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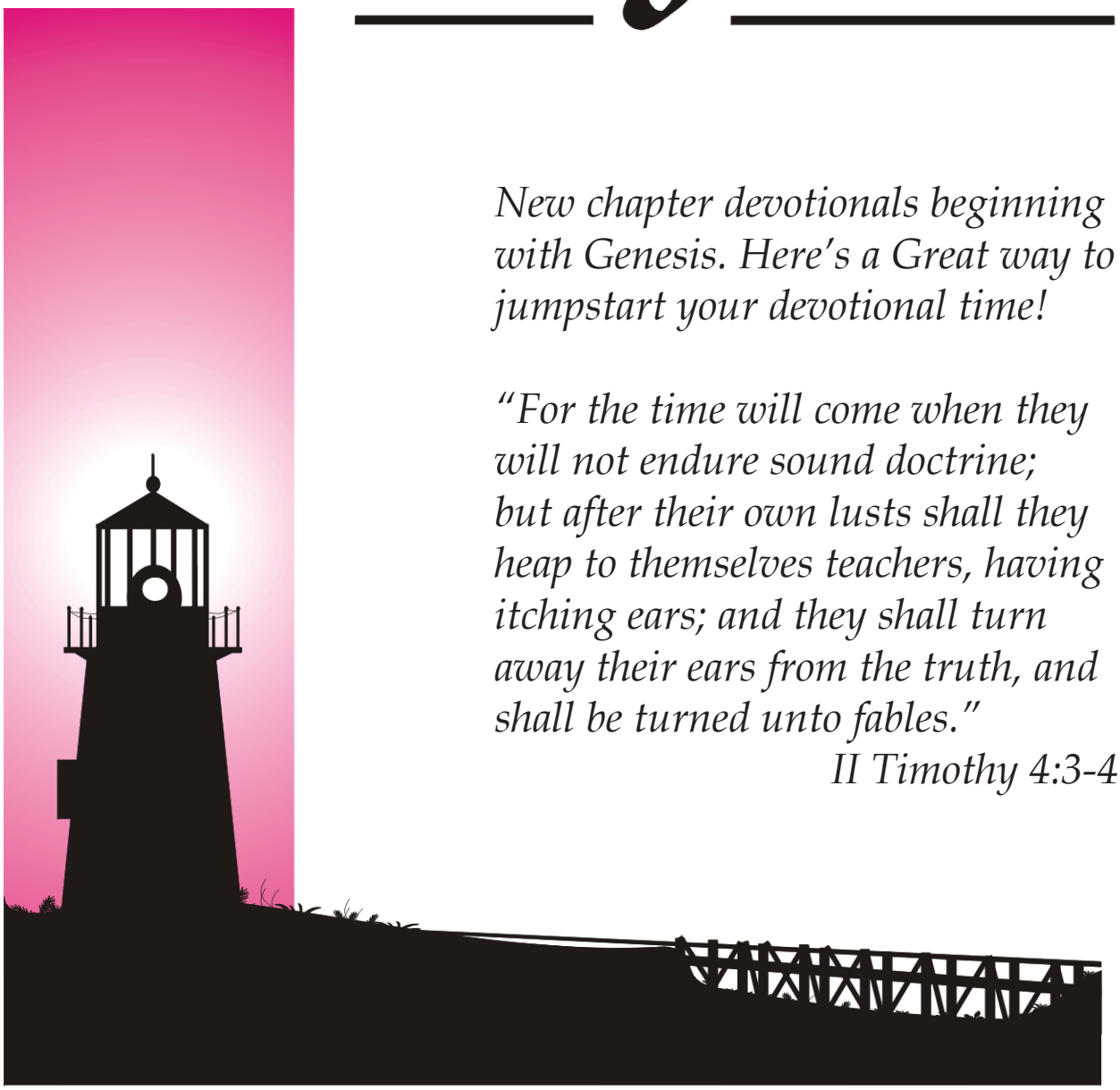

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"For the time will come when they will not endure sound doctrine; but after their own lusts shall they heap to themselves teachers, having itching ears; and they shall turn away their ears from the truth, and shall be turned unto fables."

II Timothy 4:3-4

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Fighting for Truth in a Postmodern Age (3)
Preservation of the Church in Truth: The Comfort We Need in These Perilous Days

by Ryan Barnhill

"The carnal mind is unable to comprehend this doctrine of the perseverance of the saints and the certainty thereof, which God hath most abundantly revealed in His Word, for the glory of His name and consolation of pious souls, and which He impresses upon the hearts of the faithful. Satan abhors it; the world ridicules it; the ignorant and hypocrite abuse, and heretics oppose it; but the spouse of Christ hath always most tenderly loved and constantly defended it, as an inestimable treasure; and God, against whom neither counsel nor strength can prevail, will dispose her to continue this conduct to the end. Now, to this one God, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit be honor and glory forever. Amen" (Canons, Fifth Head of Doctrine, Article 15).

Fathers, mothers, grandparents, and young people, are you anxious about the future of the church? Read that first paragraph over again and meditate on it for a while. What a beautiful article in our confession! The first two articles in this series have examined postmodernism in the colleges, and also postmodernism in the Emergent churches of our day. The articles called us to be aware of the spirit of our age around us which despises the truth of God's Word. When we think of the storms that are and will be sweeping upon the church with increasing intensity, we might become anxious, and even worry constantly about the future of Christ's body on this earth. As God's people, we always need to be warned about the error, but at the same time, we need to be reminded of our preservation in Jesus Christ. This, I believe, is a proper conclusion to this series.

Hear Scripture on the preservation of the saints. Jesus prayed for the preservation of his people to his Father: "And now I am no more in the world, but these are in the world, and I come to thee. Holy Father, keep through thine own name those whom thou hast given me, that they may be one, as we are" (John 17:11). Paul prayed for the Thessalonians that their "whole spirit and soul and body be preserved blameless unto the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ" (I Thess. 5:23). Listen to the promise to Israel: "Remember these, O Jacob and Israel; for thou art my servant: I have formed thee; thou art my servant: O Israel, thou shalt not be forgotten of me" (Isa. 44:21). Jesus spoke of himself as our faithful shepherd: "My sheep hear my voice, and I know them, and they follow me: and I give unto them eternal life; and they shall never perish, neither shall any man pluck them out of my hand" (John 10:27, 28). The preservation of the saints abounds in Scripture.

> …in the West, where postmodernism is embraced, persecution at the hands of tolerance-lovers is more subtle, but it exists, and it is paving the way for more severe persecution.

This doctrine is our rock-solid comfort in this world. In keeping with the theme of the past two articles, I speak now of our comfort in a world of postmodern ideas. Some Christians today are ruthlessly tortured, imprisoned, and even killed by intolerant governments and religious groups. But in the West, where postmodernism is embraced, persecution at the hands of tolerance-lovers is more subtle, but it exists, and it is paving the way for more severe persecution. How much longer will governments and liberal churches allow ministers to preach the pure Word of God which expresses God's hatred for homosexuality? How much longer will Christians be able to find employment while holding to an uncompromising position on Sabbath observance? At bottom, how much longer will the world allow the church to stand for truth? Let us not deceive ourselves. The nice, tolerant, accepting world will not always be tolerant toward Christians. Young people, there will come a day, possibly during our lives, in which we will not be able to buy or sell, and when we will be imprisoned, tortured, and killed. In this world of increasing wickedness and intolerance toward God's people, the bleeding and battered bride of Christ needs to have the comfort of her preservation.

Living as a Christian in this postmodern world is costly. Are you ready for such a life? Am I? We must have a love for the truth as a fire in our bones, the consuming desire of our whole life. Both church history and our daily experiences show the cost of living faithfully in a postmodern world. Christians in ancient Rome died at the mouths of lions and burned in the fiery flames because of their love for Christ and the truth which he revealed to them. In the years leading up to and during the Reformation, men translated the Bible into the tongue of the people, risked their very lives, and lived in constant fear of the Roman Catholic Church. Fast forward to today. What drives mothers to sacrifice so much for the instruction and godly upbringing of Covenant children? What motivates fathers to work tirelessly at their job to pay for the Christian schools and support the churches, many times at the expense of a nice house, truck, and luxurious vacation? Why do our ministers give of their lives in the service of Jesus Christ, even if it means long hours in the study and work which is many times marked with tears and sleepless nights? Love for the truth! Confidence in God's preserving work in that truth! Because by God's grace, and entirely by his work in their hearts, these people find it a privilege to work, to suffer, to even die, for the sake of God's truth.

II Timothy 3 and 4 is a striking passage in regard to suffering and preservation. Paul tells young Timothy in the beginning of chapter 3, "This know also, that in the last days perilous times shall come." Especially relevant to our topic is chapter 4, verses 3 and 4: "For the time will come when they will not endure sound doctrine; but after their own lusts shall they heap to themselves teachers, having itching ears; and they shall turn away their ears from the truth, and shall be turned unto fables." This became very real in the Apostle's life, for he says in verse 16, " At my first answer no man stood with me, but all men forsook me…" But though we live in perilous times and the cost is great, even cutting into our relationships, Paul speaks confidently in verse 17, as we should, that "the Lord stood with me, and strengthened me…" Paul beautifully connects this to God's preserving work in verse 18: "and the Lord shall deliver me from every evil work, and will preserve me unto his heavenly kingdom: to whom be glory for ever and ever. Amen."

In the college years, when the postmodern winds can be the strongest, it is important that we have very open lines of communication with our friends and with our parents.

We know that God preserves his church, but this does not imply that God does not use means to preserve his church. He uses you and me. Never should we forget that we are all members in the body of Christ and that we all play vital roles. What work do you perform in the church? Perhaps you think that

God would never or could never work through you for the good of his church. That could not be further from the truth. God uses many ways to keep the body of Christ strong; young people, in the strength of youth, contribute largely to this. When young people stand together, hands tightly clasped while standing on the firm foundation of truth, the postmodern winds cannot break their communion. In the college years, when the postmodern winds can be the strongest, it is important that we have very open lines of communication with our friends and with our parents. Are postmodern influences making you doubt some parts of God's Word? Are you having second thoughts about biblical doctrine and life? Such thoughts are not uncommon to anyone, especially at an age of examination and questioning. Be open and communicate. Help others who you see struggling with this.

But especially pray to our Father in heaven. So often we hear this, but how important it is! Pray that, at those low points when you doubt, he would lift you up and strengthen your faith. Jesus did not pray that we would be out of this world, where wicked philosophies and worldviews constantly circulate, but that the Father should keep us from the evil (John 17:15).

God never changes. God's truth never changes. God preserves his people in the truth of his Word. That is and must be our confidence in this world! As Protestant Reformed young people, we should, more than anyone, know in our heart and confess that preservation is all of God. Therefore, let us trust in him. He will never forsake those whom he has loved from all eternity. God preserves his church in truth! We respond to this the same way we started: "Now, to this one God, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit be honor and glory forever. Amen" (Canons, Fifth Head of Doctrine, Article 15). ❖

Ryan is a member of Hudsonville Protestant Reformed Church in Hudsonville, Michigan.

