7. In Lystra, Paul and Barnabas were taken for gods and the local priests tried to offer a sacrifice to them. Why?
8. Shortly afterward, in the same city, Paul was stoned. Why?
9. Why were Paul and Silas imprisoned in Philippi?
10. Why did Paul make his last journey to Jerusalem, when (Acts 20:23) he knew it to be very dangerous?

See answers on page 22.

Taken from The Bible Quiz Book *by F. Hall and used by permission of Baker Book House.*

The Ninth Century of His-Story:
The Eyes Grow Dim That Had Seen Paradise

by John Huizenga



God reveals two important events in Scripture which took place in the tenth century: Adam's death at 930 years old, 30 years into the tenth century, and Enoch's translation into heaven fifty-seven years after Adam died. For this segment of history we will consider those years of Adam's growing old to his death. Next time, the Lord willing, we will consider the translation of Enoch.

When the eyes of an elderly saint who has lived to experience a great event of history grow dim and then close to this life, there is a sense in which that history dies as well. That history does not live within the hearts of those who live on but have never experienced it themselves. The history is viewed from a distance, but can never again be touched and experienced first hand. The only man who had experienced Paradise, had felt his heart sink from the righteousness and beautiful grace of God to the depths of guilt and shame, and had heard the wondrous promise of a seed who would conquer the awful power of sin, was now very old and near unto death. Would the memory of walking in the cool of the evening in covenant fellowship die with him? Would the sense of guilt, and the thrill of hope in God's promise stay with the church?

Adam had waited all his life for the fulfillment of God's promised seed, but the power of sin only seemed to grow, and no sign of a savior able to crush its head ever appeared. Yet the evidence of the power of God's grace and faithfulness was apparent in godly children and the church which surrounded him. His heart was filled with joy and wonder, as well as concern that God's revelation to him through the history of his life be passed on to them. If he was to die before God's promise was fulfilled, the church must learn to cherish that knowledge and carry it to the next generation.

Life in the sin cursed world is busy now, and it was busy then. Children, young people, planting, weeding, harvesting, feeding, rearing children, growing, learning, playing, experiencing, chasing ambitions, sorrowing, rejoicing – life is busy! It often is not until God takes away health or strength that we sit still and really think about real life - life with God. It is then that we begin to realize just how much of our busyness is just that: vain busyness. Adam was growing old in the middle of a very busy world, and he could see more and more how important it was for the church to set priorities, make time for devotions and instruction, and especially cherish the day of worship established by God. No greater joy filled his heart at this point in life, than to see the children, the young people, and the busy parents set aside their daily work, and listen in rapt attention to the preaching of God's word. It renewed his hope to see the young people show true sorrow for their sins, and find comfort in the promised redemption. When he could see that longing in their eyes for that perfect covenant fellowship with God that he had enjoyed, then he was assured that God

would preserve that knowledge with his people. Then he was ready to die and go home to his heavenly Father.

It is the same with elderly saints today. Nothing grieves them more than to find the children and young people of the church uninterested in the truth that God has revealed and recorded in the Bible, and cherished and developed by the church through the ages. It brings sorrow to see all the energy of youth and the resources of covenant parents invested in careers, large homes, and earthly wealth instead of the establishment and maintenance of sound, God glorifying schools and catechism instruction. As his eyes grow dim, so do the hopes of God's continued blessings for such families.

By this time in Adam's life, God had revealed to his church the fundamental truths of man's spiritual condition before the holy God: His sovereign power in creation, his sovereign power to accomplish his purposes, his great love and mercy toward the church, and had planted the hope of full redemption and covenant life with him in the promised Savior. Adam held a precious heritage. Today we are able to enjoy, as believers, the full accumulated treasure of the revelation of God and his plan of salvation in Christ. When the apostle Paul considered the faithfulness of God through the ages, he exclaimed in faith "O the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of God! how unsearchable are his judgments, and his ways past finding out!" (Romans 11:33) As we live in the last days and await the return of Christ, we are called as a church to mine these riches, polish them, and display their glory to each generation.

