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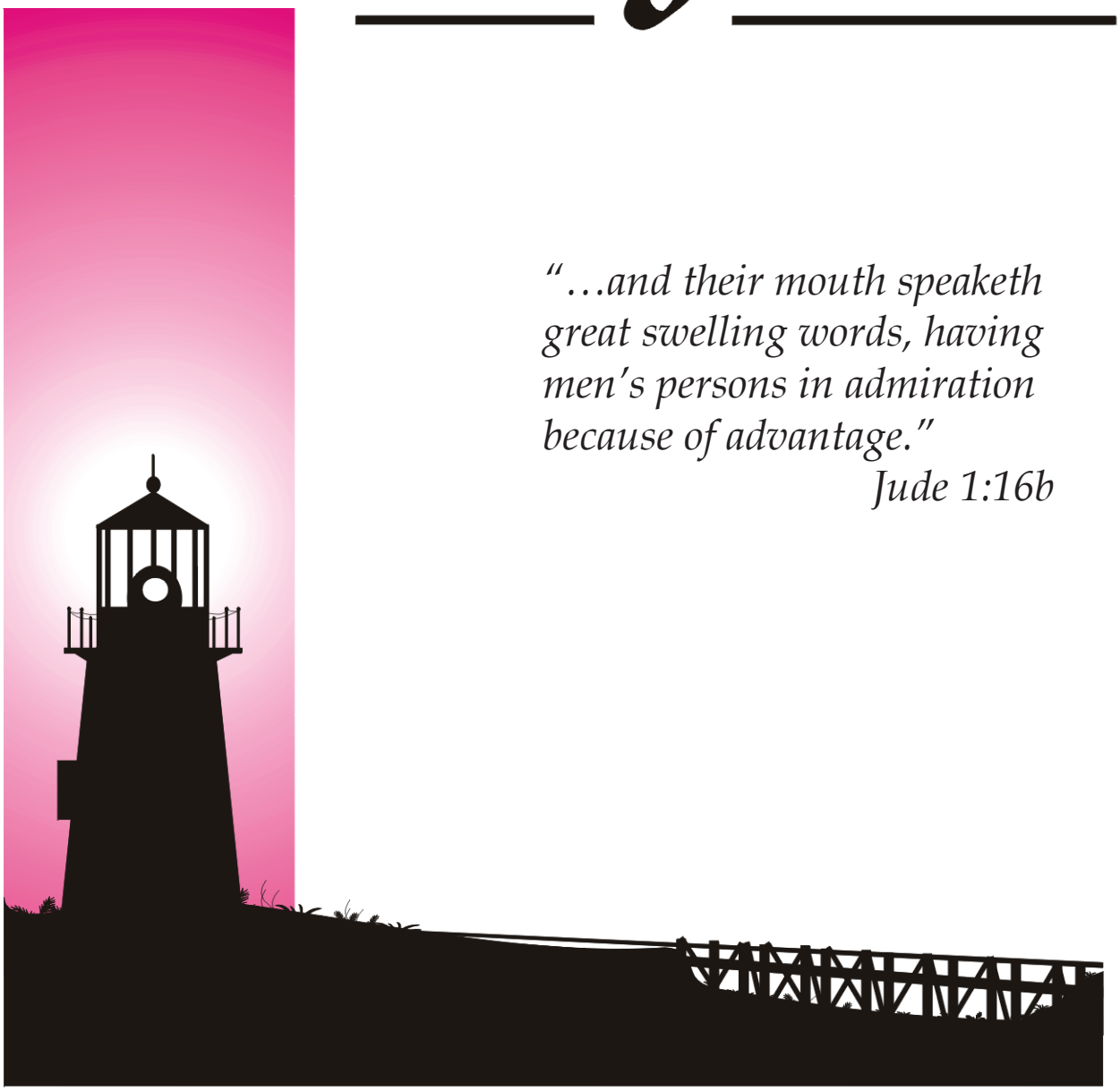

"…and their mouth speaketh great swelling words, having men's persons in admiration because of advantage."

Jude 1:16b

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Ascension — Pentecost

by Rev. C. Hanko

Triumphant Easter, day of first-fruits, in which Christ arose as victor over sin, death and the grave.

Glorious ascension. for he went through the heavens to Father's throne, where he was crowned with glory and honor to rule over the works of God's hands.

Blessed Pentecost, feast of harvest, when he came to dwell with us in the Spirit, to bless us with all spiritual blessings from heaven and to take us unto himself that we may be where he is.

Without his ascent into heaven there could be no outpouring of the Spirit on Pentecost, no more than there could be an ascension without the resurrection from the grave. Nor could there be a resurrection unless it was preceded by the atoning death of the cross, no more than there could be a cross unless the Son of God came into the likeness of our sinful flesh, born of the virgin.

Christmas, Good Friday, Easter, Ascension Day and Pentecost are so many links in the chain of our salvation, filling our hearts with joy and praise to God.

Yet Ascension Day is a forgotten occasion. And Pentecost suffers the same lot.

Who would forget Christmas? If for no other reason than that the stores and display windows are decorated in festive array weeks in advance and carols are as popular as turkey on Thanksgiving. Even Good Friday gains recognition, and Easter vies with Christmas in growing popularity. But who bothers about Ascension Day or Pentecost?

Even in the church the interest waxes warm at Christmas time, for the story of the Christ-child never seems to lose its appeal. Also the passion weeks, climaxing in Good Friday, hold our attention to the suffering and death of the cross. And interest once more flames high on Easter as we follow the rapid flow of events on the amazing, glad day of the resurrection. But we need a special note on our memorandum pad to remind us of Ascension Day, and a similar note, twice underscored, not to forget Pentecost.

What may be the reason? Are these last two occasions less important than the others? Is it of lesser importance to the church of Jesus Christ here on earth that Christ ascended to heaven and poured out his Spirit upon the Church than that he was born, suffered, died and arose again on the third day? Perish the thought.

Or is it because historical facts, which always have a special appeal to us, are somewhat lacking at these last two occasions? It is true that the story of Christ's ascent into heaven is very brief. The historical facts of Jesus' last appearance to his disciples on the mount. His final words, his being received up into heaven, so that a cloud received him out of their sight, and the sudden appearance of the angels and their message, are all soon told. And the known facts accompanying the outpouring of the Spirit are also few. There was the fact that it was Pentecost and the disciples were all with one accord met in one place awaiting the promise of the Spirit. There were the signs of the rushing, mighty wind, cloven tongues as of fire sitting upon each of them, and the speaking in various languages. There was the gathering of the multitude that had come together to investigate more closely into these things that were noised about, the speaking of the disciples to each in their own language, the reaction of the people and the sermon of Peter, followed by the conversion of about three thousand souls. More facts than could be mentioned about the resurrection. Yet, when we stop to think of it, do we have so many facts immediately connected with the birth of Christ that Christmas should take such a predominant place, even in the church? And even so, what do we have left if we have nothing but the historical facts of Christ's birth and death and resurrection? What spiritual value lies in a mere story, if we lose ourselves in that? A story cannot save us, no more than it can fill our hearts with praise to God.

The facts of the case seem to be that there is some natural appeal to the historical events connected with Christ's life on earth. That appeal we fail to find in the ascent into heaven and the outpouring of the Spirit. Yet

if we lose ourselves in that natural appeal, Christ's birth, suffering, death and resurrection cannot have any real significance for us. Nor will we look forward in anticipation toward the commemoration of Ascension Day and Pentecost.

The shepherds found more than a mere babe in the manger. They found the promised Messiah, the Saviour, born in poverty and shame to bring glory to God and peace on earth in the people of his good pleasure. When Jesus died on the cross the disciples lost more than a friend and master, for they confessed him to be the Christ, the Son of the living God. When he died they seemed to have lost all for time and eternity. Therefore the glad clay of the resurrection left Mary Magdalene without her Rabboni, but enriched her and all the true disciples with the hope of an eternal and blessed reunion in Father's house with its many mansions. The resurrected Lord has gone into heaven, whither he now dwells and rules over all things, whither he blesses us with all spiritual and eternal blessings in the Spirit, and whence we expect him in that day when he will change our vile bodies into the likeness of his glorious body. Christ in heaven means more to us than his presence on earth could ever mean. Besides, he is busily engaged in preparing a place for us there, and preparing us for that place, that we may be where he is. And he will take us unto himself in a perfect and eternal reunion in glory.

Of that we are assured through his Spirit in our hearts. Triumphant Easter.

Glorious Ascension.

Blessed Pentecost. ❖

Reprinted from Volume III, No. 8, May, 1943, by the late Rev. C. Hanko then pastor of Oak Lawn Protestant Reformed Church in Oak Lawn, Illinois.

Poem

Daffodils

I wandered lonely as a cloud
That floats on high o'er vales and hills,
When all at once I saw a crowd,
A host, of golden daffodils;
Beside the lake, beneath the trees,
Fluttering and dancing in the breeze.

Continuous as the stars that shine
And twinkle on the milky way,
They stretched in never-ending line
Along the margin of a bay:
Ten thousand saw I at a glance,
Tossing their heads in sprightly dance.

The waves beside them danced, but they
Out-did the sparkling leaves in glee;
A poet could not be but gay,
In such a jocund company!
I gazed—and gazed—but little thought
What wealth the show to me had brought:

For oft, when on my couch I lie
In vacant or in pensive mood,
They flash upon that inward eye
Which is the bliss of solitude;
And then my heart with pleasure fills,
And dances with the daffodils.

—William Wordsworth

Haiti Earthquake

Dear Editor Huizenga

I read the articles about Haiti and earthquakes in the March *Beacon Lights* with great interest, but some of the arguments left me bewildered. Allow me to submit my thoughts and I hope that you can publish them in a future issue.

In the fourth paragraph of your editorial you somehow manage to link Haiti rescue efforts to common grace. It is not clear to me how, for example, using computers, bulldozers, or airplanes to rescue starving children is an example of the heresy of common grace. Moreover, I don't know how many non-Christian rescue workers you have conversed with, to judge that they all went to Haiti so that they would achieve great glory. The ones I talked to were moved with compassion and hoped to bring some healing to suffering people. (More about that later).