Fearfully and Wonderfully Made

Diabetes (1)

by Angie DeVries

When asked again this year if I would be willing to speak to you for the Fearfully and Wonderfully Made program, I must say as I said to last year's class: I can write about almost anything you throw at me,…but speak? A completely different story! So please bear with me as my nose is pressed firmly into my paper and I read this instead of having it all memorized.

When I say the word diabetes a lot of you will recognize the word as being something that your grandparent, parent or quite possibly your sibling suffers from. There are 2 types of diabetes—Type 1 and Type 2. When talking diabetes, the one body organ affected by the disease is called the pancreas. The pancreas' job inside the body is one of the most vital to the body functioning properly. It produces a hormone called insulin. Insulin is the main "transporter" for every bit of sugar that enters your body. It carries it through your blood stream in order for your body to use it as energy. When you are without insulin, the sugar sits in your body with nowhere to go and this will lead to problems.

Type 2 diabetes is common in adults aged 50 years or older—although it can occur in children and adolescents. Being overweight and leading a non-active life style can also make a person at higher risk for developing Type 2 diabetes. Other factors could be family history and also race. Type 2 diabetes is the most prevalent form of the disease accounting for 90-95% of all cases in America. Most people with Type 2 are still able to produce insulin at diagnosis, but the insulin that is produced doesn't keep up with the sugar that is taken into the body. A lot of times what is used to maintain Type 2 diabetes is a healthier life style which includes eating healthy and also exercising. Because the body is still able to produce insulin, pills are usually taken to help with their own insulin's ability to work effectively. When this does not help, then insulin injections are needed.

I'm here today to speak to you about Type 1 diabetes. It's a disease that I've had now for about 30 years of my life. I'll give you a brief "scientific" instruction of it but most of this speech will be from a personal aspect of

having this disease.

We Type 1 diabetics are often quite jealous of the Type 2 ones. When you have Type 2 there's a possible chance that it is preventable—whereas for us Type 1s? We had no choice, no way of preventing it and really now, there's no way of knowing if a person will get it or not.

Back when I was diagnosed it was a disease known as juvenile diabetes because most often it was diagnosed in children. But that is not always the case now. There have been many people affected by Type 1 diabetes in their late teens and early adult life as well. The cause for Type 1 diabetes isn't quite known yet but some say it's due to genetics and it takes an environmental trigger or series of triggers (such as a virus, toxin or drug) to set the autoimmune process in motion to destroy the pancreas' cells that produce insulin.

When you are diagnosed with Type 1 you are automatically put on insulin injections because your pancreas produces no insulin at all. Your shots mainly take the form of an "artificial" pancreas.

Around the age of 3 and a half I started showing symptoms that didn't seem quite right with my mom. I was constantly drinking, tired all the time, moody, loosing weight, loosing hair and going to the bathroom all the time. My mom took me from doctor to doctor and each one saying the same thing: "It's her age." I showed all the symptoms of having the disease but because doctors back then thought that Type 1 diabetes was an inherited disease and no one in my family had it, then there was no reason for me to be tested for it.

The doctor visits continued because my mom was convinced that something other than my age was going on. I was finally diagnosed on my 6th birthday, and from that point on I hated my disease. Being diagnosed on my birthday was the first way it "stole" my life from me. I had so many plans for that day—I turned 6! I was going to have a birthday party with cake and ice cream and presents! I had no time for a disease—I was on my way to kindergarten!

Because my disease went undetected for so long the sugar levels in my blood were outrageously high. When there's no insulin to help carry the sugar through the blood stream what ends up happening is that the sugar just sits. When it sits it starts causing significant damage to the body's organs and nerves.

For those of you that don't have the disease, your work is pretty easy—you eat what you want and your body does the rest. Your pancreas figures out how much sugar is there inside your body, it produces the right amount of insulin to take care of that sugar—and all this goes on without you feeling or even knowing about it.

I was put on shots from the very beginning and hated it. Not only were the shots a pain to get, but it was never quite right—the insulin was either too much or too little and to find the *exact* number took a pancreas—which I didn't have.

Another introduction to my life was blood testing. Blood testing is one of the ways a person can know what the sugar level is inside the body and this will in turn let us know how much insulin to give ourselves to help that sugar maintain a normal number. A normal blood reading is 60-120. When I was first diagnosed my blood sugar number was well over 1000. Blood testing involves a simple finger prick and it registers into a machine to give you your blood glucose level (or in easier terms—blood sugar).

When I was first diagnosed they didn't have the machines they have today. In fact my mom had to take me into the doctor sometimes 3-4 times a week to get my blood sugar tested because at-home meters weren't available. A few months though after my diagnosis , we were given our first "at home meter." Today's models are small and compact—almost as small as a credit card and as thick as a half a deck of cards. My first meter was the size of a Psalter and just as thick. Blood testing was never a "love" of mine, I don't remember really hating it so much as a kid but as I grew it became a constant irritation.

Another change in my life because of the disease was my diet. Thirty years ago sugar was *taboo*—I couldn't eat it much less look at it. And to have 2 brothers who didn't have it and were able to eat anything and everything while I was stuck with fruit or veggies? Yeah, that didn't help make me love this disease more than I already hated it.

Science has come a long ways since 1980. Since then the insulin pump has been invented. This is a machine that is attached to you and deposits insulin slowly into your system sporadically throughout the day. It takes on the role that the pancreas would take in "producing" the insulin, but you still have to watch blood sugars as that was also the pancreas' job to do.

Another added bonus about the work in science is that we diabetics can basically have whatever we want to eat. You can't imagine the sheer joy in this giant step! I *finally* was given the green light to eat cake! The only thing is that you constantly have to watch what you put in your mouth—making sure that you keep an eye on the sugar (more importantly the carbohydrate) content and calculate how much insulin you will need to take to cover that amount of sugar.

The things I have to deal with as a diabetic are continuous. Daily life includes: blood testing (up to 10-12 times each day), insulin injections (about 6 times each day) and a constant monitoring of what I put in my mouth and calculation to how much insulin this would require me to take. Diabetes is a constant monitoring game. You are aware of how you are feeling at *all* times and if you are feeling a little "off" then bells start going off "are my sugars high? Are they low?"

Low blood sugars are pretty easy for the "public" to spot. You start sweating, shaking and acting a bit strange. Low blood sugars usually happen when the body has too much of the insulin but not enough sugar for the insulin to attach itself to. I've had my fair share of "interesting" low blood sugar reactions, one of which happened while shopping at Meijers. As I was walking down the bulk food isle I could tell that something just wasn't right. I started having a hard time focusing on things and couldn't figure out why I was where I was at and what I was doing there. While passing the bins of candy, I grabbed a scoop knowing that I needed sugar. Then things started fading in and out and the next thing I knew I was karate kicking the end isle for some unknown reason. Now to most passers-by it would look as if I were completely off my rocker. But a lady took me in her arms and gently guided me to the floor where I passed out. Thankfully she was a wife of a firefighter and knew the signs and symptoms of a low blood sugar. ❖

(to be concluded in the next issue)

Angie is a member of Trinity Protestant Reformed Church in Hudsonville, Michigan.

Your Thoughts

Eternal Ponderings

by Kevin Schipper

The human brain and human reasoning cannot fully comprehend the idea of something that has no end and no beginning. God in his three persons is eternal. The expanse of the universe is infinite, even though the mind of man says that there must be an end somewhere. The idea of eternal glory with God, and likewise, eternal torment without God, is something beyond describing with human words.

It is hard enough to describe what the glories of heaven will be like before you even begin to consider just how long we will be spending there. Eternity; in heaven, time will no longer be consequential. It will not mean a thing, so that a thousand days will be as an evening gone. This whole time we will be, as Reverend Vos put it, "singing deliriously before the throne of God." In heaven, we will not just be "partying it up" as the world thinks, but rather doing everything to glorify the name of God, and we will be doing it perfectly.

But we must remember that we will do this for the rest of eternity. Imagine!

Hell is a place; it is there, and it is real, contrary to the ideas of a certain popular author. It is outside of God's good providence, where God empties his cup of wrath, so that evil and torment reign supreme. As his son hung on that accursed tree, God took his good grace away from him, and caused the three hours of darkness to hide the torments that his son was going through to pay for all of our sins. This is why the Apostle's Creed says "and he descended into Hell." It was not that Christ was bodily moved from his place on the cross and sent to the actual place hell, but rather, that God removed his care from him as he hung there. Our savior only had to deal with that for three hours, not to minimize that in any way, but the wicked will have to endure that for eternity. Hell is not like the Roman Catholic purgatory. You pay for your sins, but there is no way to ever escape. One sin deserves an eternity of punishment and our sinful human nature sins every second of our life.

Again, the idea of eternity comes into play. God is infinite and eternal. He has no beginning and no end. The mind of a mere man cannot fathom this. One day, I sat on my bed and just thought about eternity for a while. Even though I gave up because my head hurt too much after about five minutes of thinking about it, I discov-

ered something. Man can remember the past, live in the present, and not know the future, but you and I cannot wrap our minds around the idea that something will be forever. You can try, but all you will really accomplish is giving yourself an aching head. I believe that eternity is another one of those mysteries that God does not choose to reveal to man. But this does not stop man from trying to understand it.

God does give our feeble human minds an insight into the idea of eternity. We call pi "irrational" because it has no end (that man has found yet), nor repeats itself. But there are people who are constantly trying to find the end to pi, and highpi.com has it written out in download form to the 400 millionth digit. Man wishes to comprehend something eternal, but cannot, so he covers it in a blanket term by saying, "It goes on forever." It sounds like a simple statement, but if you would realize the full implications of that phrase, I think you might be a little more hesitant to use it.

As children of God, we know that we will be spending this eternity with our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ, and also, that the worldly people around us will be spending it in hell. We know that these glories, and likewise, those horrors, are beyond human explanation, but we do know that it will never end. "For the wages of sin is death; but the gift of God is eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord" (Rom. 6:23). ❖

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

Church Family

Our Children's Education: (5)
A Covenant Education as Demand of the Covenant

by Aaron Lim

A Chinese proverb says it well that every parent desires his child to become a dragon. The meaning of this proverb is that parents naturally wish their children to succeed in life. This is naturally true of believers too. In a fiercely competitive society like Singapore, it is conceivable that covenant parents are greatly concerned about the future of their children. How will our covenant young survive in this spiritually hostile world where sin and ungodliness pervades? How will they find their means of livelihood where the wicked often seek to harm God's people?