How do the elderly saints feel as they observe our busy lives today? Do we ask questions and listen with interest to their experiences in church life? Do they find us reading material that will keep us alert to life in the church world? Do they find us diligent in our catechism studies and thankful for Christian schools? Today we increasingly witness with horror what happens when the church becomes busy in the things of the world, loses interest in the treasures of God, and looks for a quick and easy solution to salvation. Churches which have a history rooted in the release from Rome's bondage, have forgotten and do not really care what Luther or Calvin exposed, and are quite content to let the priests, bishops, and pope promise salvation with the help of good works. The treasures of knowledge and wisdom lay in dusty heaps or are kicked around like worthless stones. Let us pray that God continue to pour out the power of his grace upon us and our children that we might see and cherish the heritage we have.

God has preserved the truth of his word through many generations. Not only does he raise up men like Methuselah and Enoch to lead his people in the green pastures of his word, but God also works mightily in the hearts of his sheep a hunger and thirst for that word. We can be assured that this will continue until the last sheep has been born, fed, and prepared for glory and his place in the kingdom of God. To God alone be all the glory. ❖

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Scholarship Essay

Strength Found in Unity

by Joe Holstege

"For as the body is one, and hath many members, and all the members of that one body, being many, are one body: so also is Christ" (I Corinthians 12:12).

A certain young man was in a dire predicament. He was in the middle of a vast desert, far out of reach of any other human life, and he was terribly thirsty; so thirsty that he thought he might die from dehydration. The odd thing about this situation is that this certain young man was plunked right next to a small reservoir of water in a desert oasis. Why does not the young man simply walk to the water's edge, lean over, and take a drink with his hands? Of course, this is the obvious question that arises! The answer is that this is no ordinary young man! His different body parts will not listen to the commands he has been sending them

from his brain. Rather than functioning as a whole body by following the impulses from his nervous system, each of his body parts has its own plan to retrieve water. One hand stretches toward the water as far as possible, while the other tries to dig a hole deep enough to reach the ground water. Each of the young man's legs has attempted to carry him to different sides of the water reservoir, which in the end has only forced him into a painfully stretched position. The young man looks toward the sky at the circling vultures which are prepared to destroy him should his body parts fail to unify.

The fictional story of this young man serves as a parable to draw out the truth concerning the church as the body of Christ which was written by the inspired Apostle Paul in his first epistle to the Corinthians. Such a young man as in the parable could never survive in reality. The same principle applies to the church as the body of Christ. Without an attitude of unity, working together as individuals for the welfare of the whole, the church would be destroyed by her enemies.

The aspect of this parable which makes it almost laughably ridiculous is the fact that the water, the one thing the young man needs to survive, is right next to him, and yet he remains unable to reach it. The young man was thirsty, and yet he could not satisfy his thirst because of the disharmony among his members. In much the same way, the church is, was, and always will be thirsty for Christ. He is her vitality. The one thing that she cannot live without!

Christ makes himself available to the church. However, the church can jeopardize its access to him when it divides itself into sects, each of which stubbornly refuses to submit themselves to the greater benefit of the whole. Rather, such division lays waste to the church and leaves her vulnerable to her enemies. The enemies of the church, like the vultures in the story, are ever present, searching out her weaknesses and waiting for the right moment to annihilate her. The difference for the church, as opposed to the dying young man, is that her enemies might not be as obvious as a few circling scavengers. The Apostle Peter instructs the church in regards to the threat of the church's great opponent, Satan, in the fifth chapter of his first epistle: "Yea, all of you be subject one to another, and be clothed with humility…because your adversary the devil, as a roaring lion, walketh about, seeking whom he may devour." Notice what defense is offered in the text. Each member of the church must humbly submit themselves to the other members as a safeguard against the devil. It is fortunate for the church that God in his limitless wisdom has given his people the spectacles of his Word through which they are able to recognize danger.