On page 6 Rev. Decker also deals with "sinful man." Sinful man, he says, measures the earthquake, forecasts a volcano, and tries to prevent famine and illnesses. I'm not quite sure how forecasting a tornado or trying to prevent and/or cure illness is a sign of godlessness. Are there no Protestant Reformed physicians who try to alleviate suffering?

Rev. D. gives a gruesome catalog of all the evils and suffering in human history, including natural catastrophes. His only explanation for this suffering is: "This is divine necessity. God brings these things." I wonder if he does not allow secondary physical, scientific explanation. Think of thunder and lightning. They are cited in Revelation as signs of the end times (8:5; 16:18). Do PR members try to avoid the lightning and urge others (including non-Christians) to do so and thereby try to escape God's actions of judgment, and the divine necessity of God's wrath? Or do they go out into the storm or stay inside a rickety house as the earthquake begins? After all, says Decker, "be not terrified. Rejoice and be very glad"—no matter how many children in Haiti are killed. If an influenza pandemic or another "pestilence" is threatening, do PR members inoculate their children and urge their non-Christian neighbors to do so? But should they not rest in divine necessity and "rejoice" because God is bringing these things? Do the scientists in the PR community not use the principles of cause and effect and might they not tell a PR congregation not to build a church on the most threatening fault line in California?

Sherry Van Egdom writes in the same vein: "I had the privilege of witnessing the power of God as he struck Haiti with an incredible earthquake. This was not a privilege from an earthly point of view, but from a spiritual point of view, for we see God's glory when his power is displayed in such a fashion." For Sherry it's not only a necessity, but "God's glory"! One feels like yelling, "But Sherry, over 200,000 people were killed!" On TV I saw them use bulldozers to push the dead bodies into mass graves—I will never forget that terrible sight. Thousands more lived, but their bodies were crushed, others lost arms, legs, eyes, face, and the hunger and disease was just beginning. Sherry, were your 'spiritual' heart and eyes closed to compassion when you saw the mangled bodies of little children?

This brings me to Scripture. I just finished reading the book of Matthew again and noticed how important Jesus' healing ministry is. Often the healings are introduced with "Jesus had compassion on them," and then he cures one or two (e.g. 20:34), or dozens or more (15:30). (The original meaning of pity is "having your bowels yearning!") That combination of having pity on suffering people (whether they are believers or not) and curing them is one of the greatest concerns/tasks in Jesus' earthly ministry. And he orders his disciples "to heal all manner of sickness" (10:1). Never once does Jesus seem to wonder if these illnesses had been brought on by "divine necessity" or by the people's own sin. People suffer—Jesus has pity—he heals the "lame, blind, dumb, maimed, and many others." (15:30). Indiscriminately! Again, when John the Baptist wonders if Jesus is the Christ, Jesus "proves" that he is, mostly by pointing to his healing. The application seems clear. If we are to be like Jesus and carry on his ministry, we need hearts of compassion, of "feeling with people," and do all we can

to alleviate suffering. Indiscriminately!

Another applicable Scripture is the story of the "Good Samaritan" (Luke 10:25-37). John Calvin and (all?) Reformed Bible commentators assume that the Samaritan is not a believer. And this man has compassion and helped the injured man in every possible way. Just as Jesus would have! And Jesus says to the Pharisee (and all of us), "Go, and do thou likewise."

This parable brings me back to the *Beacon Lights* articles. I could see the Samaritan as a rescue worker going to Haiti—out of compassion. And it would not occur to me to see him as a worldly "common grace" person trying to establish his own glory. No, I would thank God for this person's compassion and his desire to alleviate suffering.

And that's what ultimately makes me sad about the articles and the theology displayed. Where is the compassion? Where is the Scriptural application to be found in the healing of Jesus and of the Samaritan? Where is the call to help in any way possible to alleviate this terrible suffering? In those five pages of theology and rejoicing about the suffering coming in the end times, there is one sentence (thirteen words) that only hints at mercy, at healing, and doing likewise. And even then it's a lame sentence: "And when we can, let us give in the name of the Lord."

Harry Boonstra
Theological Librarian–Emeritus
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P. S. I will be glad to suggest ways how your readers can give and help the Haitian people.

P. S. 2. Incidentally, I was delighted by Ms. Van Egdom's working in Haiti, first with a dental team and then a trauma team. However, as far as I can tell, there is nothing in the articles that would suggest why she would or should do so. Did I miss something?

Editorial response

You make a number of thought provoking and important points in your letter, and I appreciate the opportunity to clarify my point and discuss issues you raised. In an effort to explain how "using computers, bulldozers, or airplanes to rescue starving children is an example of the heresy of common grace," we should get the three points of common grace before us as set forth by the CRC in 1924:

> In addition to the saving grace of God, shown only to those who are elected to eternal life, there is also a certain favor, or grace, of God shown to his creatures in general.
>
> Since the fall, human life in society remains possible because God, through his Spirit, restrains the power of sin.
>
> God, without renewing the heart, so influences human beings that, though incapable of doing any saving good, they are able to do civil good.

In regard to the third point, one practical illustration described in the Wikipedia article on common grace is as follows: "Providential blessings to mankind—Human advancements that come through the unredeemed are seen as outcomes of God's common grace. For example, medical and other technological advancements that improve the lives of both the redeemed and unredeemed are seen as initiated by common grace." It is the advancements so described that I had in mind when I wrote "Haiti offers an opportunity for the fruits of common grace—the relief organizations, technology, and human care—to be displayed on a grand scale for all the world to see." If one believes that it is a certain grace of God that results in helpful technology as well as the desire to use it to help with the rescue of starving children, then one would also be quick to point out how wonderfully this grace is being revealed against the dark and devastating backdrop of the earthquake.

Some of the other points you made regarding sinful man, divine necessity, and God's glory end with your concern for the lack of compassion in five pages of the March issue of *Beacon Lights*. I would like to address some of the questions raised about a practical life ruled by knowing a sovereign God, but first address what seems to be the heart of your concern: "And that's what ultimately makes me sad about the articles and the theology displayed. Where is the compassion? Where is the scriptural application to be found in the healing of Jesus and of the Samaritan? Where is the call to help in any way possible to alleviate this terrible suffering? In those five pages of theology and rejoicing about the suffering coming in the end times, there is one sentence (thirteen words) that only hints at mercy, at healing, and doing likewise. And even then it's a lame sentence: 'And when we can, let us give in the name of the Lord.'" You are right, that was a pretty lame sentence. Much more can be said about compassion and our calling to "give to drink unto one of these little ones a cup of cold water only in the name of a disciple" (Matt. 10:42).

There is no doubt at all that we as believers are called to live a life of thankful gratitude to God, and demonstrate our gratitude not only in an attitude of love toward our neighbors, but to give willingly of our time and resources in acts of love. It is love that is rooted in compassion which is literally "suffering with" someone else. In such compassion, we forget all about ourselves and never think whether or not the one in need is a friend or enemy, rich or poor, Christian or Muslim. We show compassion not to fill a spot on our resume, not because we know the good feeling that comes afterward, and not because everyone else is doing it. We think only of the needs of the one suffering. The love and compassion that God demands of his children must include, but also go beyond the natural compassion that human nature displays. It is a love that flows out of our love for God; from one who knows that he is not his own, but belongs, body and soul to God. It is the kind of love that Jesus illustrates with the parable of the "Good Samaritan."

In your letter you write "I could see the Samaritan as a rescue worker going to Haiti." Perhaps, but don't you think the lawyer would be interested in going too? The only people he was not ready to see as a neighbor were the people who had in one way or another done him injury or despised him. I see no reason to believe that the helpless Haitian who has never done anything to offend, would be just the kind of neighbor this lawyer had in mind when he asked, "and who is my neighbor?" The point of the parable of Jesus was to reveal a deeper, more profound kind of love and compassion than the normal human love and compassion that God providentially preserves in the world for the sake of the gathering of his church. Often it is those people who are closest to us who can arouse in us scorn and disgust and therefore are the most difficult to love. The Samaritan had compassion on a man going from Jerusalem to Jericho, and therefore likely a Jew which despised the Samaritans. If Jesus would have told a story about a Samaritan going as a rescue worker to help some Zidonians in need, the lawyer would have been quite pleased to respond that he would be happy to do it too and thus fulfill the whole law of God.

Jesus demanded that the question be turned around when he says, ask yourself: "am I being a neighbor to those I find among thieves?" In other words, am I one who "shows mercy" (Luke 10:37)? Am I someone who is known by everyone around me to be "the neighbor/merciful one"? Am I someone who would have compassion on a man like Zacchaeus who just cheated me and forced me and my family onto the street because I could not pay the debt on my home? One who immediately identifies the Hatian orphans as his neighbors today and sends $1000, but in his daily life he so devotes himself to career or hobby that he neglects the needs of his wife and children is a good example of the lawyer who asked "what must I do to inherit eternal life?" He is one who is only going to give for causes that don't require giving oneself, don't require a pride wrenching denial of self and pride, helping those who are far away and have not offended or injured him. When we understand what being a neighbor entails, we are not really interested in the question "who is my neighbor?" We certainly love those that love us, but we really don't know the love of God yet, really aren't being neighbors, until we "love our enemies, bless them that curse us, do good to them that hate us, and pray for them which despitefully use us, and persecute us" (Matt. 5). Our compassion compels us to send money or help out the Haitians in other ways, but we may not do it as a smoke screen for not being neighborly to all those who cross our path of life.

Though it is a gracious work of God in the heart of the believer to engage in such work, and through it display the mercies of Christ, it is not a work of grace in the heart of the unbeliever. The only outward difference between the believer and unbeliever as they might work side by side in relief efforts is the fact that a believer brings the comfort of the gospel along with his or her help. As difficult as it may be for us to understand, it is God himself who says that "the tender mercies of the wicked are cruel" (Prov. 12:10).