The comfort believers receive comes from the truth of Scripture where God has promised to be their God and their seed in their generations for an everlasting covenant (Gen 17:7). He has promised never to leave nor to forsake us (Heb 13:5). The Heidelberg Catechism confirms these promises by assuring us that we are not our own but belong to Jesus Christ, so that all things are subservient to our salvation (LD1,Q&A1). God our Father, on whom we rely so entirely, will provide us with all things necessary for soul and body (LD9,Q&A26).

God's covenant friendship with covenant parents is sufficient assurance for them.

As covenant parents we must turn to the Scriptures to find the basis for covenant education. I wish to prove the demand on 3 grounds.

1. The doctrine of infant baptism
2. The doctrine of the covenant
3. Our Reformed fathers

1. The Doctrine of Infant Baptism

Although the doctrine of infant baptism stems from the covenant and ought to be treated in the second contention, I believe the doctrine specially provides the starting platform for the contention for covenant education. Following Scripture's command, Reformed parents baptize their children.

The Belgic Confession beautifully explains the basis for infant baptism:

> [Infants of believers] ought to be baptized and sealed with the sign of the covenant, as the children in Israel formerly were circumcised upon the same promises which are made unto our children. And indeed Christ

shed His blood no less for the washing of the children of the faithful than for adult persons (Article 34).

The Heidelberg Catechism affirms the truth:

[Infants of believers] are included in the covenant and church of God...since redemption from sin by the blood of Christ, and the Holy Ghost, the author of faith, is promised to them no less than to the adult (LD27,Q&A74).

When covenant parents present their children before the Lord for baptism, they confess that "infants are to be baptized as heirs of the kingdom of God and of His covenant." They "promise and intend to see these children, when come to years of discretion, instructed and brought up in the aforesaid doctrine, or help or cause them to be instructed therein, to the utmost of [their] power". Furthermore, they are to "be piously and religiously educated, increase and grow up in the Lord Jesus Christ"(Form for the Administration of Baptism).

Infant baptism implies that our children belong to Jehovah, since He has cleansed them by the blood of his son. They are baptized into Christ (Rom. 6:3) and are therefore partakers of his death and resurrection. The cross is as effective for them as for mature believers.

Unlike the erroneous Baptists who treat their children as unbelievers and unregenerate, the Reformed church insists that her covenant young are holy (1 Cor. 7:14). For this reason they must receive a holy education—one that instills in them holiness and trains them to lead a life of holiness. It is especially striking that the Heidelberg Catechism declares that by way of baptism our infants are "distinguished from the children of unbelievers" (LD7Q&A74). It only follows logically that the education they receive must be "distinguished from the children of unbelievers." For this reason covenant parents may not allow their covenant seed to receive the same education as unbelieving seed. It is no less than a contradiction to the vows we made as covenant parents when we place our children in the public schools.

Children who are holy must receive an entirely different, distinctively separate education from ungodly children. Children who are sanctified in Christ must receive a sanctified education.

2. The doctrine of the Covenant

Reformed parents know from Scripture that the covenant they share with Jehovah is not a contract in which they have conditions to fulfill. The education they give to their covenant seed is not a condition they have to meet to enjoy the blessings of the covenant. Believing parents know that they are depraved, spiritually impotent by nature to satisfy any of Jehovah's conditions.

But because the covenant is God's friendship with His people, covenant parents who enjoy this friendship know their part in the covenant. They are friend-servants to their friend-master. They confess that their covenant God saves them and their seed by establishing, maintaining and perfecting his covenant with them in Jesus Christ. They know it is not only their responsibility but also their high privilege to raise covenant seed for the Lord. And so they do it to the utmost of their power.

Covenant education serves to bring covenant seed into consciousness of their covenant friendship with Jehovah. In obedience to their covenant God, Reformed parents give their children a covenant education. It is part of keeping the covenant he has established with them. They are deeply aware that a failure to give their children a covenant education would result in them refusing to walk in his ways (Ps. 78:4-11).

Because they belong in God's covenant, covenant parents know that they have a radically different purpose in raising covenant seed. Their goals are never aligned with the wicked world but are always sharply in contrast. They are raising children for the glory and purpose of the Lord. That purpose is beautifully summarized in the Heidelberg Catechism: "to learn rightly to know the only true God; trust in Him alone, with humility and patience submit to Him; expect all good things from Him only; love, fear, and glorify Him with my whole heart" (LD34,Q&A94). Our children must be taught to know that their chief end is to glorify God and to enjoy Him forever (Westminster Shorter Catechism, Q1).

In giving our children a covenant education, Prof. Engelsma points out:

We aim at mature men and women of the covenant (pg 92, *Reformed Education*).

Mature men and women of the covenant are those who are deeply conscious of their covenant friendship with God, live in obedience to Him, and who direct all of their life to His glory alone.

In raising covenant seed, parents must have the welfare of the church in mind. They love the church dearly because Christ paid the ultimate sacrifice to redeem the church from her misery. Covenant parents are spiritual visionaries. They are conscious of the truth that "from the beginning to the end of the world, [Christ] gathers, defends, and preserves to Himself by His Spirit and Word...a church chosen to everlasting life" (HC LD21,Q&A54). So they give their covenant children a covenant education for the church in her generations to come.

Prof. Engelsma is especially right on this point:

> Covenant thinking reckons with the future good of the coming generations (pg. 17, *Reformed Education*).

Rev. Steven Key explains this point:

> So this covenant instruction, passed on from generation to generation, is the means whereby each succeeding generation learns to set its hope in God and to keep His commandments (Biblical Basis & Goal of Christian Education, *Standard Bearer*, Nov. 15, 2005).

Faithfulness to God's covenant demands that we raise our covenant children to know the ways of the covenant intimately.

3. Our Reformed Fathers

The education of covenant seed weighed heavily on the minds of our Reformed fathers. They understood clearly the sheer importance of educating covenant children in the ways of the covenant. To neglect covenant education meant spiritual death for future generations.

We who call ourselves Calvinists can find support from the man himself:

> Calvin recognized that the church would not last another generation if the children did not receive catechetical instruction, plus thorough parental Christian education. He saw the urgent need not only for training in the faith, but for secular education from good teachers...With a pastor's heart, he also drew up ordinances for Christian schools. Calvin understood that the church had responsibility to promote the Christian education of the children (pg. 16, *Protestant Reformed Theological Journal*, Nov. 2009).

Luther understood that "for the church to remain faithful it must teach—explicitly, purposefully, and programmatically—the gospel and orthodox theology, and it must do so to the young" (pg. 151, Martin Luther, Stephen J. Nichols, P&R Publishing, 2002).Hence "Luther wrote extensively on education because the education of the children of the church was crucial to him" (pg 131, Portraits of Faithful Saints, Herman Hanko, RFPA, 1999).

In his condemnation of public education, Rev. Herman Hoeksema "prayed in his congregational prayer that God's covenant people might not in the education of their children deliver them over to the gates of hell—his forceful characterization of the public school system." He did this knowing "that the congregation was opposed in large measure to Christian education" (pg. 396, Portraits of Faithful Saints, Herman Hanko, RFPA, 1999).

Prof. Herman Hanko's insightful observation is correct:

> Covenant parents begin the instruction of their children from the moment they are born. They do so, not in the earnest hope that when these children grow older, they will remember what they were taught and then come to Christ. Parents do so because they believe that God is at work in the hearts of these elect children of the covenant, and that covenant instruction is used by God to work conscious faith and salvation in them, as small as they may be (pg. 144, *We and Our Children*, RFPA, 2004).

Prof. Engelsma offers sharp words:

> God's children must be godly taught; covenant children must be taught to fear God; children separated unto God must be kept apart from wicked teachers and wicked children; sanctified children must be taught and disciplined to be holy (pg. 69, *Reformed Education*).

The list goes on and there are plenty more Reformed men who have written extensively on Christian education. All had one thing in common: the future of the church depended on a solid Christian education for their covenant children. ❖

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

Dear Readers,

Recently, some correspondence between two brothers regarding the series on Abstruse Melancholy has taken place in this magazine. We want to warn our readers that some of the material in the books recommended in the series have erroneous content. As always, we ask that you read discerningly.

In Christ,
Editorial Team

Watching Daily At My Gates

by Chester Hunter

August 6 Read Psalm 137

Obviously this is a Psalm written about Israel's captivity. It is a Psalm some would dismiss as unnecessary because of verses 7-9. But yet we should look at its words often. We are no different than Israel. We, too, deserve their fate because we walk in the same sins. We treat God as no more than an idol at times. We need to look at verses five and six frequently. God has given to us songs of praise. Do we use them? Do we prefer the church above all earthly joys? Consider also those last verses. They serve to remind us that in this world there are those who are not God's people. We must not get too cozy with them. We need to see that our eternal home is not on this earth but in the New Jerusalem. Sing Psalter 379.

August 7 Read Psalm 138

There are a variety of thoughts in the Psalm that we should ponder. First of all we see that God is God and must be worshipped by us in the way that he has ordained. Secondly, we see that our God is great and glorious and deserves the praise of all levels of society. Next, even though our God is mighty, he cares for even the lowliest of his people. He has care for us in the highest manner. He gave his only begotten Son to die for us. For what more can we ask? Finally, we see that his mercy is towards us in all situations in this life. We will not be forsaken. Let us pray that he complete the work he has begun in us and take us to glory. Sing Psalter 381.

August 8 Read Psalm 139:1-6

What doesn't God know about us? He has made us and watches over us each day. He knows our every thought and word. In that knowledge he knows when we need him. He knows this before we do. When we think about all of this, like David we must see that this knowledge is more than we can comprehend. We cannot be like God, and we cannot be God. Let us confess that God knows us in all that we do, and let us flee to him in all things. Sing Psalter 382.

August 9 Psalm 139:7-16

The Psalmist continues with the knowledge that God sees over his every move in this life. There is no escaping the sight of God. This should give to us a feeling of comfort, not a feeling of terror. With God knowing our every move and watching us in all places, we can be comforted that he will not let us fall. God has known us from the moment of our conception. Not only has he known us, he has ordained us from all eternity. Our place in his book is secure. No matter what happens to any of his children from the moment of that conception, the loving arms of the heavenly Father cares for them. Thanks be to God! Sing Psalter 383.

August 10 Read Psalm 139:17-24

After considering that God knows his people from conception and in any place on this earth, the Psalmist realizes that God's thoughts are with and for those people. God's thoughts are limitless, and they are able to care for us at all times. David also realizes that his enemies, and they were many, had no sway over him because God cared for him. We can have the same comfort as we go through life in this wicked world. David's final wish in this Psalm is that God would search him and root out any wicked way found in him. Is this our prayer? Sing Psalter 384.

August 11 Read Psalm 140

Once again we see a Psalm of David where he pours out his thanks to God for deliverance from enemies. We know from Old Testament history that David faced many enemies from within and without. All of these enemies were instigated by Satan to try to cause David to fall so that Christ could not redeem his people. Satan works in different ways today, but his goal is still to make God's people fall. We must pray for deliverance from all enemies of God's cause. We must know, like David, that God is on our side and will preserve us until the end. Let us give thanks unto him knowing that we shall live with him forever. Sing Psalter 385.