Submission is not something that comes naturally, nor is it easy. It is a command in Scripture that goes against the nature of fallen man, and yet it is necessary for the survival of the church. Each man and woman of the church must walk in submission toward each other and to Christ. Submission is such a hard thing for the members of the church that all would fail except for the wonderful truth found in Ephesians 4:7: "But unto every one of us is given grace according to the measure of the gift of Christ." The Apostle Paul in the fifth and sixth chapters of his epistle to the Ephesians speaks of all the ways the different members of the church are called to submit themselves to each other. Specifically, he speaks of wives submitting themselves to their husbands, children submitting themselves to their parents, and servants, or in the modern world, employees submitting themselves to their employers. In much the same way, believers are called to submit themselves to the office bearers in the church. By way of submitting one's self to these different authorities, he is submitting himself to Christ! However, one must understand that the Holy Spirit is given to all believers so that even though the distinctions of authority found in Ephesians five and six and other passages exist, the person in authority must remain humble. For instance, if a parent behaves foolishly because of their sin, but is then humbly and wisely admonished by their child, they must submit themselves to the wisdom found in the child's voice. In this way the people of God show their love for each other and for Christ.

The reason for submission becomes clear when one considers the differences among the people of God. Each member of the church is given different abilities and also different trials. No one member is perfect, but rather all are totally depraved in themselves. On the flip side, each church member is given different spiritual gifts which make them unique individuals. These differences in gifts and trials are not merely for the sake of the individuals themselves, but are for the sake of the others in the church as well. One could picture the church as a giant puzzle, the pieces of which fit perfectly together to make one whole. If the puzzle is missing one piece, then everything which that piece added to the picture is lost and so is the picture itself as a result of incompleteness. The church is one body which is composed of many different individuals who are just as different from each other as a hand is from a foot, but in the same way are just as necessary for each other.

So, each individual ought to strive to recognize the things which God has given them to make them unique,

and how then, to use those things which set them aside for the sake of Christ's church, even if it causes them pain or grief. In the world, each person is encouraged to find something that sets them apart and makes them unique such as earrings, drastic looking make-up, pants which are two sizes too big and thus drag along on the floor behind them. However, the individuality of the world is not for the benefit of anyone else, but for themselves. They want to look cool or fit in for their own satisfaction, rather than submit themselves to the benefit of anyone else. This is an attitude of rebellion more than anything else and is directed at the words of the Confession of Faith, Article 27, which says that the church "is joined and united with heart and will, by the power of faith, in one and the same spirit."

It is hard to stay focused on the benefit of others when the old man of sin screams for the gospel of self. More than anything, each man wants to do whatever it is that suits his own interest. It must be clear to the church that this kind of attitude is sin. God gives grace to those who ask him for it. James 1:4 says, "If any of you lack wisdom, let him ask of God, that giveth to all men liberally, and upbraideth not; and it shall be given him." Let each member of the church pray for the grace to submit his or her self to the benefit of the church, and let each member pray for church unity.

The young man continued to stare at the circling vultures as the first one dropped into a ferocious dive. The young man closed his eyes and desperately called out to God to save him from his plight. The prayer helped him to relax as he put himself in God's hands. He felt safe, even though all appearances suggested his impending doom. Then, outside of his control, his arm muscles simultaneously contracted and helped to push him to his feet. His leg muscles then flexed in union, carrying him stride by stride to the water's edge. The vulture screeched, and then sullenly veered off, knowing that the young man would now have the strength to fight him off. The water was cold and refreshing. He drank deeply, giving gratitude to God for his salvation that day. ❖

Joseph is a member of Southeast Protestant Reformed Church in Grand Rapids, Michigan.