On the flip side, it may also be difficult for our human mind and heart to grasp the truth that the sovereign God does not helplessly watch children wander about the rubble of their home, but rather is in sovereign control and has from eternity determined such pain and suffering. Again, as difficult as this is for us, we humbly submit to his word and say "But our God is in the heavens: he hath done whatsoever he hath pleased" (Psa. 115:3). What he pleases is not necessarily pleasing or comprehensible to us; "Out of the mouth of the most High proceedeth not evil and good? Wherefore doth a living man complain, a man for the punishment of his sins? (Lam. 3:38-39). We may not be fooled into thinking that a common grace of God is being displayed when we see the bowels of the world yearn at the suffering of so many desperately needy people. To do so is unbiblical and makes God unfaithful to his bride, the church in Christ.

Non-Christian rescue workers were moved as you state "with compassion and hoped to bring some healing to suffering people." If these created instincts within man were destroyed with Adam's fall, this world would be a

terrifying place to live and unfit for the birth and growth of the church. This compassion and hope is a part of human nature that is necessary for human survival. God in his sovereign work of gathering his people throughout history and from the nations of the earth is pleased to preserve the entire framework of the universe along with the gentler feelings of man. The people of God through the Levites confessed of God, "Thou, even thou, art LORD alone; thou hast made heaven, the heaven of heavens, with all their host, the earth, and all things that are therein, the seas, and all that is therein, and thou preservest them all; and the host of heaven worshippeth thee" (Neh. 9:6). Whatever we see of the non-Christian, unbelieving world doing things to alleviate suffering in the world is due to God's preservation of the world, not his grace.

Compassion is a normal human response to those who endure great suffering and loss. This emotion is greater in some than in others, and for various reasons and circumstances it may be virtually nonexistent in some. The believer has every reason to cultivate this quality within himself and let it show forth in concrete action. But to say that curing the sick and alleviating suffering was "one of the greatest concerns/tasks in Jesus' earthly ministry" ignores much of Scripture and misses the point of this work of Jesus. If alleviating suffering was a goal of Jesus, he would have accepted the nomination to become an earthly king (John 6:15). Every time Jesus healed, he directed the attention to the need for the healing of spiritual sickness, repentance and the forgiveness of sin. God made this power to heal one of the signs that Jesus was indeed the Christ, the promised Messiah who would crush the head of the serpent as promised. Everything Jesus did pointed to his high priestly work as the Lamb of God who has taken away the sin to make the whole people of God, the church, holy and fit for eternal covenant life with God. It is not, therefore, our chief calling to "do all we can to alleviate suffering indiscriminately," but primarily to support the preaching of the gospel indiscriminately.

Regarding the articles by Rev. Decker and Sherry Van Egdom you raise some questions about the lifestyle and condition of the spiritual eyes of those who believe in divine necessity and the glory of God displayed in the Haiti earthquake. In that connection you suggest a "secondary physical scientific explanation." I would assume then that viewing the earthquake as a natural result of the earth's tectonic plates grating past one another would shield God from responsibility of causing an earthquake that would kill children. One who understands these scientific explanations would also then use her scientific knowledge of the earth and its forces to protect herself with technology instead of ignoring technology and living helplessly under divine necessity.

I'm not quite sure what to think about your conclusion. Personally I am quite fascinated by forecasting technology, remote sensing technology that orbits our planet, and the incredible surge of knowledge gained about the workings of earth and its atmosphere. The more we learn about this creation, the more I am inclined to declare: "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!" (Rom. 11:33). I don't fret about every possible danger the earth and its germs provide, but I don't stand under trees during a thunderstorm either. I am not sure what you mean by "divine necessity." I believe in the sovereignty of God in salvation as well as in his providential upholding of all creation as expressed in the answer to question 27 of the Heidelberg Catechism:

> The almighty and everywhere present power of God; whereby, as it were by his hand, he upholds and governs heaven, earth, and all creatures; so that herbs and grass, rain and drought, fruitful and barren years, meat and drink, health and sickness, riches and poverty, yea, and all things come, not by chance, but by his fatherly hand.

I believe God knows the exact position of every electron orbiting every atom in the universe at every moment in time. Having created the earth, he created it along with the position of every cloud and the moment of each earthquake determined before in his eternal counsel. I also know the promise of God: "There shall no evil befall thee, neither shall any plague come nigh thy dwelling. For he shall give his angels charge over thee, to keep thee in all thy ways" (Psa. 91:10, 11). When Satan suggested in the light of this revelation of God that Jesus jump from the pinnacle of the temple, Jesus' response was, "Thou shalt not tempt the Lord thy God" (Matt. 4:7); and that is the response for anyone who believes in the sovereignty of God and is encouraged to test that faith by ignoring what I would prefer to call "laws of creation." There is no inconsistency between believing God's word as it stands and true scientific knowledge. ❖

The Gift (12)

by Tom Cammenga

His wife had attended this church for many years and yet he had never once stepped foot inside. There was a time in his life when he wore that fact as a badge of honor but now as he looked through the car window at the large, and admittedly beautiful, building he couldn't help but feel only shame. What had he done? What pain he had subjected his beloved wife to he was only now beginning to understand.

Slowly and somewhat reluctantly he walked up the walk that led to the front doors of the church, taking in the landscaping and the building itself. Reaching out he grasped the handle of the door in his hand, fully expecting it to be locked, but to his surprise it opened easily. Hesitantly he moved through the doorway and into the narthex. There was a faint scent of cleaner in the air but what really caught his attention was the music. Piano music seemed to flow throughout the building and at first he thought it was coming from some type of speaker system. Only after he stood there for a minute did he realize that it was coming from the sanctuary.

Making his way through the narthex he quietly opened one of the doors that led into the sanctuary and peeked in. Off to the left side in the front of the church was a beautiful grand piano upon which a younger woman played, seemingly lost in the music. So intent was she that she didn't notice him ease through the doorway and sit down in the back row of pews.

He didn't recognize any of the songs she played but the music itself had a very calming and reassuring effect on him. It wasn't long before he too became caught up in the music. Sitting back he closed his eyes and just enjoyed it.

The hand that gently came to rest on his shoulder brought him immediately back to reality. In fact, it scared him quite badly. With a start he turned to see the pastor of the church standing next to him.

"I am so sorry," whispered the pastor. "I didn't mean to startle you, Bill."

"That's…that's okay," replied the old man as he stood up and regained at least some of his composure. "How in the world did you know I was here?" he asked with a bit of a puzzled look on his face.

Instead of answering the question, Pastor Kielman gestured for the old man to follow him back out into the narthex so that they would not disturb the young woman who continued to play the piano.

Near the doorway that led into the sanctuary were a couch and chair to which the pastor directed the old man. "Whenever Cindy or one of the other pianists or organists is here practicing," he said as he sat down in the chair and the old man sat down on the couch, "my wife and I try to keep an eye from the parsonage on who comes and goes. You just never know these days."

The old man nodded his head in understanding. "I see," he said. "I suppose that makes good sense."

As the piano music continued to flow from the sanctuary the two men sat opposite each other, both struck with the same irony of the situation. Here were two whose lives had been completely different. The pastor was a man who had dedicated his life to serving the Lord. The old man had spent his life serving himself.

Although quite a bit younger than the old man, pastor Kielman had been in the ministry for more than twenty years, the last eight of which had been in this particular congregation. He and his wife Beverly had been blessed with four children who now ranged in ages from twenty-three down to ten. Both he and his wife had been close to Jenny and in the last weeks of her life they had visited her often.

This was the first time in his ministry that he had encountered a situation in which one spouse was a devoted member of the church while the other spouse would have nothing to do with it. It was a situation with which he had struggled for all of the eight years he had been in this congregation. The last months however had been particularly difficult for him.

He and his wife had watched Jenny slowly die and had shared her joy in her salvation and rejoiced in the faith that God had given her. Both had also watched with a feeling of utter helplessness as the old man watched with a despair that could be seen on his face and in his actions and heard in his voice as his beloved wife of many years slowly faded away. Many nights he would lay awake in bed wondering and praying that God would work in the heart of the old man. On one particular night he had broken down from the sheer frustration of the situ-

ation and his inability to do anything to rectify it. His wife Beverly had awoken to his sobs and had wept along with him as both of their hearts felt the same anguish and pain.

A couple of days before the Lord took Jenny home they had visited her at the hospital, and this experienced pastor and his wife had been ministered to by the one to whom they had originally intended to minister to themselves.

Jenny had been asleep when they had entered her room but her eyelids fluttered open as they came up beside the bed almost as if she had sensed them enter the room. The normal pleasantries had been voiced and they had talked for some time about some of the recent goings on in the church. Before he read scripture with her and prayed he felt compelled to ask her how William was handling everything.

"Not so well I am afraid," she had replied quietly. A tear began to form in the corner of her eye and then made its way down her cheek. "Oh, he hurts so deeply but he won't admit it." She raised her hand carefully so as not to detach any of the tubes that were attached to it and attempted to wipe away the tears from her face. "He is a stubborn old man."

Pastor Kielman smiled slightly along with Jenny and Beverly for they knew all too well how true this was. Reaching out he took her hand and held it firmly in his own.

"Jenny, I only wish that I could break through that stubbornness." He let out his breath and shook his head slowly in resignation, looking down at the floor as he did so. "There is a wall there that I just can't seem to get past."

The room had remained quiet except for the nearly imperceptible hum of the IV machine. All three of them silent in their thoughts, wanting the same thing but only one of them knowing, at least at that moment, how best to answer the questions that swirled through all of their minds.

Jenny finally broke the silence. "You know, it has been such a burden for me over the years. Not being able to share the joy of my salvation with William, not being able to talk with him about spiritual things, not being able to explain the hope that is in me in a way that he will understand." She paused briefly to catch her breath and then continued. "But I don't carry that burden anymore." As she said this she looked up into the faces of pastor Kielman and his wife and smiled.

Neither of them had quite understood what she had meant at first, as was evident by the looks on their faces.