August 12 Read Psalm 141

Do we pray the words of verses 3 and 4 often? We should do this daily, because we are inclined to sin in this way every day of our lives. Our mouths can get us in trouble because of what they say about both God and our neighbors. In our hearts we strive with God and with the neighbor. We must want the discipline of a friend knowing that it is God's blessing upon us. When we pray this way and live this way, we will escape Satan's traps. As we finish our prayers let us remember to have our eyes

upon Jehovah God who will protect us throughout our pilgrimage on this earth. Sing Psalter 386.

August 13 Read Psalm 142

The Psalm's title says that David was in a cave. It is thought that the experience that brings on this Psalm is while he is fleeing from Saul. Even though David had as many as six hundred men around him, he knows that his only refuge is in God. David wishes to be removed from this trouble so that he can join his fellow believers in praise to his God. Is this our desire? Do we look for help so that we can praise God, or are we looking out for ourselves? God has directed our paths throughout all of life. Let us look to him for our help and our refuge no matter where we are or what we are doing. Sing Psalter 387.

August 14 Read Psalm 143:1-6

David is in some difficulty as he pens this Psalm. He sees no escape from that difficulty in his own strength, and so he does what we must do when we are in difficulty. He goes to God in prayer. He asks for help on the basis of God's faithfulness and righteousness. In doing this he realizes that his own work and experience are for nothing. He looks back on his life, he remembers that God has helped him in prior difficulties. This must be our thought as we go through trials and troubles in life. We must fall upon God's mercies that are new every morning. He will give to us a drink of the water of life, and we will be refreshed as nothing else can refresh us. Sing Psalter 389.

August 15 Read Psalm 143:7-12

David continues his prayer in this portion of the Psalm. He asks God to hear him and show himself to him. In doing this he asked for the way that he should walk. It might not be an easy way but it is God's way. We, like David, must ask the Great Teacher to teach us his will for us. In his will and way we will find the land of plenty and peace. In walking in that way we will live. Finally David confesses that he is God's servant. Is this our confession? Do we acknowledge that God is the master of our life? Let us go to him for all the help that we need every day. In that way we will find the blessings of Jehovah. Sing Psalter 391.

August 16 Read Psalm 144:1-8

Throughout his life on this earth, David was bothered by enemies both within and without the nation of Israel. He learned by experience that his help had to be Jehovah. He starts off this Psalm by blessing Jehovah for such help. Like David we, too, must fight battles. While our battles are not with the physical weapons of war, we must be well versed in the spiritual weapon, the Bible. Like David we must learn that we cannot fight the battles alone. Daily we must use our Bibles and use the means of prayer to seek help from our refuge who is in heaven. God has given to mere men a great treasure in his Word. Let us know it, and let us use it each day. Sing Psalter 392.

August 17 Read Psalm 144:9-15

After realizing the source of our victories over the enemies of God and his cause, we must break forth into singing for such victories. The songs that we sing must be the songs of Zion which speak of the salvation we have from Satan and all his hosts. This salvation gives to us the quiet rest that we need to bring up children in the Lord. Those who know the joyful sound of salvation can be happy. They can be happy because their God is Jehovah of hosts. He is their covenant God, and he will help them in all of their needs. Sing Psalter 393.

August 18 Read Psalm 145:1-8

As the title indicates, this is a Psalm of praise. As David looks back over his life, he finds many reasons why he should praise Jehovah. As he looks at God's greatness, he sees the covenant being worked out in his life. We see this in verse four. The greatest reason for praise is found in verse 8. Jehovah has been gracious toward David, and he will be gracious toward us. Even as David realizes this, we must realize that we do not deserve the least of God's greatness to be given to us. We deserve his anger; we get his love. Should not we praise him?

August 19 Read Psalm 145:9-21

After speaking about God's greatness toward him, David now looks at God's attribute of goodness. We see that God in his providence cares for all of his creation. All creation joins in singing a psalm of praise to its Creator. Do we do this daily? As we ponder the beauties of the creation, whether small or large, do we praise their maker? God is not only good to us, but he also cares for us. When we fall, he sets us on our feet again. When we call unto him we can be assured that he will hear us and give us a good answer. As we consider the way of our life, let us turn to Jehovah in praise for all that he has done for us.

August 20 Read Psalm 146

As we make our way toward the final doxology, we come to another song of praise. The first and last sentences could be written: Hallelujah. We praise him, first of all, because there is no one else who deserves such praise. No one on this earth has done enough for us to deserve the praise that our God does. Look back at the list of all that God does for his people on this earth. He cares for all classes of them. Not one elect person, no matter what their state is on this earth, escapes his love and attention. These are no strangers to God. He loves them. We can

trust him because he does and will reign forever. Let us join his people constantly praising Jehovah!

August 21 Read Psalm 147:1-11

When we doubt the wisdom of singing the Psalms of Zion, we need to go back and reread verse one. Singing those words is a beautiful practice. While the church may not agree which *Psalter* to sing, those who are faithful Psalm singers do agree on the practice's value. We sing those songs because they tell about our wonderful God who alone does wonderful things. He is an awesome God in that, for example, he alone is able to know the number of the stars. But he is not limited; from knowing the number of stars, we also have a God who cares for the lowliest of his people. He, by his providence, cares for his creation. We must fear him, for in that way he takes pleasure in us.

August 22 Read Psalm 147:12-20

In this portion of the Psalm the church is specifically called to praise God. As we have looked in nature around us, we have seen many signs of his power. Floods have covered the earth from Australia to Missouri. Storms have ravaged towns throughout the United States. Earthquakes have reminded us that Christ is returning. As the seasons cycle from year to year, we remember who our God is. He is not everyone's God. That is clearly seen in this Psalm. He is the God of a specially chosen people. Praise God from whom all blessings flow!

August 23 Read Psalm 148:1-6

As we come to the close of this book of praises, we see God inspiring one of Israel's poets to write this grand doxology of praise. In calling on these parts of creation to praise Jehovah, the Psalmist reiterates God's greatness. Praise begins with the angels in heaven. Those creatures who are called upon to serve God are called to praise him. Once again we see evidence of the very truth of creation. Creation is not a myth; evolution is Satan's lie concocted to sway the believer. What a great comfort it is to know that God's decree concerning this world and his church will not fail! Hallelujah!

August 24 Read Psalm 148:7-14

Not only the angels and the created lights of heaven are called to praise God, those created earthly beings are given the same command. After going through the list of those who are called to sing the grand hallelujah, God inspires the Psalmist to call upon men of all stations in this life to praise him. Why are we to praise him? First of all we are to praise him because his name is above all names. More importantly, we are to praise him because he alone is the Redeemer of his people. This is the meaning of verse 14. Christ is the horn, the salvation, of his people. Let his name be praised because he is God.

August 25 Read Psalm 149

Every time we receive mercies from our heavenly Father, it is fitting that we sing a song of praise to him. We see this idea throughout Scripture culminating in the new song that we will sing in heaven as the whole choir of the elect is finally brought together after Christ's return. We praise him because he takes pleasure in us to whom he has given salvation. This Psalm also speaks of the destruction of the reprobate. You cannot have one without the other. Christ's return will bring heavenly glory to the elect and eternal desolation to the reprobate. What should our response be? Hallelujah!

August 26 Read Psalm 150

It does not matter to us who wrote this final Psalm. It is a Psalm of God calling us to praise him. It begins with the call to praise God in his sanctuary, that is, the place where he dwells with his people. In the Old Testament that was the temple. For us it is the place where we gather with fellow believers on his day to commemorate the mightiest of all acts—our salvation wrought by him alone. In our worship we are called to bring all parts of that worship to praise him. Man is not to be praised in God's worship; God is! Let us praise him for his greatness which he has graciously extended to us who are nothing. Praise ye Jehovah!

August 27 Read Genesis 1

Genesis is the book of beginnings. In fact, the meaning of the word is beginning. In this chapter we see a description of the creation of all things. All things were created by God by the word of his mouth. All things from the minutest atomic particle to the largest object in the universe were brought into being when God called them. This is the belief that God's people have had from the beginning. Scripture is sprinkled with that belief. The confessions extol that belief. Is it yours? After God created all things, he pronounced them very good. God has given to us a good creation. Let us use it aright. Sing Psalter 287.

August 28 Read Genesis 2

Genesis 2 not only recaps the events of Genesis 1, but it also gives to us more information about the crown of creation—man. Man is the crown. Creation was made for us so that we can glorify God with it. Is this our goal in life? Is this how we view creation? Is this how we view our creation? This chapter also gives to us the institution of marriage. God ordained this solemn vow between one man and one woman. That is the only way that marriage

can be viewed in order that God may be glorified. Unions between those of the same gender are not marriages and are certainly not God-glorifing. Neither does the God of marriage sanctify unions between those who have a living spouse. Let us keep our vows made at marriage, and let us marry in the Lord. Sing Psalter 14.

August 29 Read Genesis 3

We move from the beauty of the creation story to the ugliness of sin to the beauty of the promised redemption. Adam and Eve lived in the garden until they committed the original sin. With that sin the beauty of the garden which was a picture of heaven was marred. Man also was plunged into despair. God did not leave him in despair. In verse 15 God promised a savior who would crush the head of Satan and bring his people to salvation. As we live in this life fouled by sin, let us look to Christ the author and finisher of our faith and salvation. Sing Psalter 83.

August 30 Read Genesis 4

In this book of beginnings we see the beginning of the strife between the seed of the woman and the seed of Satan. Not only does Cain kill Abel, but he also ushers in the antichristian warfare that will continue until Christ returns. After we read of the martyrdom of Abel, we are told of Cain's line with all its inventions and wickedness. In the last verse we are told of Abel's replacement, Seth, and the beginning of public worship. Are we fighting the fight of faith, meeting our God in worship, and looking for the return of Christ? Sing Psalter 99.

August 31 Read Genesis 5

Throughout the Old Testament we come upon these chapters which are a list of names. We tend to read through them quickly or to skip them all together. There is a time for that practice, but there is also a time for the practice of examining the list for the nuggets found within those lists. In this list we see the line of Seth. In yesterday's chapter we saw the line of Cain. That line was filled with sinners and boasters. This line also contains sinners but it contains those saved by grace. Examine the nuggets found in verses 24 and 29. What more do we sinners need? Sing Psalter 69.

September 1 Read Genesis 6

When God's sons and daughters marry the sons and daughters of Satan, quite often monsters of sin are created. Now this is not always the case, but the truth of the first sentence is found in this chapter. Out of the world of sin and corruption was found Noah, a man who found grace in God's eyes. This was definitely not Noah's doing; this finding of grace was only by grace which is the gift of God. That grace allowed Noah the strength to build an ark when there had been no rain. It allowed him to raise a covenant family in the midst of the wickedness around him. It also gave him strength to prepare for the catastrophe that would change the world and prove to be a precursor to the final catastrophe. These are only catastrophes in the world's eyes; for God's people they are the way to salvation and eternal life in heaven. Sing Psalter 285.