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Church News

BAPTISMS

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

The sacrament of Holy Baptism was administered to:

Nathan Timothy, son of Mr. & Mrs. BJ Mowery—Doon, IA

Moriah Jo, daughter of Mr. & Mrs. Joel VanEgdom—Doon, IA

Garrett Peter, son of Mr. & Mrs. Eric VanDyke—Faith, MI

Jordynn Presley, daughter of Mr. & Mrs. Brad Schut—Grandville, MI

Allison Jeanette, daughter of Mr. & Mrs. Jonathan Key—Grandville, MI

Sailor Ruth, daughter of Mr. & Mrs. Joe VanOverloop—Grandville, MI

Easton Cruz, son of Mr. & Mrs. Nathan Dykstra—Grandville, MI

Ella Grace, daughter of Mr. & Mrs. Matt VanOverloop—Holland, MI

Mattea Joy, daughter of Mr. & Mrs. Nathan Maassen—Hull, IA

Allison Jae, daughter of Mr. & Mrs. Zach VanGinkle—Hull, IA

Bennett Timothy Joel, son of Mr. & Mrs. Joel Zylstra—Immanuel, Lacombe, CAN

Isaac James, son of Mr. & Mrs. Matthew Span—Immanuel, Lacombe, CAN

Nala Rae, daughter of Mr. & Mrs. Robert Span - Immanuel, Lacombe, CAN

Mitchell Ryan, son of Mr. & Mrs. Stephan DeJong—Peace, IL

Abigail Grace, daughter of Mr. & Mrs. Chad Skolny—Pittsburgh, PA/Southwest, MI

Hudson James, son of Mr. & Mrs. John Pipe—Providence, MI

Gracia Beth, daughter of Mr. & Mrs. Kyle VanBaren—Randolph, WI

Brandon Todd, son of Mr. & Mrs. Shaun Karsemeyer—Redlands, CA

Quinn Jillian, daughter of Mr. & Mrs. Mike Kerkstra—Southeast, MI

Marta Alice, daughter of Mr. & Mrs. Tim VanderMeulen—South Holland, MI

Megan Debra, daughter of Mr. & Mrs. Greg Duerr—Spokane, WA

Adult baptism was administered to Ashley Wesorick—Grace, MI

CONFESSIONS OF FAITH

"Ponder the path of thy feet, and let all thy ways be established." Proverbs 4:26

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

Steven Ophoff—First, MI

Larissa Burgers—Hull, IA

Shantelle Gritters—Hull, IA

Nicole Groeneweg—Hull, IA

Michael Hilt—Hull, IA

Marissa VanBemmel—Hull, IA

Alann Penaverde—Philippines/Doon, IA

Breanna VanEgdom—Sioux Falls, SD

Jennifer VanDonselaar—Southwest, MI

Scott VanPutten—Southwest, MI

MARRIAGES

"Trust in the LORD with all thine heart; and lean not unto thine own understanding. In all thy ways acknowledge him, and he shall direct thy paths." Proverbs 3: 5 & 6

United in the bond of Holy Matrimony were:

Mr. Jon Pastoor and Miss Alyssa Hoekstra—First, MI

Mr. Kenny Terpstra and Miss Lynelle VanOverloop—Grace, MI

Mr. Tim Dykstra and Miss Sarah Brummel

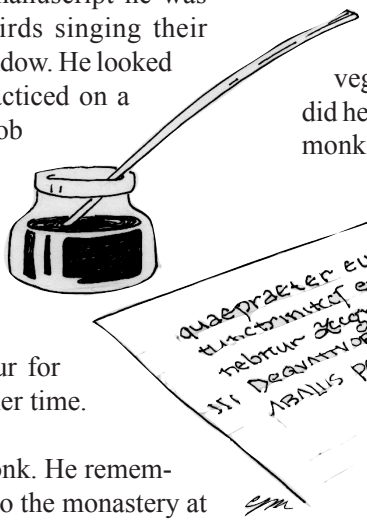
Mr. Jeremy Essenburg and Miss Jill Hoffman—Southwest, MI