"God has made me realize in the last few weeks that His ways are not our ways. If it is his will that William not be saved, all my fretting and worrying aren't going to change that. And you know what?" she asked, again with a slight smile on her face. "God's will is good. For me in what he has laid upon me, and for William, whatever that may be."

She reached out then with her other hand to grasp Beverly's hand and looked from one to the other, a fire in her eyes. "I believe with all my heart that God is able to turn William toward him. He can! I don't know how but I know he is able. We just have to have faith and leave it in the hands of God."

What a testimony! Here lay a woman near to death and yet the Lord had given her such strength even to instruct her pastor and remind him and his wife of the Lord's unfailing mercies and his power to overcome even the most stubborn of men.

Looking into the old man's eyes now as they sat in the narthex of the church he smiled, remembering the grace that God had shown him and his wife through Jenny and silently thanking him once again for it.

They had spent the remainder of the afternoon talking in the narthex of the church. This was not a great and deep doctrinal discussion. They actually didn't talk about doctrine at all. Nor was it a counseling session in which the pastor arduously calls the sinner to repentance. It was in fact a mostly one-sided conversation.

The Lord had laid it upon the heart of this old man to talk, and the pastor, having counseled many saints in his years in the ministry, knew by the grace of God that the very best thing he could do was listen. There were burdens on the heart of this man, grief that weighed heavily on his soul, and more than anything he needed to bare that heart and soul to another.

As he listened the pastor felt an incredible awe and a deep sense of humility as he witnessed with his own eyes the grace of God at work in this old man. He could almost perceive his hardened heart slowly softening with each word the man spoke.

As the daylight had begun to fade they had parted ways with a firm and genuine handshake as well as an agreement to meet the following morning for breakfast at a local restaurant. Having parted outside the doors of the church, each going their own way, both men brought a hand to their face to wipe away the tears that had begun to form in each of their eyes. ❖

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Watching Daily At My Gates

by Chester Hunter

May 16 Read Psalm 119:1-8

The word blessed can also be translated happy. So in verses 1 and 2 we see that the happy ones are those who walk in the way of the law of God. This long Psalm lays out for us the way that we should walk either young or old. The Psalmist realizes that he cannot walk in God's law on his own. We see this in verse 5. We, too, must depend on the Holy Spirit to guide us in the proper way. May we make that part of our daily prayers. When we walk in God's law we will praise him with our whole being and we will have the assurance that he will not forsake us. Sing Psalter 321.

May 17 Read Psalm 119:9-16

This section of Psalm 119 is full of gems. Young people must start out with verse 9. There is only one right answer to the question posed at the beginning of that verse. It is not multiple choice or true/false. Verse 11 continues to give wise counsel for God's people of all ages. Do you want to know why you must memorize God's word? It is not so that you can win trivia games, but so that you may flee from sin. And then in verse 15 we see the object of our devotions. They are not so that we can exalt ourselves, but so that God can teach us the right way. Ponder these things, people of God, and seek his Word always. Sing Psalter 322.

May 18 Read Psalm 119:17-24

It should be our testimony that we are strangers on the earth. This Psalmist testified to that truth. The writer of Hebrews 11 also states that as he describes Abraham's family's life. Do we live that way? Or do we join with the world in all sorts of activities and events, and no one knows that we are different? If we live the life of a stranger and pilgrim, we will need God's law every day. We will need that law to keep us through the onslaughts of the wicked. With that law at our side and in our hearts, we will know what to speak and how to act at all times. Let that law be your delight and counselor. Sing Psalter 323

May 19 Read Psalm 119:25-32

The Psalmist realizes that a sin that besets him and all of us is the sin of lying. In that sin we repudiate God's law in all that we do. When we lie, God's law is cast aside like an old rag. When we choose the way of truth, which is living in accordance to God's law; then God will enlarge our hearts, that is, make us to live a life pleasing to him. As we go through life, let us seek God's law, understand that law, and talk of that law to all that are around us. Sing Psalter 324.

May 20 Read Psalm 119:33-40

As we read in Hebrews 12, life can be compared to a journey or a long race. What will make it so that we can finish the race? The answer is found in verse 33. We need to run the race in the way of God's law. When we have learned that law from the mouth and hand of the Great Teacher, then we can keep that law to the very end of the race. In that keeping we will finish the race and be able to receive the prize won for us by Christ. As we observe that law, we must turn away from all types of wickedness. Let us long after that law and in that way be made alive in righteousness now and in eternity. Sing Psalter 325.

May 21 Read Psalm 119:41-48

Are we ready to speak of God's Word and Law before all kinds of men? Do we speak of it daily in the workplace, at school, or where we are enjoying recreation? This part of the Psalm says that we must be ready to speak of that Word before kings. We may not let whom we are talking to dictate of what we speak. Even before those whom God has placed in authority, we must speak of God's Word. If we cannot or will not do it now, we will not be ready for the trials that will come upon us in the last days. We must learn that law, love that law, and be ready at all times to give an answer for the reason of the hope which lies within us. Sing Psalter 326.

May 22 Read Psalm 119:49-56

The Psalmist recounts the comfort he had in times of affliction. He may have been tempted to lose hope in God. He was afflicted in many ways. The wicked were out to do him harm and were openly breaking God's law. He also needed help at night. He received comfort in all these afflictions. What was the way of that comfort? That way was in the keeping of God's law. We, too, can have that kind of a comfort. We, too, can be comforted when it appears that afflictions from any and every corner press in

upon us. That comfort is found when we keep all of God's law. Let us daily pray for the grace to find that comfort in this way. Sing Psalter 327.

May 23 Read Psalm 119:57-64

There are two ideas on which I wish for us to focus today. First of all verse 59. There the psalmist says that he turned his feet to God's testimonies. Our feet are the vehicles which take us places. If we allow our feet to take us places unfit for the child of God we have not turned them to his law. Secondly, reread verse 63. Who are our companions? Are they those who fear God's name? Are they those who lead us in places that our feet should not be? As we go through life we must make choices. We should let the law of Jehovah be our guide and lead us onto paths where we find fit companions. Sing Psalter 328.

May 24 Read Psalm 119:65-72

Does God do "bad" things to his people? The answer to that is an emphatic no! Take a minute to remember Romans 8:28. Look it up; ponder it; savor it. In this portion of Psalm 119 we see more proof that "bad" things are for God's peoples' good. Those afflictions, as they are called here, help us to keep God's Word, and they also help us to learn God's Word. Verse 68 tells us that not only is God good but he does good. Would he not do good unto his people? We might not always understand the why of those afflictions, but we can trust that they are for our profit. As we go through life, we can always know that God loves us and does good for us. Sing Psalter 329.

May 25 Read Psalm 119:73-80

Notice verse 74. Here is a statement that we do not focus on very much or very often. Are God's people glad to see us because we hope in his Word? Does the fact that we hope in his Word bubble out of us so that the saints are made glad by our appearance? There is a connection between that verse and the next one. The connection is that even though God has afflicted us, we still can hope in God. This is not a light matter. This matter is only one that can take place by faith. Only by way of God's lovingkindness is his law our delight. Let us make verse 80 our daily prayer so that we might show forth God's faithfulness to us each day of our lives. Sing Psalter 330.

May 26 Read Psalm 119:81-88

We see many evidences of the troubles that the Psalmist was experiencing. The writer was no different than any of us. We, too, have afflictions in this life. It does not matter what our age or what our station and calling in this life is. We have afflictions. God does not leave us alone. He brings to us his Word. In that Word and especially in that law, he gives to us all the comfort necessary to live as we await the day of rejoicing. We are being made ready for heaven. Like the caterpillar that unfolds into the beautiful butterfly or moth, we are being made ready for a beautiful life of glory. May God's Word sustain us. May we, like the Psalmist, not forsake the law of our gracious God. Sing Psalter 331.

May 27 Read Psalm 119:89-96

What a beautiful thought it is that God's Word is settled in heaven! The idea of settled is established. But it is an establishment with comfort. That Word comforts us each and every day of our lives. It also gives to us the comfort that our covenant God who made the heaven and earth is in control of all things so that nothing happens by chance but all is carried out by his fatherly hand. Because we are his, we can have the confidence that all things work together for our good and his glory. As we read God's Word, and as we live out of that Word, we can have the assurance that it gives to us spiritual life now and through all eternity. Sing Psalter 332.

May 28 Read Psalm 119:97-104

The Psalmist has experienced the benefits of knowing God's law and seeing its profit in his daily life. He then breaks out in the song of praise "O how love I thy law." Is this our experience? Do we see how God's law is applicable in our lives, and how it gives to us the true wisdom? God is the best teacher with the best subject material. When we immerse ourselves in the study of his law, we learn what is most important in this life. God's law will taste better than any earthly food as it will be our food for eternity. Let us learn that law, live out of that law, and hope in that law forever. Sing Psalter 333.

May 29 Read Psalm 119:105-112

There are two verses to which I wish to call to your attention in this section. First of all there is verse 105. We live in a world of darkness. This darkness descended upon it at the fall. The only means by which the child of God can make his way in that darkness is with the light of God's word—Christ himself. This is also the testimony of John 1. Secondly look at verse 111. When we think of heritages, we often think of possessions. The law is one of those possessions that has been given to us from our covenant God and handed down through the line of continued generations. Do we treat it as a treasure? If we do, it will be the joy of our heart. Sing Psalter 334.

May 30 Read Psalm 119:113-120

Do we always hate vain or empty thoughts? There are many of them around us. Some of them are offered up in the guise of fun. Others are out and out sin. We need to pray often to God that he holds us up. Those vain thoughts

will weigh us down and cause us not to walk in his law. Those fears mentioned in verse 120 are the fears that keep us from sin. God's law shows us that we must stay away from sin, or we will become like the wicked. As Solomon says, "Fear God and keep his commandments, for this is the whole duty of man." Let us do this each and every day. Sing Psalter 335.

May 31 Read Psalm 119:121-128

As the Psalmist has been led through the way of affliction, he has learned that it is not what he must do for himself but rather what God must do for him. His only escape through every kind of trial is the law and mercy of God. These two ideas are inseparable because both are perfect. We cannot keep that law and it is only because of God's boundless mercy that we are not consumed by our sins. Do we hate every false way? Do we make this our prayer every day? When we confess that we love God's commandments above all else, then and only then can we have hope to hate the false way. Sing Psalter 336.