September 2 Read Genesis 7

In this chapter we have an account of destruction and grace. First of all, we must notice God's hand in the whole chapter just as we must notice God's hand in all of our life. God brought the animals to Noah. God shut Noah, his family, and the animals into the ark so that they could not be harmed by the catastrophic happenings outside of its doors. God brought the waters from all parts of his creation to inundate the world and destroy all but eight of its inhabitants. It was by God's grace that the church was preserved. It is by God's grace that we are preserved until Christ comes for us either through death or through the final destruction. Sing Psalter 211.

September 3 Read Genesis 8

Yesterday we saw that it was all God's doing in the preservation of the church and the destruction of the world and its wicked inhabitants. Notice verse one of today's chapter: "And God remembered…." God was not finished with Noah's education as yet. He had to wait for many months until the world was ready for habitation once more. God could have made it ready much quicker but he did not. After Noah steps on dry land, he takes some of his precious clean animals and offers them for a sacrifice to God. This, too, was by grace, and God accepted that sacrifice and made the promise never to completely destroy the world by a flood again. When we see devastating floods, we must be reminded of this promise, and know that by grace God will always protect his church. Sing Psalter 378.

September 4 Read Genesis 9

Here we have another "And God...." This one is "And God blessed Noah and his sons…." After saving them and remembering them, now he blesses them. In this blessing is comprehended not only Noah but also the church of all ages. We see this in the sign of the rainbow as it shines brilliantly all over the earth when God dictates through the proper weather conditions. We also see this wonderful blessing in the covenant promises also given in this chapter. In contrast to the beautiful rainbow is the ugly reminder that sin is still present in this world. Let us look forward to the final cleansing of the world when God and

his Son will make a new heavens and new earth not tainted with the ugliness of sin. Sing Psalter 241.

September 5 Read Genesis 10

Here we have another list of names in Scripture. Did you catch the reference to most of us? If not, look again at verse 5. In verses 8-10 we see a precursor to the next significant event in the history of the battle between the forces of Satan and the forces of God. Nimrod was more than a great hunter. He was a political leader who set up a political body that would oppose God. In this history of Noah's sons we see the beginnings of world history throughout the ages. This history would contain many battles between the forces of Christ and the forces of antichrist. Are we fighting this battle? Sing Psalter 206.

September 6 Read Genesis 11

In the first part of this chapter, we find the carrying out of the building of the Tower of Babel. Even though God stymied Satan's attempt this time, Satan has continued building various towers of Babels throughout history. The confusion of languages has been overcome through the many means of communication that we have today. Satan will use the present technology to gather his forces together to attack the children of God on this earth. But we need not fear. In the end of the chapter we see the beginnings of the line of the covenant of which we are a part. Thanks be to God! Sing Psalter 425.

September 7 Read Genesis 12

We move from the account of Noah to the account of Abraham. First of all we see obedience. God told Abraham to leave the land of his birth, his relatives, and all that were familiar to go to a strange land. He obeyed; would we? As he leaves, he is given a rich blessing. In fact he is given the richest blessing. He is given the promise that Christ would be born in his generations. When he comes to that land, he worships his God. Are we willing to worship God in a strange place among a people who care little for the things of Jehovah? Abraham also shows that he is in need of a Savior when he leaves the Promised Land and goes to Egypt. Let us learn from this history how we must live in this world until we reach the Promised Land. Sing Psalter 218.

September 8 Read Genesis 13

Each chapter of this portion of Scriptures is a building block for the formation of the nation of Israel, the Old Testament church. In each chapter we can and must learn how we must live in obedience to God. We must not be like Lot and move away from the body of Christ even when we think we would gain from such a move. We must stay or move to the place where we can build an altar and worship God as he has commanded us. God's promises are sure; let us be patient until he carries them out. Sing Psalter 245.

September 9 Read Genesis 14

Here in the account of Lot's capture and rescue, Abraham and we are afforded a little insight into Christ's identity. Lot is chastised for his abandonment of fellowship with the people of God. But he is not forgotten and Abraham rescues him by doing battle with his captors. Abraham then shows his allegiance to God by refusing to take spoils from the kings that he helped. In meeting Melchizedek he is blessed by God. As we know from the books of Psalms and Hebrews, Melchizedek is a type of Christ provided for our instruction. May we seek the priest-king who saves us from all our sins. Sing Psalter 302.

September 10 Read Genesis 15

Once again God shows to Abraham the truth of the covenant which he has promised to give him and his seed. Humanly it was hard, well nigh impossible, for Abraham to comprehend this truth. He was seemingly beyond the age at which childbearing was possible. Yet God showed to him the stars as a picture of the seed which would be his. Abraham believed by faith—not his faith, but the faith given to him by the covenant God. The picture at the end of the chapter is again not only for Abraham's instruction, but also for our instruction that we may learn about our covenant God and our Savior Christ Jesus. Sing Psalter 65.

September 11 Read Genesis 16

Here we find Sarah guilty of running ahead of God. Her motive was good, we might think. After all she wanted the seed promised to her. Her method, while approved by the world in which she lived, was not approved by God. We are no different. When we want a certain thing to come to pass, sometimes we run ahead of God to get what we want. We, too, might be guilty of the sin of using methods not approved by the sovereign God. Motive is not the key; obedience is. When we run ahead of God, we find ourselves in Sarah's predicament. Let us be patient and wait for God's will to be carried out by him in his time. Sing Psalter 27.

September 12 Read Genesis 17

In this chapter God repeats his covenant promise to Abraham. He also gives the Old Testament sign of that covenant in circumcision, the forerunner to baptism. Notice verse one. Abraham is commanded to walk before God and to be perfect. It is not a condition to the covenant promise which follows in verse 2; it is truly a command.

It is a command to us as well. We must walk before God and keep his commandments. God also reveals to Abraham and Sarah that Isaac will be born in the next year. To believe all of this takes faith. May we pray daily to have the faith to cleave unto the promises of God that he has given to us in his word. Sing Psalter 7.

September 13 Read Genesis 18

"Is anything too hard for the Lord?" Notice the use of God's covenant name Jehovah in this text. As the Old Testament Christ and two other angels visit Abraham, he is reminded of those covenant promises that God has told to him even when he was in his hometown of Ur. Abraham shows himself to be hospitable to these strangers who appear to him one afternoon. They remind him of the promise of a child. Then Abraham is told of Sodom's looming destruction. Lot would be caught up in that destruction, and so Abraham successfully pleads for the life of his nephew. Are we praying for those of our family caught up in sin? Remember, nothing is too hard for the Lord. Sing Psalter 208.

September 14 Read Genesis 19

Sometimes in Scripture it is hard for us to understand God's ways. Chapter 19 is one of those chapters. Sure, we understand that Sodom and Gomorrah needed destruction. We can understand Lot's wife's demise as she showed that she loved the wickedness of Sodom more than the obedience of God's command. We might even say that Lot deserved his problems for moving away from the church. But then we have the ugly end to the chapter. In the New Testament Lot is called righteous. We are prone to say, "How can that be?" But then we must remember God's ways are just. We, too, deserve the end of the wicked of Sodom and Gomorrah. Thanks be to God for the gift of his son, our Savior. Sing Psalter 253.

September 15 Read Genesis 20

Abraham had a besetting sin of not trusting God when it came to difficulties. This happened when he went to Egypt to escape a famine. This happened when he took Hagar to be his wife. And now we see it happening again. This time, like the time in Egypt, God uses someone to chastise Abraham and set him on the right path. Abimelech must rebuke Abraham for the troubles caused to his people. Sometimes this happens to us. We must be careful to live lives above reproach so that God's name is not blasphemed by those around us. Let us trust in God to care for us in all manners of adversity. Sing Psalter 347.

September 16 Read Genesis 21

God is faithful; of that there is no doubt. First of all in this chapter we see his faithfulness as he fulfills the promise to Abraham and Sarah to give to them a son. Isaac is the seed for which they looked for many years. He was the seed in which God's covenant to them would be fulfilled. He was the seed through which Christ would be born and our salvation realized. Right away Satan protests through the mocking of Ishmael. Abraham has to do what we have to do; keep the church separate from the seed of the serpent. The world also sees this fulfillment, as Abimelech desires a covenant of peace. May we look to our faithful covenant God who keeps his covenant with us. Sing Psalter 168.

September 17 Read Genesis 22

God led Abraham from gladness to a trial of his faith. Think of that three-day journey as Isaac talked with his father as any son would. Abraham's mind was on the end of that journey. And then think of that climb up Mt. Moriah when Isaac asked the question, "Where is the lamb?" Think of Abraham's wonderful answer, "God will provide." Is this our faith day by day? Do we have faith that God will provide for us in any difficulty? God did provide for Abraham and Isaac. In that ram, caught in the thicket, was the picture for us. God provided his own Son for us that we may appear before him without spot. What a blessed day that will be! Sing Psalter 358.

September 18 Read Genesis 23

Is there anything harder than laying a loved one in the grave? There is if you are not a child of God. Those who are not accounted for in God's covenant have no hope as they stand by the grave of a loved one. God's people look at death as the passageway to glory. We can be assured that our loved ones' deaths are just a beginning of an eternal glory in heaven. That was Abraham's hope as he bargained for that cave which would be the final earthly resting-place for several Old Testament saints. Let us go to the grave in the hope of the resurrection. Sing Psalter 33.

September 19 Read Genesis 24

Are we as careful about marriage for our children as Abraham was? Do we see the seriousness of whom they marry? Or do we leave it to "chance" that every thing will turn out all right? Abraham did not do that. He was careful that the promised seed would have a wife who loved God. He also was careful that his son would live where God had commanded them to live. Is this our desire? Do we instruct our young people in this aspect of marriage? Let us follow Abraham's example for the good of our children and God's church. Psalter 360.

September 20 Read Genesis 25

We have in this chapter two of life's most touching events: death and birth. "Precious in the sight of the Lord

is the death of his saints." That is the truth expressed as Abraham dies and is buried by his children. He is buried in the land of promise, the picture of the place of glory, heaven. Do we remember this as a loved one leaves this life and goes to glory? Are our tears dried by the hope of life in heaven? The contrasting scene is the birth of a covenant child. Even though Rebekah knew that God did not love Esau, she had the hope of the promise in Jacob. While we do not know the eternal destiny of our little ones, we have the beautiful covenant promise to sustain them as we work to bring them up in the fear of his name. Sing Psalter 359.