Answers to Quiz from Acts
on Page 17

1. To choose a successor for Judas.
2. They said, "whether it be right in the sight of God to hearken unto you more than unto God, judge ye." Acts 4:19.
3. His argument was: "If this counsel or this work be of men, it will come to naught; but, if it be of God, ye cannot overthrow it." Acts 5.
4. To arrest any Christians whom he might find there. Acts 9.
5. They feared (and naturally) that he might be a spy. Acts 9:26-27.
6. "Because he saw it pleased the Jews." Acts 12:2-3.
7. Because of their healing of a lifelong cripple. Acts 14.
8. "Certain Jews from Antioch and Iconium" came to the city and grossly slandered him. Acts 14, (How violently changeable people can be!)
9. Because of the healing of a slave girl, whose "spirit of divination" had been a source of profit to her owners. Acts 16.
10. He went to see old friends and also, and especially, to take a gift from new converts to the mother church at Jerusalem. Acts 24:17.

Gottschalk: Lone Voice in the Night (2)

The young monk bent over the manuscript he was copying and sighed. He heard the birds singing their springtime songs and looked out the window. He looked down at his writing again. He had practiced on a cookbook and had done a fine enough job to be assigned texts from Augustine and other church fathers. It was tedious work. His shoulders ached. The last line was almost complete and he did not want to spill any ink now.



The bell from the abbey rang. Gottschalk wiped his brow. It was the hour for prayers. He could finish the page another time.

If there would be another time.

Gottschalk did not want to be a monk. He remembered the day his parents brought him to the monastery at Fulda, well over ten years ago. He remembered the goodbyes. Then his parents left him there. He was so young, he had had no choice in the matter.

His parents meant well. They believed monks and priests were more holy than other people. The church said so. To live away from the world in a monastery, to own almost nothing, and to have no wife or children to distract him—all those things would make him more holy. The church said so. And Gottschalk did want to live a holy life. But he wondered about these things as he made his way to the abbey. He saw the crypt where the bones of St. Boniface were kept, the martyr killed by the Friesians. Maybe God made martyrs more holy, he thought as he gathered with the other monks.

Rabanus Maurus, the abbot of the monastery, was by the altar. Gottschalk had learned much under Rabanus and the other teachers at Fulda. This was one of the best places in the whole empire to receive an education. But still, Gottschalk did not want to be a monk. He could inherit land, for his own father was rich. He could have a family. He closed his eyes in longing for these things. Then he opened them and watched Rabanus raise his hands in blessing.

Rabanus would not be pleased with these thoughts, Gottschalk knew. Rabanus had told his students over and over: a vow can never be broken. Never. But how could a monk be held to vows he had been forced to make? Rabanus was a wise and reasonable man. The Synod of Mainz was to be held this June in 829. The men there should be sensible, too. Surely anyone would be able to see that such vows do not have to be kept. He would appeal to the Synod of Mainz.

At supper, eaten in silence, he had time to think. The vegetables were few, but Gottschalk did not notice. Nor did he mind the lack of meat. These rules of the Benedictine monks about food were not his main concern at the moment. Gottschalk was deep in thought about the Synod of Mainz. He was sure those men would understand his case.

And they did, partly. His inheritance would still belong to the church, but the men said he could be released from his vows as a monk. He was free! Gottschalk's heart was filled with joy at that. He could not wait to gather his few belongings and leave the walls of the monastery behind—although his freedom would be more difficult without an inheritance.

But this was an unusual turn of events. Some of his fellow monks looked at him cautiously. Here was a monk who was trying to forsake his vows—vows that they were keeping. And what would their abbot Rabanus Maurus say? The heart of Rabanus was filled with emotion, too. But it was not with joy.

"LITTLE LIGHTS" . . . let it shine!

by Connie Meyer

Find the underlined words from the following text in the puzzle below:

"Now the Spirit speaketh expressly, that in the latter times some shall depart from the faith, giving heed to seducing spirits, and doctrines of devils…forbidding to marry, and commanding to abstain from meats which God hath created to be received with thanksgiving of them which believe and know the truth" (I Timothy 4:1-3).

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

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

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A godly man, Young Joseph was.
His brothers' sheaves bowed down to his.
So let us too be standing sheaves,
That all can see where our trust is.

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August 8-12, 2011 at the
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