June 1 Read Psalm 119:129-136

As the Psalmist lived with those who were the church, he was distressed when he saw them breaking God's law. Through many experiences he had learned of the value of that Word, and how it was the way that God's people should live. Now he saw that law broken and trampled underfoot by those who had been saved by that law. What about us: are we moved to tears by the disregard of God's law by those around us? Are we zealous that God's law is handled even as valuable possessions are handled? Let us take comfort that God will use his law for our good and for the good of his church. Let us pray daily that God's face shine upon us and give to us peace. Sing Psalter 337.

June 2 Read Psalm 119:137-144

One comfort, which the child of God always has, is that no matter what the situation may be, God's commandments are delightful. As it is stated in the New Testament, God's law is not grievous. That law, which leads us to Christ, leads us upon a path that has a glorious end. That end is not found in this valley of the shadow of death. That end is in heaven where God will be praised every day. Trouble and anguish may be our lot now, but something far more glorious will be theirs who keep God's law. Let us pray daily for understanding that we may obtain that eternal life wrought for us by Christ. Sing Psalter 338.

June 3 Read Psalm 119:145-152

In verses 147 and 148 we have the word prevent. In this context it means to anticipate or begin before. The Psalmist here is anticipating a regular time of day, and in anticipating it, he begins his daily devotions before the usual time. We must pray and worship God privately. We do this by reading God's Word, for in that Word are the wonders of salvation. In that word is the light that will lead us upon the path of this life. Our anticipation of this time of worship shows not only our eagerness for that Word but also our dependence on that Word as our guide. In our leaning upon that Word, we confess that Jehovah is ever near us and will help us in all our needs. His Word is sure and everlasting; of that there is no doubt. Let us worship daily and come before his throne of grace in prayer. Sing Psalter 339.

June 4 Read Psalm 119:153-160

Each of us has been given some affliction in this life. These afflictions pale when compared to the affliction that God's Son our Savior suffered on our behalf. Our walk in his law leads us to Christ our redeemer. We can face these afflictions and bear them because Jehovah's tender mercies are great, and as the prophet Jeremiah said, they are "new every morning." Even in affliction the Psalmist was grieved because sinners walked not in God's ways. Are we so concerned about God's word that we can forget our troubles? We must pray to be quickened by God, for in that way we will find the peace and comfort that we need. Sing Psalter 340.

June 5 Read Psalm 119:161-168

While we might say that the Psalmist is boasting in this part of the Psalm, he is not boasting of himself. He realizes that the only way that he can live is through the law of God. Therefore, what appears to be boasting of his works is admiration for the law of God that guides him in all situations. Notice verse 165. Peace is a much sought after commodity. The world wants peace and cannot find it because daily they disregard the law of God. The child of God will walk without peace when he forgets or refuses to walk in that law. May we seek the peace that is everlasting and perfect. May we do this by daily loving God's law and living our lives out of that law. Sing Psalter 341.

June 6 Read Psalm 119:169-176

As the Psalmist closes this Psalm, he continues to utter forth words of praise and admiration for God's law. That law is invaluable to our lives. We need to read it, study it, learn it, and use it every day. This section is also a prayer. This, too, we must do each day and often each day. We, too, must confess that we need the hand of God to help us along the twists and turns of life's paths. Finally, once more he confesses that, because of sin, he goes astray. Do we realize this about ourselves? Are we ready to confess that we have gone astray? Let us, always, pray that God will seek us, take us from our lost condition, and set us on

the right path. This is the way to true peace on this earth, and this is the way that will lead us to the coming glory. May we say every day, "O how love I thy law; it is my meditation all the day." Sing Psalter 342.

June 7 Read Psalm 19:1-6

In the Belgic Confession we are shown that God teaches us about himself in two ways. This Psalm bears that truth out. The first is that in nature, we can see God and his glory. And, of course, we have his Word. In the first part of this Psalm we are told to look to the sky to see the glory of God. This can be seen each day and night. At night we see the stars which speak of his infinity and again his glory. In the day when the sky is clear, the brilliant sun shines forth against a sky of crystalline blue. If there are clouds of any type, we again can see God and some of his attributes. That sun is a picture of the Son of God. As the prophet Malachi proclaims, he is the "Sun of righteousness risen with healing in his wings." Let us daily take the time to admire God's creation, that "most elegant book." Sing Psalter 37.

June 8 Read Psalm 19:7-14

After teaching us that the creation, that most excellent book, shows to us God and his glory, the Psalmist turns to the Word of God which must be precious to the child of God. As you read through the first five verses of this section you see that the Psalmist regards that Word very highly. Is this our attitude toward the Word of God? Is it more precious to us than anything that we may desire or possess on this earth? Then the Psalmist realizes that that Word shows to him his sins, and that he must confess those sins and seek God's forgiveness for them. He also prays that God would keep him from sin. Let us pray those beautiful words of verse 14. Let us, each day of our lives, seek to have our words be acceptable to God our strength and our redeemer. Sing Psalter 38.

June 9 Read Proverbs 1:1-7

The wise king Solomon wanted to instruct his children in the ways of Jehovah. This was a wide-ranging instruction which included doctrine and many aspects of daily life. Solomon had learned that true wisdom only comes from God, and he wishes to instruct covenant youth in that wisdom. The keystone to this chapter is found in verse 7. True wisdom must be based on the fear of Jehovah. If we do not fear our covenant God, we will have nothing. To disdain true wisdom and its accompanying knowledge is to live a life of a fool. Let us ponder the words of the wise king and embrace them all the days of our lives. Sing Psalter 42.

June 10 Read Proverbs 1:8-19

Children and young people are called to walk in the way of the antithesis. They must learn to say yes to the things of God and to say no to the things of Satan. Saying yes to the things of God will give to them the grace needed to live in this life. Of course, grace is given to them by faith in order to say yes to the right things. And that same grace also enables them to say no to the wicked enticements of the world. Parents must always remind the covenant seed to "consent thou not." Saying no is active; it is not passive. May we pray daily for grace to walk in the path of life. May parents pray for the grace to daily teach their children about that path. In this way God will bless each of us. Sing Psalter 24.

June 11 Read Proverbs 1:20-33

After setting forth the contrast of walking in wisdom and walking in folly, the wise king Solomon shows the folly of not turning to the wisdom that is found in God. As we will discover in a later chapter, this wisdom is Christ himself. There are times in our lives when God calls his people to turn from the folly of their ways. Our failure to do this is also folly. Those who turn will dwell safely all the days of their lives and have a sure dwelling place in the house of the Lord. May we heed his call and walk in wisdom as we live out our lives on this earth. Sing Psalter 146.

June 12 Read Proverbs 2:1-9

Living the Christian life is to live an active life seeking after Jehovah's wisdom. We must live a life of sanctification "working out our salvation with fear and trembling." We must listen to his Word as it is found in Scripture, proclaimed on the Sabbath and taught in the catechism room. When we seek the fear of the LORD, then we will find the strait path and narrow gate that is the way to eternal glory. We must seek this way and this wisdom even more zealously than we would seek some earthly riches. We must do this because this way is more precious and has an everlasting value. May God give to us the necessary grace to seek this way always. Sing Psalter 1.

June 13 Read Proverbs 2:10-22

Solomon continues to instruct his son in the folly of following any thing but wisdom's path. Notice verse 17. Covenant children and young people have been, by grace, given a guide that will direct them all of their lives. This guide, God's Word, will lead them unfailingly on the right path. To ignore it is sure failure in this life and, of course, the life to come. This instruction is found in the friendship of God and his people. When we follow this guide, great blessings will be ours. Sing Psalter 428.

Deconstructing Theistic Evolution

by David Crossett

Be ye not unequally yoked together with unbelievers: for what fellowship hath righteousness with unrighteousness? and what communion hath light with darkness? And what concord hath Christ with Belial? or what part hath he that believeth with an infidel? And what agreement hath the temple of God with idols? for ye are the temple of the living God; as God hath said, I will dwell in them, and walk in them; and I will be their God, and they shall be my people (II Cor. 6:14–16).

Modern Times

Darwinism or, more accurately, neo-Darwinism is taught in our schools and universities, we hear it on the radio and television, and more worryingly in many of the 'churches' of our day. Reformed believers who attend university are often for the first time (especially if they have had the privilege of Christian schooling) forced to defend their beliefs, debating and discussing with ungodly professors and peers. Dr. Gary Parker, a former evolutionary biologist who (by the grace of God) turned to the biblical creationist perspective, described Darwinism as a "world and life view, an alternate religion, a substitute for God" and hence was something he taught passionately, considering it his role to "help his students rid themselves completely of old, 'pre-scientific' superstitions, such as Christianity" (2006:11). The tears he claims to have caused on the faces of his students are an evidence and a reminder, not only of the distress such vigour in teaching can cause, but of the contempt with which much of the scientific world treats biblical creationism.

With evolution so widely proclaimed in secular society, hearing it within academia is something we as Christians have come to expect. More saddening and ultimately more shocking, especially for those of us who have been brought up in the truths of the Reformed faith, is that many in our day come to expect this in "churches" that claim to profess the name of Christ. Alan Colburn and Laura Henriques, two social scientists, carried out research into the views of clergy from various denominations. Although much can be said about the sentiments that run throughout the paper, one statement they made struck me as particularly unbelievable:

> The concept of theistic evolution deserves special mention here because almost all the clergy we interviewed probably held beliefs that we would characterize within this category…Almost all the clergy we interviewed subscribed to the truth of evolution and natural selection as scientific explanation and description (2006:435).

The "church" (and I use the term in a secular sense) has become rotten, as it seeks to marry the truth of the Scriptures with worldly humanism. "Almost all" the clergy interviewed subscribed to the "truth" of evolution, as summed up by Colburn and Henriques.