September 21 Read Genesis 26

God knows what is good for his people. When Isaac attempted to leave Israel to escape a famine, God stopped him. God knew that it would not be good for Isaac to go to Egypt. As we go through this life we must be confident in God's leading. We must neither run ahead of God nor think that we are wiser than God is. Even when Isaac resorts to his father's trickery in Philistia, God was watching over him and turns his problems into good for him. Esau could not see this, as God's grace was not in him. His choice of wives shows this. Let us walk in God's ways in our pilgrimage on this earth. Sing Psalter 312.

September 22 Read Genesis 27

There is much to be learned from this familiar chapter of Scripture. First of all the truth of "Jacob have I loved, but Esau have I hated," is borne out most clearly. Secondly we see that God's people have weaknesses. Isaac tries to put his favorite over God's choice. Do we fall into this pit on occasion? Rebekah tries to use earthly means to gain God's blessings. We, like her, will be sorely disappointed by the outcome of using our strength instead of faith in God. Never would she see her beloved son again. We must trust in God to give us what is good for us each step on our pathway of life. Sing Psalter 63.

September 23 Read Genesis 28

Notice the contrasting scene in verses 7 and 8. Esau's rebelliousness is contrasted with Jacob's obedience. Esau in his wickedness falls further and further into sin. Jacob, on the other hand, is blessed by God himself at Bethel. He is given a vision into the house of God and the way into that house. It would not be by his strength that he would come back to Canaan, though he would try to do it his way. It would be by God's grace alone that he would come back to the place where he saw Jehovah. Let us seek God's blessing in Bethel, House of God. Sing Psalter 65.

September 24 Read Genesis 29

As we read through the various events of Jacob's life, we see that he constantly wants to take things into his own hands. We might think he would have learned from his mother's trying to manipulate Isaac so that he could obtain the blessing. We are no different. Quite often we think that we know better than God. This is a serious error, and there are serious consequences which come from it. By not being content with the wife God gave him, Jacob would have to endure much hardship in his family. While we might want to say, "It was Laban's fault," we must always remember that God is sovereign. Sing Psalter 106.

September 25 Read Genesis 30

Jacob's troubles continue as his wives vie for his affection and compete to bear him sons. Jacob knows what is right. That we see from verse 2. Out of all of this, however, we see God building his church. From Jacob's sons would come the twelve tribes that would make up Israel. From one of those sons, Judah, would come the Christ child. The events of the last part of the chapter would soon precipitate Jacob's leaving Laban's house and returning to Canaan, the land of the promise. Sing Psalter 237.

September 26 Read Genesis 31

While the circumstances of Jacob's leaving are far from happy and far from being without sin, they bring forth a beautiful word for the child of God. That word is Mizpah. That word means "The Lord watch between me and thee, when we are absent one from another." Is not there more feeling in Mizpah than in just a simple goodbye? Think about all the times that we leave our loved ones. Do we pray that God will watch over us as we are apart from them? Even a simple trip to a store may turn out differently than we expect. We must always remember that God's ways are best, and that he is sovereign over all parts of our lives. Sing Psalter 204.

September 27 Read Genesis 32

Trying to live our lives in our own strength means that we will spend a lot of time wrestling with God. In a nutshell that is Jacob's life. From the time he grabbed Esau's heel to the time he made elaborate plans to escape from Esau's wrath, he tried to run ahead of God. We must avoid this temptation at all costs. It does not matter what our age is; we must see God's love for us in whatever way he leads us. Jacob finally learned, and was named Israel—God's prince. Sometimes God gives to us a daily reminder of our futility, just as he gave to Jacob a limp that would last the rest of his life. We need to pray for help so that we may avoid trying to live in our own strength. Sing Psalter 159.

September 28 Read Genesis 33

There are times that Satan will come to the child of God and pretend that he is acting in the child of God's best interest. We see that here. Esau did not love his brother. He still held the theft of the birthright against Jacob. His "good" offer was not good at all. Jacob realized that and did not go along with Esau's plan. Jacob continued to Canaan. When he reached it, he offered to God on an altar named God the God of Israel. We must be vigilant when the world offers to "help" us. As Solomon in Proverbs states, "The tender mercies of the wicked are cruel." May God be our God all the time that we spend on this earth. Sing Psalter 271.

September 29 Read Genesis 34

Because Jacob did not go back to Bethel as God commanded him, he had to endure the sad and shameful events of this chapter. Obedience to God is the way we must walk in this life. Notice how verse 1 starts. Dinah goes out to see the daughters of the land. Our covenant seed are tempted through many types of media to see the world and its young people. They can be taken in by the wiles of Satan in this way. We must help our young people see the evil around them, and we must often forbid them to see the daughters of the land. This is not an easy task, but it is our calling as we rear covenant children in God's name. Sing Psalter 106.

September 30 Read Genesis 35

In order to go to Bethel, Jacob had to rid his family of idol worship. Do we do this? As we prepare to go to church, are all forms of idolatry removed from our lives? We must do this weekly, even daily. Then we can worship God in the way that he has commanded. We also see in this chapter the birth of Jacob's final son. The church fathers are now complete. The church of the old dispensation will grow from those twelve sons. Two deaths are also recorded. The church militant is marked by births and deaths. Happy will be the day when all of God's elect are gathered in the house of God in heaven. Sing Psalter 140.

October 1 Read Genesis 36

We may wonder why God uses an entire chapter to show us the descendants of he who typifies the reprobate. I think, first of all, that this is so we see that the reprobate seed develops right along with the elect seed. Even as Jacob's children bore children, so did Esau's. This teaching is brought forth in Christ's parable of the wheat and the tares. Secondly, we see that Satan will not give up in his fight to stop the birth of Christ. Later on he will use Esau's wicked seed to persecute the church. We must mark those who are against the cause of Christ and have no fellowship with them. Sing Psalter 300.

October 2 Read Genesis 37

Long before the Heidelberg Catechism was written, Joseph experienced the truth of LD 1: "What is my only comfort in life and in death?" His brothers hated him as the son of Rachel who became more godly than they. His father favored him, which gave to him more grief with his brothers. Now he was taken and sold into a land far away. A land where it appeared that God was not present. Yet, as we know from further chapters, Joseph felt the comfort of Jehovah. We must remember the words of this question and answer wherever we are. By remembering them we can have a peace that passes understanding. Sing Psalter 187.

October 3 Read Genesis 38

Similar to a chapter full of names, we might be inclined to skip over this chapter which may bring embarrassment to us as we read it out loud. But as we saw with Noah's family after the flood, with Abraham, with Isaac, and with Jacob, sin had not been eradicated from the church and the world. Out of this ugly chapter of sin shines the brilliant light of God's grace. If we trace the history of this particular family, we will come to our Savior, Jesus Christ. We may not sin that grace may abound, but grace abounds in spite of sin. Sing Psalter 198.

October 4 Read Genesis 39

Young people, do you ever think that God cannot see you? We could ask this question of any age group. Joseph knew that God could see him even in Egypt. He knew that to sin in the matter of his master's wife, was to sin against his master and especially against God. God had given to Joseph a faith that allowed him to withstand Satan's wiles. Even when it landed him on what may have been death's row, he remained strong in the faith. Just as grace shone through yesterday's chapter, so it shines brilliantly in this one as well. Be strong in the faith, people of God, and flee sin. Sing Psalter 24.

October 5 Read Genesis 40

God teaches his people patience. We need to learn to wait on him. After Joseph was unjustly put in prison, it seemed that God was making a way for him to get out. He was, not in Joseph's time but in his. After Joseph, with God's help, successfully interpreted the dream, he remained in prison for two more years. Are we patient and wait for God's ways? God's ways are always best. "All things work together for good to them that love God," are the words of Romans 8:28. That chapter also talks about hope and patience. Let us pray for that patience as we walk through this life. Sing Psalter 107.

Amalgamation

by Rev. Rodney Miersma

"And it came to pass, when men began to multiply on the face of the earth, and daughters were born unto them, That the sons of God saw the daughters of men that they were fair; and they took them wives of all which they chose" (Gen. 6:1, 2).

The calling of God's people is a call to separation, not amalgamation. It is always a call to separation in the spiritual sense of the word. For when, through the deep way of sin and grace, God establishes his covenant of friendship with his people, that covenant friendship of God reveals itself in this world antithetically, and therefore, as enmity of God's enemies. That is seen in God's Word from the beginning of the Bible to the end. Being in the world we are spiritually not of the world. To live as though we are of the world is to deny the line of demarcation between light and darkness, between righteousness and unrighteousness.

We, including you young people, are a militant church for we have a battle to fight. This is a spiritual battle which we fight with spiritual weapons. Thus we must equip ourselves with the whole armor of God. All the while that we are fighting we must keep our eye of faith on the glory and the perfect victory that is to come in the day of our Lord Jesus Christ.

Today this truth is not popular. We are living in an age that emphasizes amalgamation which is really synthesis. A spirit of worldly-mindedness has captivated the church. Church-world, believer-unbeliever, Christ-Belial, supposedly go hand in hand. For the most part that spirit is manifested in the preaching in that the call to separation is not clearly sounded forth.

There was another age, another world, in which this very amalgamation took place. This was the time before the flood. There never was a period in which sin revealed itself so terribly and developed so rapidly and in which the world became ripe for judgment so quickly as in the pre-diluvian age. Scripture sets forth that age as an example of iniquity and the embodiment of wickedness. As we are now approaching the last minutes of the last hour of time, our age is more and more looking like that age. Thus we must be more and more vigilant to keep ourselves separate from the world spiritually.

In our text the sons of God represent the people of God, the seed of the woman as issuing forth in the generations of God-fearing Seth. The daughters of men represent the seed of the serpent as issuing forth in the generations of wicked Cain. The sons of God looked upon the daughters of men and saw that they were fair. They were attracted by their natural beauty in the lust of the eyes and the lust of the flesh. Not only were they attracted by the women themselves, but also by all the worldly goods and entertainment which characterized the line of Cain, especially as we see it in the sons of Lamech, Jabal, Jubal, and Tubal-cain. They were fascinated with the greatness and the glitter of the world. Instead of keeping an eye on the city that hath foundations, they lived Cain's life of the world and were attracted to it. These sons of the church looked at the daughters of men with adultery in their hearts, to lust after them. This infatuation of sensuous beauty is a short-lived thing since it is devoid of the love of God.

Thus it goes when the church intermingles with the world and when those who are of the generations of the church make common cause with the ungodly, put on a yoke with them. True in the most serious and the most intense sense of the word when it comes to marriage; but it applies to any putting on of an unequal yoke with unbelievers in any sphere of life. This bit of history is a serious God-given warning to all of us. We are so ready with our excuses. "Maybe he or she can be gained for Christ through marriage." "We must witness. We must join their labor and business organizations, and witness from within. We must join them in education, and witness of our Christianity and perhaps Christianize their schools."

Indeed we must witness, but such a witness is both impossible and futile. The fact is that when God's people ally themselves with the world, the world never becomes the church; but the church is swallowed up by the world.

We must remember that only God converts and changes us into his children. Moreover, he does so, as a

general rule, in the generations of his people. What reason have we to believe that if it pleases us to form alliances with the world, that God is going to accommodate himself to those alliances and change the world? None!

What reason have we to believe that if it pleases us to form alliances with the world, that God is going to accommodate himself to those alliances and change the world? None!

When the believer puts on a yoke with the unbeliever, that yoke is always an unequal yoke. When such an alliance is made, the church does it on the terms of the world. The world will not join the church, nor form an alliance on the church's terms.

Do you see the danger? In that first world it did not take very long, only a few generations, and there developed a general wickedness in the world. It may be that when such alliances are formed and such marriages consummated, there is in the first generation yet some battle and some misery on the part of those who are really the sons of God. But in generations God does not bestow his covenant blessings where such amalgamation takes place. In generations, also in that world, there was a rapid decline until wickedness and godlessness prevailed. Thus you have the picture of that world as our Lord described it; they ate, they drank, they married and gave in marriage; and knew not until the flood came and destroyed them all. So shall it be in the days before the coming of Christ in judgment. We live in those days now. Just look about you and see the signs.

Therefore, the word of the Lord is: Be ye not unequally yoked together with unbelievers; Christ and Belial have no concord; walk with God; walk before him; walk in his way; walk to his praise. And if any would ally themselves, let them walk with you, not you with them. ❖

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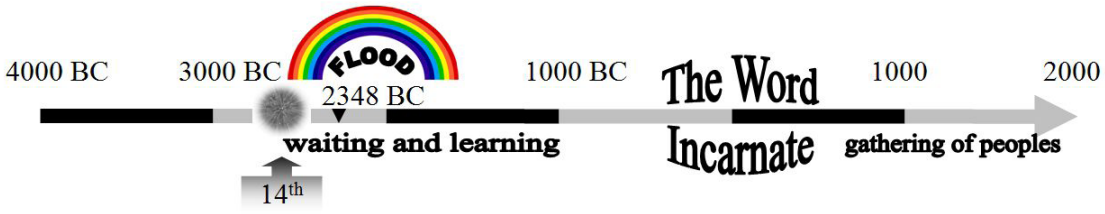
Church History

The Fourteenth Century of His-Story:
The Church Among Growing Wickedness

by John Huizenga



When Satan entered the garden and the corruption of sin took hold of Adam and Eve, death and corruption enveloped the whole of God's good creation. Even so, this did not mark an instant victory of Satan, but rather under the sovereign plan of God, a stage was set for a marvelous display of God's power and grace. Satan was bound by the time and space created by God. He planted a seed of sin and death, but it would take time and space to grow…and grow it did.

If you have in any way endeavored to grow a garden or any other crop, you have first hand experience with the characteristics of weeds in relation to the beans, corn,

and tomatoes. If wet weather or busyness prevents your spending some time rooting out the weeds, it does not take long before those little weeds have taken over the space making it difficult to even find the row of seedlings. Not only are your plants difficult to find, the roots have so intertwined with the seedling roots, that uprooting the weeds leaves your plants looking rather bedraggled. It is the nature of weeds to be much more aggressive than cultivated plants. They grow much faster and are better able to withstand insects, drought, and even poor soil. It seems as though the weeds are in their native turf, and the plants are helpless visitors and pilgrims.

This was not always so. The curse upon the ground which now seems to favor every plant that is useless to man has become a picture of the spiritual growing conditions for man: the wicked naturally thrive, and the children of God are weak, helpless, and out-of-place pilgrims in this world. Selfish natural man greedily dives into all the wonders and powers in the creation that were created by God, and were good, and for man to search out and use. God created man with a passion to serve and glorify Him, but that passion has turned to selfishness and fuels his growth in wickedness. His wickedness grows like the weeds grow—they start small, multiply, stand even with the godly for awhile, but unchecked, they quickly overcome and completely smother the garden plants. God tends his garden, but he also uses the weeds to reveal beautiful attributes about himself that we would otherwise never see.

You will notice from the timeline above that the church at this time was getting very close to the time of the flood. They days when the church seemed to flourish have come and gone. The weeds now tower over the plants, and it requires some searching to even discover that the garden once contained neat rows of plants. This, of course was not due to the neglect of God. He demands fruit from his people, but he does not need that fruit for his happiness or life (Psalm 50). His purpose is to reveal himself to his people in Christ (Col. 1:27). By the fourteenth century of his-story, it is becoming increasingly clear that the church does not save herself. The power of Satan was clearly manifest.

The growth of wickedness is a frightening thing. David cries out in Psalm 3:1 "LORD, how are they increased that trouble me! many are they that rise up against me." A mathematical look at such growth reveals an exponential curve. We see this phenomenon in unchecked population graphs. If we were able to measure the volume or weight of a weed, we would see its beginnings to have a slow steady increase; but it reaches a point where the volume makes a steep increase. Some weeds can reach the status of a small tree before the frost of winter cuts them down. Noah could see the trend, and was able to walk calmly before God only by faith.

Genesis 6 describes the characteristics of this growth and identifies one of the powerful contributing factors of this growth in the relationships and marriage of the church with the wicked (v. 2). We have already discussed the concept of giants in an earlier article. In a spiritual sense, the wicked now towered over the godly. It had reached the point where it was as though there was no end in sight. "And God saw that the wickedness of man was great in the earth, and that every imagination of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually" (v. 5). Soon the church would be reduced to one family among the millions, and God would begin to reveal to Noah the wondrous plan of his power and salvation through the flood of waters.

As we noticed in the last article, God reveals a parallel between the world that then was, and the world in which we live today. God will again come in judgment, this time as Christ coming to bring his church into the new heavens and the new earth. Jesus explained these things to his disciples in Luke 17. "And as it was in the days of Noe, so shall it be also in the days of the Son of man" (Luk. 17:26). We are living in the days when wickedness is growing exponentially. God describes the power of wickedness and evil in terms of a great and terrible beast in Revelation. So great becomes the power of wicked man, that even the preaching of the gospel will be silenced (Revelation 11:7). Even so, we like Noah walk by faith. We hold fast to our Lord and Savior and cling to his promises. We wait patiently for the full revelation of his power and salvation. We go about our life in peace showing forth fruits of thankfulness. Each day we are able to sing:

"I laid me down and slept,
I waked, Because the Lord sustains;
Tho' many thousands compass me,
Unmoved my soul remains."
Psalter number 5. ❖

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"The Lord Gave the Word":
Commemorating the 400th Anniversary of the King James Version (4)
"Scripture is a Light": William Tyndale's Establishment of the English Bible Text (1)

by Jonathan Langerak, Jr.

Introduction

Although the Protestant Reformed Churches have their theological and ecclesiastical roots in the rich loam soil of the Dutch Reformed tradition, we form a part of Christ's English-speaking church. It is in that tongue that we must needs have our heavenly Father speak to us.

That being said, all who are able and willing must learn Dutch as well!

To have the Lord speak to us in English is vital to our souls! Is it not? In order that we might have covenant fellowship with our covenant Father, we must understand him when he utters his voice. God must not only speak in language which our stupidity can comprehend, but in a language which our minds might understand and our hearts apprehend. God gave his Word to the prophets and apostles in Hebrew and Greek. Those languages most of our people do not understand. We must have God's Word in English! So our Father, ever mindful of our weakness, has bestowed upon us the King James Version (KJV), whose 400th anniversary we commemorate this year. But the father of the KJV was not King James I of England. Nor was it John Wycliffe, "the morning star," who began the process of translating Holy Writ into English. The father of the English Bible and of its culmination in the KJV of 1611 was William Tyndale, among the greatest of the English Reformers, brilliant linguist and scholar, and martyr for the faith of Jesus.

"To Establish the Lay-People in the Truth"

William Tyndale was born in the early 1490s in the region of Gloucestershire, England to parents who had prospered through farming. The Lollard legacy of John Wycliffe—"Wycliffe's dust" of the poem given in the last article—still prevailed in those days, even as the land lay under the ban of Archbishop Arundel's "Constitutions of Oxford," forbidding any translation of Scripture or parts of Scripture into the English tongue and outlawing any reading of the Wycliffite Bible. And these were no idle prohibitions! Men caught distributing Wycliffite Bibles or any other of Wycliffe's writings burned at the stake, along with their books. Parents who taught their children the Lord's Prayer in English perished in the flames. An elderly noblewoman and her maid were arrested and imprisoned for reading a copy of the Scriptures in English. And even a bishop of the city of Chichester, Dr. Reginald Pecock, was accused of heresy, imprisoned, and forced to give up his office for seeking to better understand the beliefs of the Lollards (the more effectively to refute them!), and then using citations from the English Bible—and not the Latin Vulgate—to argue against them. Truly, the darkness of the pre-Wycliffe centuries had again descended upon England!

Nevertheless, I use the word "prevailed" deliberately to describe the continuance of Lollardy because, despite all the huffing and puffing of Romish authorities, the light of the true gospel lit by Wycliffe continued to burn. Tyndale doubtless had some contact with the doctrines and Bible of Wycliffe in his early years. This contact planted the seed in his heart that would eventually come to maturity in Tyndale's own shining work of bringing the Bible into English straight from the Hebrew and Greek. But the time for this seed to flower was not yet. God first brought him to the lion's mouth, as it were, so that he might see how desperately the church in his mother country needed God's Word in its own language. Like John Wycliffe, Tyndale entered Oxford University in his mid-teens, studied theology, and became an ordained priest in the Roman Catholic Church. And, again like Wycliffe, he saw at Oxford the apostate, superstitious, and ignorant nature of the Romish Church rise before him in all its hideous infamy.