Further evidence of such teaching is not hard to find. The Archbishop of Canterbury, whilst conducting an interview with the Guardian newspaper, is quoted as saying "my worry is creationism can end up reducing the doctrine of creation rather than enhancing it." One must be tempted to ask how the Scriptures, given by inspiration of God, fail to do themselves justice? When has God ever failed to put his glory first (Col. 1:16-18; Rom. 11:36)? Is the Archbishop suggesting that the inventions of (foolish) men (Ps. 14:1; Ps. 53:1) better enhance the doctrine of creation? "Nay but, O man, who art thou that repliest against God" (Rom. 9: 20)! II Sam. 6: 6-7 serves as a poignant reminder to those who feel that the LORD requires the aid of totally depraved men to heighten his glory. God in his anger struck Uzzah dead, and so God strikes today. His Holy Spirit is grieved by the lies proclaimed from the pulpits of these churches, and so, withdraws. Ironically, the inventions of men, used to bring people into their churches, are the very tools God uses to make them depart, giving the earthly seed over to the lusts of the flesh and the sinful inclinations of the heart (Rom. 1:28).

The specific invention spoken of in this circumstance is the lie of "theistic evolution." Essentially, theistic evolution is a man made doctrine that asserts there is a "creator" God, yet at the same time adheres to scientific humanism, maintaining the compatibility of the creation "story" with modern scientific thinking on Darwinian evolution. In essence, it is a marriage of convenience that has arisen due to conflict between the literal biblical

creation narrative and modern day evolutionary thinking. As Parker (2008) describes evolution as a process of "time, chance, struggle and death," I will endeavour to deconstruct theistic evolution according to this brief synopsis, in highlighting its fundamental flaws, according to the creation narrative as found in Genesis 1.

Time

We are all creatures of time. Genesis 1:1 begins with "In the beginning God…." This teaches that God's omnipotence is the cause of all things; he is the foundation from which all was, is and is to come. God is eternal, he has no beginning or no end, but as for the creation, it clearly happened in time "the beginning." Man is regarded (by evolutionists) as the highest step in the evolutionary chain, yet according to Genesis 1, man was created in the beginning. Christ reinforces this in Matthew 19:4, stating man was created male and female, "at the beginning." This conflicts with evolutionary and hence theistic evolutionary notions, given that man arrived approximately 5 billion years after the beginning. If this was the case, then how could Christ possibly say that man was created from the beginning and still be regarded as the spotless lamb of God?

The biblical narrative as penned in the inspired scriptures clearly teaches a literal six days of creation (see Laning, 2010). References to time are emphasized repeatedly through use of "evening and the morning" (Gen. 1:8, 13, 19, 23, 31). Verse 14 is also clear in relation to the idea of time. Here we see the creation of days for the purpose of "signs," "seasons," "days" and "years." Would it not be absurd to suggest million year old days, given that they were created for a specific purpose? I.e., the identity of the seasons and the timing of years.

The genealogies, as recorded in the Old and New Testaments, require a young earth. On the other hand, evolutionary thinking according to modern science requires billions of years in order to account for multiple, complex and ultimately impossible mutations to take place. We can see that the time scales afforded by young earth creationists and evolutionists are diametrically opposed. Undeterred by this, theistic evolutionists marry the two, suggesting that days, as recorded in Genesis, refer to billions of years, thus giving "time" for evolution to take place. Ham (2006) suggests that the Genesis narrative is the only place in the Bible where the meaning of the word "day" is contested. This contestation does not arise from within the Scriptures, where the historical narrative infers literal 24 hour days, but instead, and crucially, arises as a result of man's looking outside of the Scriptures and endeavouring then, to add his theories to them.

Chance

Chance may be defined as "a possibility due to a favourable number of circumstances." Chance is also a fundamental part of modern day evolutionism, even more so today according to neo-Darwinian theory than it was in Darwin's. Yet just as the time scales afforded by both creationists and evolutionists are diametrically opposed, so the evolutionary idea of "chance" is opposed to the creationist view of God's command and design in creation. God commanded, and "it was so" (Gen. 1:7, 9, 11, 15, 24, 30). When God commanded, it happened instantly, according to his plan and design (Ps. 33:9; Ps. 148:5). In this way, he created the firmament, the solar system, flora, fauna, man and gathered the land mass together so that it stood in the water and through the water (Ps. 33:3-9; II Peter 3:5). There is no compromise between "chance" and "plan and design." Theistic evolution however suggests that God paradoxically used "chance" to create. This idea is fundamentally flawed, especially when we consider the methods (struggle and death) they claim God used.

Struggle and Death

Struggle and death have been highlighted as key concepts in evolutionary theory. Theistic evolutionists transfer these, as methods that God used in "creating by chance." As reformed believers however, we wholly reject this error.

Struggle and death are unnatural, they are not natural. The bible teaches us that struggle and death entered the world as a result of sin (Gen. 3:16-19 and Rom. 5:12; 6:23). Before sin however, there was no death, 'it was good' (Gen. 1: 4, 10, 12, 18, 21, 25) or "very good" (Gen. 1:31). The logical conclusion that we draw here, is that in a world without death (as the pre-fall world was), there can be no evolution. Likewise, in a world without evolution, there is only "In the beginning, God." Paul the apostle clearly warns us in saying, "Beware lest any man spoil you through philosophy and vain deceit, after the tradition of men, after the rudiments of the world, and not after Christ" (Col. 2:8). We do wisely to take heed.

Wider Implications

Not only does this get to the heart of the issue, but it highlights the tragedy that is theistic evolution. Evolution ousts the need for God and completely denies him, giving "atheism credibility" (according to Richard Dawkins). Theistic evolution attempts to compromise, by bridging the man-made gap between the Genesis account and Darwinian evolution. It makes this attempt to soften

the truth of the gospel, to make the church seem more contemporary and compatible with secular thinking. Its acceptance however has not led to an increase, but rather, a falling away, as the truth of the gospel is diminished and scoffed at.

Denial of "death by sin" is an outright attack on the very truth of the infallibility of Holy Scripture. If the Genesis account of creation is false, then perhaps so is the virgin birth—perhaps Christ did not suffer and die—and even if he did come once, then perhaps he will not come again! II Peter 3:3 warns us of such scoffers. Theistic evolution opens the door to them and, in doing so, attacks the very hope of the child of God.

Worse still, theistic evolution logically must conclude that Christ is an ineligible sacrifice, wholly incapable of bearing our sin. The Heidelberg Catechism states that "one who is himself a sinner, cannot satisfy for others" (Q. & A. 16). Likewise, the revelation of Holy Scriptures testifies to the truth of a literal interpretation of Genesis (Matt. 19:4, Mark 10:6; I Cor. 11:9). If these interpretations are given to us by Christ and the Apostle Paul (through whom Christ speaks), then surely this makes Christ a liar. Can a liar satisfy for the sins of God's people? Theistic evolution completely removes the hope of the Christian, marrying the light with the darkness, in an unholy union. What fellowship has the light with darkness (II Cor. 6:14-16). "Buy the truth, and sell it not" (Prov. 23:23).

Thankfully, despite the apostasy that we see in this evil day, God is a merciful and loving God, and so preserves his true church, a remnant, adopted into his family by grace and preserved by his power. As our sure record, we have the Scriptures, God's special revelation to us (II Tim. 3:16). And so, let us marvel at the beauty and wonder of the creation. May it (as Bavinck, 1999 points out) strengthen our faith, confirm our trust in God, be a source of consolation in our suffering, inspire praise and thanksgiving and induce humility and meekness in us, his people. Praise be to God. ❖

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Using Our Time for the Glory of God

by Manuel Kuhs

"Whether therefore ye eat, or drink, or whatsoever ye do, do all to the glory of God." (I Cor. 10:31)

Whatsoever we do? Really? Including eating and drinking? What about after a hard day's work helping my parents, surely a few hours in the evening I can just please myself?

The inspired Apostle teaches us, that in everything we are to have the glory of God as our first and primary aim. This includes eating, sleeping, laughing, playing, doing homework and cleaning our rooms. As a preacher once said in all seriousness, it even includes "drinking a glass of orange juice."

Or, to put it another way, it is sin to live even one second in a day not for the glory of God.

What is the foundation of this command? Ultimately, it is this: "Be ye holy; for I am holy" (I Pet. 1:16). The triune God is devoted in all his being and doing, every part of it, to his own glory, and we ought to be likewise.

This has very serious implications for us. It means it is not acceptable for our mindset to be, "as long as this isn't outright sin…;" or, "I read the Scriptures this morning, prayed, did my homework, and now I can just

do what I want."

Rather, the decisive question for everything we do, from brushing our teeth to going to church, ought to be, "how may I please my Lord in this situation?" Thus, what God says to us about our time is, "use all the time that I have given to thee in order to honour me in thy heart and actions."

Using all our time for the glory of God does not mean that we ought never to enjoy the good things of this world. We are not Anabaptists. The idea that everything that a Christian does must be explicitly "spiritual" and that a Christian cannot enjoy the good things of this world is nothing but asceticism. These rules of "touch not; taste not; handle not" have indeed a show of wisdom and humility, but are in fact nothing but will worship and despising the good things God has made (Col. 2:20-23). There is nothing wrong with playing games or going out for a fancy dinner occasionally. Rather, in doing these things, we ought to ensure that we are serving our heavenly Father. For example, when we play games with our younger siblings, we ought to put the desire to help them above the desire to win. Or when we invest in some nice food, we ought to receive it from God with gratitude in our hearts (I Tim. 4:4-5), and to have conversation pleasing to him while eating. Thus, not only is it not sin to enjoy the things of this world, but God is actually honoured as the Giver of these good things through our faithful enjoyment of them. As Solomon says, "it is good and comely for one to eat and to drink, and to enjoy the good of all his labour that he taketh under the sun all the days of his life, which God giveth him: for it is his portion… this is the gift of God" (Ecc. 5:18,19)—and to despise God's gifts and not rejoice in them is sin. However, this liberty ought never to be taken as an excuse to indulge the flesh (Gal. 5:13) and of course it is only liberty to enjoy the good things of this world, since we ought to hate all else (I Jn. 2:15).

As we hear this high standard of God, the new man in us will cry, "I can never do this! I cannot in this life do everything without fail in obedience to God's revealed will!"

And so the first response of faith, that precious union with our Saviour Jesus Christ, is to flee to him for refuge from the fiery wrath of the holy triune God. Though I am writing this article, I am not writing from the viewpoint of one who has fully achieved what he sets forth, but one who struggles daily to forsake himself and cleave to God. And so we must always keep this in mind as we pursue a life of complete devotion to him: If the Apostle Paul could not perfectly serve God with all his time (Rom. 7:14ff), neither can we. Therefore we must continually cry in our hearts: "O wretched man that I am! who shall deliver me from the body of this death? I thank God through Jesus Christ our Lord" (vv. 24-25).

This also is the foundation upon which we must build a good stewardship of our time: Not a desire to earn God's favour, nor the lustful yearning of our sinful hearts to prove ourselves better than our friends, but rather the truth that, as our beloved Heidelberg Catechism formulates it, "I with body and soul, both in life and in death, am not my own, but belong unto my faithful Saviour Jesus Christ…" (Q&A 1; cf. I Cor. 6:19). Being assured of this by Spirit-worked faith, our Father calls upon us to present our bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable to God (Rom. 12:1) out of thankfulness for what he has done for us in Christ (Eph. 5:8).

It is worthwhile at this point to quote John Calvin:

> We are not our own: Let not our reason nor our will, therefore, sway our plans and deeds. We are not our own: let us therefore not set it as our goal to seek what is expedient for us according to the flesh. We are not our own: in so far as we can, let us therefore forget ourselves and all that is ours.
>
> Conversely, we are God's: let us therefore live for him and die for him. We are God's: let his wisdom and will therefore rule all our actions. We are God's: let all the parts of our life accordingly strive toward him as our only lawful goal…
>
> Let this therefore be the first step, that a man depart from himself in order that he may apply the whole force of his ability in the service of the Lord.[1]

The very first thing we must do to dedicate all our time to serving the living God is to believe in the forgiveness of our sins for the sake of Christ. Otherwise, it will be cold legalism. Assurance (an integral part of faith[2]) will free us to love God from the heart, so that we are in sweet fellowship with him and so that we can obey him out of thankfulness. Assurance, and joy (which is a result of assurance), we attain not by trying to work up in ourselves fake emotions, or looking for some sort of mystical, Puritan experience, but primarily by faithful attendance to the means of grace, namely, the preaching of God's Word and the administration of the sacraments in a true church,[3] which must be mixed by sincere faith

1 John Calvin's *Institutes of the Christian Religion*, 3.7.1. As quoted in David J. Engelsma's *The Reformed Faith of John Calvin*, p. 215.

2 Heidelberg Catechism, Q&A 21

3 Canons of Dordt, Head V, Article 14.

from the heart (Heb. 4:2). In this way, we will be readied for offering our time as a sweet-smelling sacrifice to him.

Having this foundation before us is the great battle in our struggle to offer all our time to God. The main reason we fail (and we will often fail) in using our time wisely is not that we are lacking the practical advice we need, but that our hearts are far from God and we love the things of this world more than he who loved us and gave his Son for us.

Loving God is where our main struggle will be.

However, practical advice is not useless (see for example the book of Proverbs). I will now seek to share some practical pointers from my own experience, based upon biblical principles, as to how we might better use our time.

First, think of the example of Christ in the Gospels. He was very aware of the divine schedule to which he must keep (John 2:4, 7:30), always conscious of the will of his father (John 5:30b). This good order in his life is of course a reflection of the perfect order of God in all his dealings within the Trinity and with his creatures. From this, we can gather that it would be a good idea to more consciously plan out how we will use and order our time, rather than doing everything spontaneously. God is a God of order.

Second, following on from the previous point, well thought-out daily routines play a big part in an effective use of time. Imagine if the church council had to think up service times and orders of worship every Lord's Day anew, so that they changed every week—there would be a lot of confusion! In the same way, if for example our private study of scripture or prayer times change every day and are left to whenever they can be squeezed in, they probably will not be of good quality or will even be skipped more and more. Though it is certainly not sin to skip a day's private scripture reading for good reason, this can easily become a habit in itself if we are not careful to maintain that routine. This need for a routine is rooted in the fact that God created us this way, which he strongly signified by the cycles of night and day, the seven-day week with a day of rest and the four seasons of the year. We are indeed "creatures of habit."

Third, as we try to become more disciplined in our use of our time, we should be careful not to become overzealous by setting too high targets for ourselves or by consciously planning out every single thing we can possibly think of. I remember in my first year in college I decided that getting up 20 minutes prior to leaving for lectures (that is, 8:30) was far too late, so I resolved to get up at 7am—and completely failed for the first week. Eventually, I realised I should gradually work my way toward an early start, which then worked quite well (by the grace of God). The example of wicked King Saul's overzealous command that his army not eat any food until the evening is a good example of setting too high a target (I Sam. 14:24ff).

Which brings me to the fourth point. Something many of us young people struggle with is too much sleep; we all like to sleep in in the mornings. However, the Proverb comes to us, "Yet a little sleep, a little slumber, a little folding of the hands to sleep: So shall thy poverty come as one that travelleth, and thy want as an armed man" (6:10-11). Though there are times when it is fine to sleep in, this should probably be the exception rather than the rule. It is a good idea to get up early in time to begin the day with devotional reading and prayer (though some of my friends find they can do devotions better in the evenings). Getting up early in the morning and being well rested (after the initial 5 minutes of drowsiness, of course) is a great way to start the day! Especially as part of a daily routine, regular bed and waking times are very important, not least because irregular sleeping patterns are not good for our bodies physically.

Fifth, a good principle to use is, "first work, then play." My mum drilled this into me and I am very thankful to her for it. If we "play" first, it is all too easy to "play" too long so we do not leave ourselves sufficient time to do our house chores or homework. Also, "play" is much more enjoyable if it follows "work" (and conversely, "play" isn't as enjoyable when we are skipping or procrastinating "work"). This principle will also help us as we become adults, when we will have to work for everything (before) we eat, drink and enjoy. And, of course, it is a principle found in God himself, who created the world in six days, and then rested in and enjoyed his finished creation on the seventh, just as Christ worked to accomplish our salvation and then entered into his heavenly rest.

And until we enter into that same rest when our earthly labours have come to an end, let us grow in grace through the means appointed thereunto by the almighty, so that we might more and more offer up our bodies as living sacrifices, that the church might be built up, the elect saved, the reprobate wicked justly condemned, and God receive the glory that is due to his name. ❖

Manuel is a member of Covenant Protestant Reformed Church in Northern Ireland.

Covenant Courtship: (7) Subjection to the Head

by Aaron Lim

"Being in subjection refers to the inner attitude of a wife's heart, according to which she knows her husband to be in authority over her and freely wills it."

—Prof. David Engelsma

In the covenant marriage between Christ and the Church, He calls his bride to be in subjection to him. Christ is the faithful husband who alone knows how to love his wife and care for her as her head. The church on earth is constantly embroiled in the bitter struggle against sin and the wicked world. At times the church loses her strength and focus, falling away to the wiles of the devil. For this reason she must constantly subject herself to Christ her husband who will guide her through all her struggles until she reaches her heavenly home. The bride's submission to her husband is a mark of her faithfulness and love for him.

I fear our age of higher education has severely damaged the covenant calling for women to be in subjection to their husbands. Our young men and women are taught in their schools that they stand on equal footing. Subjection to the man is perceived as a weakness or an ancient attempt to place the woman under bondage. The women must, as they are commonly taught, stamp their authority in all the spheres of life. In the institutions of learning, workplace and home they must excel better than the men. Only then can their true potential be achieved.

The Word of God speaks otherwise.

It cannot be emphasized enough that the Word of God alone teaches us where the true calling of a woman lies. A woman of God knows that her calling lies in the home, where she is to be a help-meet to her husband and the keeper of the home. She shuns the world's ideas of feminism and wisely prepares herself for this cause. In all of her choices of studies, work and lifestyle she prepares to sacrifice her own private ambitions and to align her goals with her husband's. This she knows is a noble and high calling. She knows this is a task so sacred that she will devote herself entirely to it.

I am often puzzled why our young women are so strongly desirous of higher education. It is, of course, not wrong to seek more knowledge to improve the cultivation of our minds. It is also not wrong to pursue higher levels of skills and proficiency to prepare for future work. But I must warn our young women to be extremely careful as they pursue higher education. I know the universities in Singapore demand a great deal out of their students. Obtaining that basic degree involves a lot of hard work and study throughout the four years. After all those years of hard labour, one naturally desires to reap the rewards. The great spiritual danger is that our young covenant women decide to put off marriage and childbirth to focus on their careers. Such talk, says Gertrude Hoeksema, is "borrowed from the world, and the philosophy behind it comes straight from hell" (*Peaceable Fruit for the Nurturing of Covenant Youth*).

As a covenant young woman engages in courtship, she has to prepare herself to be in subjection to her boyfriend, her husband-to-be. This is not always easy as she is an individual with a unique mind and will. Sinful pride and willfulness can often hinder her from surrendering her will to her boyfriend. It is my judgment that the devil uses the privileges of higher education to stir up sinful pride in our covenant young women. He shows them that they are academically and intellectually as able as the young men in the church, if not more. This pride has the powerful danger of preventing our young women from being in subjection in courtship and marriage. When our young women are unable to subject themselves to their husbands, their relationships will be drowned by chaos, bitterness and resentment.

For a covenant young woman to be in subjection means to acknowledge that God has placed another person in her life in authority over her. Her boyfriend and husband-to-be assumes leadership over her and decides for her. He becomes responsible for her. A woman who loves God submits to this cheerfully because she trusts God's wisdom more than her own. Although the man that God entrusts to be her head is as sinful as she is, God is nevertheless pleased to do so. It is his divine prerogative for a covenant relationship and marriage to function in this manner. In this manner he will bless and keep his covenant children faithful to each other.

Subjection also implies the inner attitude and cultiva-

tion of the heart. When covenant courtship is engaged with a spiritual mindset, a covenant young woman experiences a wonderful change of character. She begins to lose her identity by assuming it with her husband-to-be. No longer does she retain her individual lifestyle and exercise her will as freely as an individual. Her very own name is assumed with her husband's. This is where the transformation of becoming one flesh starts to take place. A godly woman knows this as God's will for her. A meek and quiet spirit, which Scripture dictates is of great price in the sight of God, allows her to submit to this.

To be in subjection also means to give her life to the cause of the covenant home. The home is the place where she can achieve her true potential. God in his wisdom and power creatively fashioned the woman so that all her physical, mental, emotional and spiritual attributes are suited for her work in the home. There she functions as the guide of the household, being in subjection to her husband and nurturing her children in the fear of the LORD. There she fulfills the calling that God has given to her and where she will truly be blessed. No wonder the Scriptures teach that in childbearing she shall be saved.

Once again we need God's grace to enable us to be in subjection, for we are by nature sinful and most prone to proud rebellion. A covenant relationship prospers when covenant women submit themselves cheerfully to their husbands. May the Lord teach us to submit to him so that we may submit ourselves to his covenant calling for us. ❖

Aaron is a member of Covenant Evangelical Reformed Church in Singapore.

Gem of the Month

You Tell on Yourself

You tell on yourself by the friends you seek,
By the very manner in which you speak,
By the way you employ your leisure time,
By the use you make of a dollar and dime.

You tell on yourself by the things you wear,
By the spirit in which your burdens you bear,
By the jokes at which you laugh with glee,
By the CD's you play and what you see on TV.

You tell what you are by the way you walk,
By the things of which you delight to talk,
By the manner in which you can bear defeat,
By so simple a thing as how you eat.

By the books you choose from the library shelf,
By these things and more, you tell on yourself,
So you see there's really no particle of sense,
In an effort to keep false pretense.

—Author unknown

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:

Emma Joy, daughter of Mr. & Mrs. Lance DeVries—Byron Center, MI

Jaimeson Jay, son of Mr. & Mrs. Bill VanOverloop—Faith, MI

Cameryn Grace, daughter of Mr. & Mrs. Mike DeBoer—Grandville, MI

Matthew Jon, son of Mr. & Mrs. Peter Boverhof—Grandville, MI

Laura Grace, daughter of Mr. & Mrs. George Kamps—Hudsonville, MI

Natalie Joy, daughter of Mr. & Mrs. Nick Dykstra—Hudsonville, MI

Deborah Lynn, daughter of Mr. & Mrs. Justin Pipe—Loveland, CO

Ella Kate, daughter of Mr. & Mrs. Nate Hostege—Loveland, CO

Dustin Robert, son of Mr. & Mrs. Bob Knecht—Peace, IL

Peter Dowie, son of Mr. & Mrs. Dowie VanderSchaaf—Providence, MI

Miriam Grace, daughter of Mr. & Mrs. Dan Kuiper—South Holland, IL

Austin James, son of Mr. & Mrs. Brett Zandstra—South Holland, IL

Brayden Patrick, son of Mr. & Mrs. Mike Cleary—Southwest, MI

Adult baptism was administered to Jake Alberda—Providence, 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:

Ryan Roth—First, MI

Michelle VanBaren—Grace, MI

Gerald Kooy—Peace, IL

Jordan Reitsma—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. Joel Zylstra and Miss Jessica Shewchuk—Immanuel, Lacombe, Alberta, CAN

Mr. Bart Zandstra and Miss Chelsie Miller—Lynden, WA

Rain Song

Rain fell softly against the window. Droplets started to drip into one another, making patterns of tiny, crooked rivers on the glass.

"Katie, have you finished your homework?"

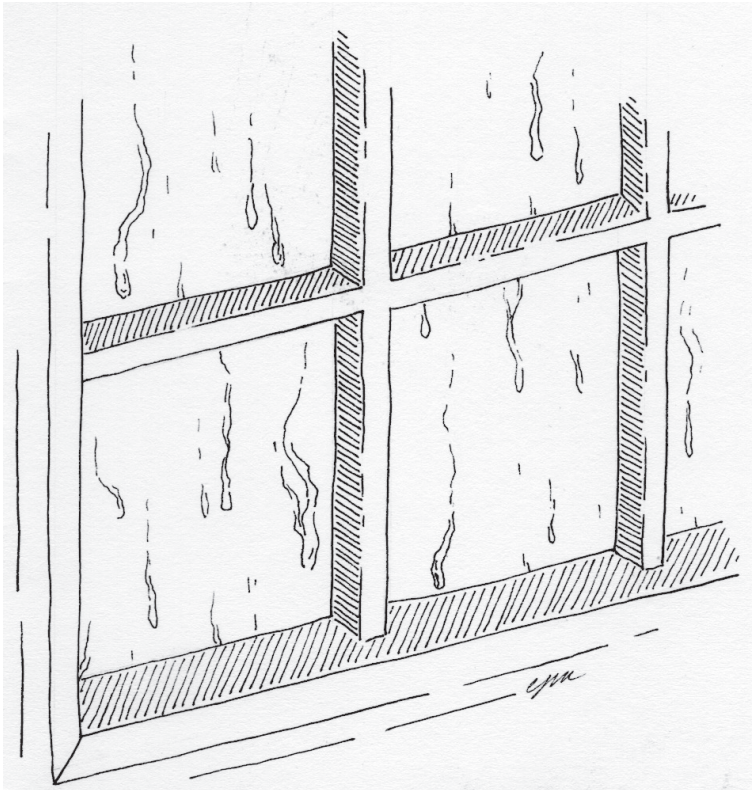
Katie jumped at her mother's voice and turned away from the windowpane. No, she wasn't finished. She had a lot to do. A rumble of thunder echoed in the distance.

"Because if you are," her mother continued, "we can go to the library now."

"No, I have a lot to do yet," she said with a sigh. She had a stack of books to return to the library though. Ah, a rainy afternoon and a good book…

Katie stared at the pages of her science textbook. Why was it so hard to concentrate on homework? She watched the rain trickling down the window some more. Then she looked at the open book on her lap. Her math book was open too. And under that one was history and a Bible workbook.

She turned the page of her science book. A picture showed the spectrum of colors revealed when sunlight is bent through a prism. She looked at the picture closely. Why are only those colors in the spectrum? And why are they in that order?



"LITTLE LIGHTS" . . . let it shine!

by Connie Meyer

She looked out the window. Sunlight started to peek through the clouds. Ah, even better—maybe the rain will stop.

She studied a little more. Sunlight was coming through the window now and shining onto the pages of her book. But rain kept hitting the glass. Katie glanced out the window again—and stared.

A rainbow!

The special rows of colors curved in vivid stripes across the sky. Now this was something to quit homework for! She set her books down and watched the glorious view. After several minutes the clouds began to shade the sun again. As quickly as it came, the rainbow faded and vanished.

She paused, and thought. Science explained how she could see what she just saw. She supposed math could help explain it too. And in Bible they had just learned how Noah came out of the ark and saw a rainbow for the first time. It was a sign of the covenant. Somehow, all these things were connected.

Katie picked up her books again. Rain continued to splat against the window. She closed her eyes. The rain seemed to be playing a song of its own—a special message and rhythm just for her: "listen, listen and watch… watch, watch." She opened her eyes. She smiled.

And kept on studying.

Unscramble these words from the verse below:

LAL YTH SOWKR LASHL SIRAPE HETE,
___ ___ _____ _____ _____ _____

O LORD; DAN HYT NISTAS HALLS SELSB
___ ___ _____ _____ _____

ETHE.
_____

Psalm 145:10

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

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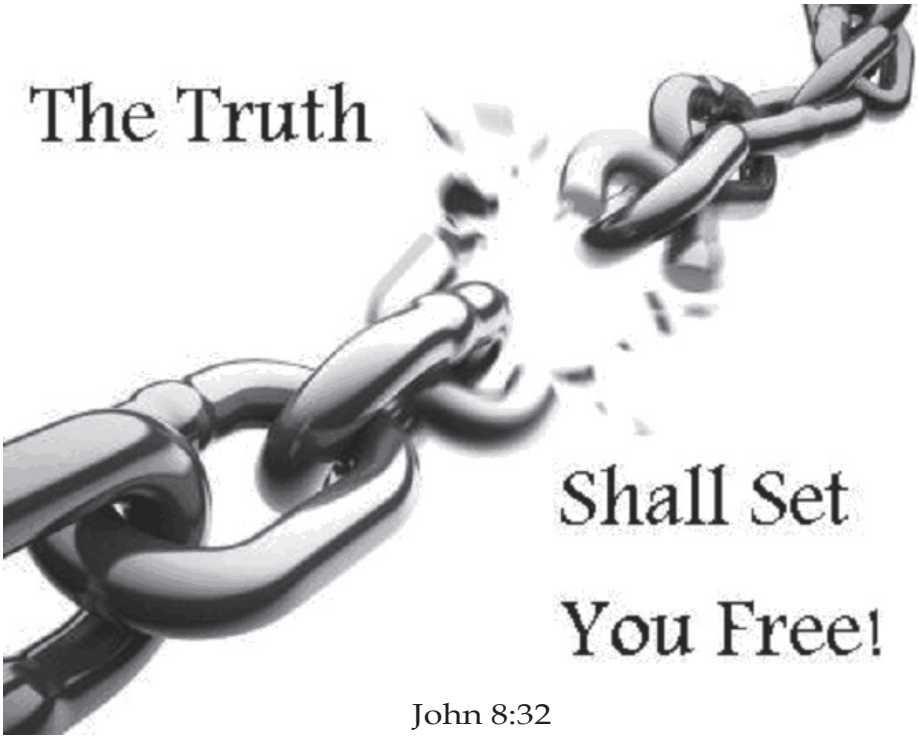

John 8:32

2010 Young People's Convention
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