In 1515, Tyndale transferred to Cambridge University for the primary reason that he wanted to read

Scripture in one of its original languages. The great Dutch scholar, Desidarius Erasmus, was in the midst of a stint of lecturing and studying at Cambridge. Erasmus had pored over the best of the Greek manuscripts of the Holy Scriptures which fugitive monks from the Byzantine Empire had carried westward as they fled the Muslim conquest of the great eastern city of Constantinople (modern-day Istanbul, Turkey) in 1453. He used these Greek texts as the basis of his own, more accurate Latin translation of the Bible, and published this new Latin translation and the Greek text that was its basis in one volume at Cambridge in 1516. Erasmus entitled this book the *Novum Instrumentum*, or, in English, *The New Utensil*. His desire was that the Greek text would be the "new utensil" used for more accurate translation of Holy Writ, not only into Latin, but into all the tongues of Europe and beyond. Wrote Erasmus in his preface to the *Novum Instrumentum*:

> I totally dissent from those who are unwilling that the Sacred Scriptures, translated into the vulgar [common] tongue, should be read by private individuals…and I wish that [the Sacred Scriptures] were translated into all languages of all peoples, that they might be used and known, not merely by the Scotch and Irish, but also by the Turks and Saracens. I wish that the husbandman may sing parts of them at his plough; that the weaver may warble them at his shuttle; that the traveler may with their narratives beguile the weariness of the way.[1]

Sometime while he was at Cambridge, Tyndale converted from Romanism to the faith of the Reformation. Luther's powerful tracts against the false doctrine—at the root of which was that damnable, God-dishonoring, and Christ-blaspheming heresy of salvation by grace and works, or Semi-Pelagianism—and corruption of life in Romish Church were smuggled into England and read by Tyndale. No doubt these included Luther's "Address to the German Nobility" and "The Babylonian Captivity of the Church" (both published in 1520). In these two blasts, Luther argued that if the people were to be established in the true faith and freed from the superstitions, idolatries, and horrors of Rome, they must have, after preaching of the pure gospel and the right administration of the two sacraments, the Holy Scriptures in their own tongue. Luther himself supplied this need for his countrymen with a German translation of the New Testament (1522), then the Old (1523). "To be occupied with God's Word," declared Luther, "helps against the world, the flesh, and the Devil, and all bad thoughts. This is the true holy water with which to exorcise the Devil."[2]

Tyndale's convictions that such a vernacular translation was also needed for England, and his desire to fulfill that need were sharpened through controversy. In 1521, he accepted a position as tutor, chaplain, and sometimes preacher at the household of Sir John Walsh at Little Sudbury Manor. Sir John was a prominent man in society and in the government of King Henry VIII, and Romish clergymen, hungry for good reputation among men and greedy for belly-cheer, frequented his rich table. Tyndale was also often at table by virtue of his high position in the household and there, to the amusement and admiration of Sir John Walsh and the confounding of the clerics, he exposed the shameful ignorance of these pretended ministers of Christ. Perhaps with the lyrical preface of Erasmus ringing in his memory, Tyndale sharply stopped the mouth of one cleric who declared that England "had better be without God's laws than [without] the pope's" in this way: "I defy the pope and all his laws! If God spare my life, ere many years pass, I will cause a boy that driveth the plough shall know more of the Scriptures than thou dost!"[3]

From that day forth, Tyndale set out to render the Bible into English. Not as Wycliffe and his associates had done—from the Latin Vulgate—but from the Scriptures' original languages: Hebrew and Greek. He would later write: "I perceived that it was impossible to establish the lay-people in the truth, except the Scripture were plainly laid before them in their mother tongue, that they might see the process, order, and meaning of the text."[4] And thus Tyndale's toil for the English text of the Bible began in earnest.

The Beginning of Tyndale's Toil

The "Constitutions of Oxford" did provide one avenue—and one avenue only—through which a vernacular text of the Bible might be made, the only avenue

1 qtd. in C.P. Hallihan, *The Authorised Version: A Wonderful and Unfinished History* (London: Trinitarian Bible Society, 2010), 30.

2 qtd. in Roland H. Bainton, *Here I Stand: A Life of Martin Luther* (New York: Meridian, 1995), 264.

3 qtd. in Herman Hanko, *Portraits of Faithful Saints* (Grandville, MI: Reformed Free Publishing Association, 1999), 250.

4 qtd. in Benson Bobrick, *Wide As the Waters: The Story of the English Bible and the Revolution It Inspired* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 2001), 89.

through which everything from Bible translation to new taxation laws had had to pass for centuries: approval by the Romish Church hierarchy. The translator's endeavor and text needed the approval of a bishop. Tyndale well knew of this provision and so in 1523 left the household of Sir John Walsh, reluctant indeed as he was to leave and they to see him depart, and journeyed to London to acquire the permission of the most powerful cleric in the English Church after the Archbishop of Canterbury, the Bishop of London. Oversight of the flock of England's capital city was at this time the responsibility of Cuthbert Tunstall. Tunstall was a scholar in his own right, a friend of Erasmus, and "in favor of cautious church reform."[5]

If we had given this description of Bishop Tunstall to Tyndale as he made his way to London, we would have emphasized the word "cautious." For Cuthbert Tunstall had recently returned from a diplomatic assignment to Germany on behalf of Henry VIII and there he had witnessed, to his shock and alarm, the wild-fire-like spread of the Reformation doctrines of Luther. No doubt, the discerning Tunstall pegged as the primary cause for the rapid dissemination of Lutheranism, after preaching, Luther's newly-published German translation of the Bible. Therefore, when Tyndale, awkward and uncomfortable in the presence of so high a churchman as the Bishop of London, but nevertheless clear and zealous in this proposals, arrived at Tunstall's palace and requested permission to make an English translation of the Bible, to do for England what Luther had done for Germany, Tunstall denied Tyndale permission, refused him a place in his house, and warned him to be "cautious" in his actions. In this action of Tunstall, powerful as he was in the English Church, we might see the church "shaking off the dust of its feet" at Tyndale, that is, rejecting him as an outcast and an enemy. Indeed, Tunstall would later show himself Tyndale's bitterest foe.

But if the Church of England (which was not yet the true "Anglican" church it would become after Tyndale's death) shook the dust off its collective feet at Tyndale, God gave Tyndale wider attention among the lay people, whom he so desired to "establish in the truth." Tyndale was not silent while he was in London, either before or after his audience with Tunstall. As often as he was able, he preached at the Church of St. Dunstan-in-the-West, a place near to St. Paul's Cathedral in the heart of London. And God used his preaching to bring Tyndale to the recognition of Lord Humphrey Monmouth. Monmouth was not only a powerful merchant and a member of London's city council, he was also deeply involved in and committed to the spread of Lutheranism in England. His fleet of merchant ships carried concealed in their cargoes of wool and grain hundreds of copies of Luther's works, which he caused to be disseminated as widely,and secretively, as possible—and with considerable success, under the blessing of God. Lord Monmouth offered Tyndale money and rooms in his London mansion in which to study, and if possible, to begin the work of translating the Bible into English. From Monmouth's residence, Tyndale "was able to observe the activities of political prelates and fashionable preachers, as well as the secret meetings of Lollards and Lutherans."[6] The judgment which he passed on this woeful scene was damning, and, for Tyndale, decisive for showing him the path he must go. Said Tyndale:

> I marked the course of the world, and heard our praters (I would say our preachers), how they boasted themselves and their high authority; and beheld the pomp of our prelates, and how busy they were, as they yet are, to set peace and unity in the world (though it be not possible for them that walk in darkness to continue long in peace, for they cannot either but stumble or clash themselves at one thing or another that shall unquiet all together), …and understood at the last not only that there was no room at my lord of London's palace [Monmouth's residence] to translate the New Testament, but also that there was no place to do it in all England…[7]

"No place to do it in all England." Thus submitting to this observation, given him of Jehovah, Tyndale gave his thanks and bade farewell to Lord Monmouth and to his homeland and set sail in 1524, to carry out his work of translating God's Word into English outside of the nation which he was seeking to "establish in the truth." He would never return. ❖

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5 Derek Wilson, *The People's Bible: The Remarkable History of the King James Version* (Oxford, UK: Lion Hudson, 2010), 36.

6 Wilson, *The People's Bible*, 36.

7 Ibid, 36-37.

Do Hard Things: A Teenage Rebellion against Low Expectations

reviewed by Tom Bergman

Do Hard Things: A Teenage Rebellion against Low Expectations, by Alex and Brett Harris. Multnomah Books, 2008; 224 pages + appendix.

Do Hard Things. It's such a catchy title that the book's subtitle could easily be overlooked. That subtitle, "A Teenage Rebellion against Low Expectations" is a very accurate indicator of the book's contents, and it should not be overlooked.

The authors, twins Alex and Brett Harris, are the younger brothers of Joshua Harris (*I Kissed Dating Goodbye*). Alex and Brett were nineteen when they wrote *Do Hard Things*. They are very open about the fact that the book is written by Christians and is intended for other Christians (225). As Christians, they felt a need to inspire other Christian teenagers. Dissatisfied with the type of teen help books commonly available, the Harris brothers poke fun of "books written by fortysomethings who, like, totally understand what it's like being a teenager" (3). Instead of saying "like, totally" a lot, the authors' style is to present clear arguments and a challenging message that isn't dumbed down to teenspeak. The book is quite well-written.

I'll admit that I was skeptical at first when I saw that the foreword was written by the Zen-promoter and Hollywood movie actor Chuck Norris. In spite of this serious flaw, many Christian teenagers could benefit from reading *Do Hard Things*.

The book hinges on the premise that our culture stifles the work and the spiritual lives of young people by expecting very little out of them in the teenage years. For example, they insist that the common saying today "Just do your best" actually promotes settling for less (89). The Harris brothers make a very convincing case that remaining childish well into the teenage years is a quite recent phenomenon. Their answer is what they call a *rebelution*: "a teenage rebellion against low expectations."

In *Do Hard Things*, they include an important section called "What the Bible Says about Teens" (42-44). They use Romans 12:2 ("Be not conformed to this world") to support their idea that Christian young people should not be going by what the world expects out of teenagers. They apply I Corinthians 14:20 ("Be not children in understanding") directly to teenagers in particular. Above all, they appeal to I Timothy 4:12 as their theme; their take on it is that "Let no man despise thy youth" was Paul's instruction to Timothy regarding hard responsibilities that Timothy had to do regardless of his youthfulness.

Alex and Brett offer an insightful treatment of Psalm 1:1 ("Blessed is the man that walketh not in the counsel of the ungodly"). Their advice for understanding verse 1 is to go on to read verse 2 ("His delight is in the law of the LORD"). This means that it is not enough for teenagers to stay out of trouble ("not…in the way of sinners"), but to do something right and profitable instead.

So do something. Do hard things. Do what hard things? This is the question that nagged me throughout the book. I appreciate how the authors make a case for rebelling against low expectations; they did an admirable job. But they should have been more clear on what types of hard things they are encouraging. I don't mean to say that they hide their opinions. They speak very highly of teenagers managing political campaigns, organizing relief programs for the homeless or in Africa, or producing good films; is this the type of hard thing they are looking for? Then they highlight figures such as George Washington, David Farragut, Clara Barton, and Teddy Roosevelt; is this the type of hero to pattern ourselves after?

To be fair, Alex and Brett also spend a little time addressing the need to be faithful in doing small hard things. Do even the things that don't appear glamorous, such as doing your homework or spending time with a sibling. And although they speak very positively of the noble calling of a wife and mother, the subject keeps going back to being world-changers. They devote a lot of pages to fixing the social ills of this world—doing something huge for God.

What exactly they mean by the often-repeated phrase "for God" is unclear. I do want to recommend that you read *Do Hard Things*, but don't just read it and run off to change the world. *Do Hard Things* can leave the impression that the teenage years are wasted if Christian young people don't step out of their comfort zone and take on a

large-scale project. In reality, the Christian life is much more: observing the Lord's day, living the antithesis, nurturing friendships, being despised for Christ's sake, etc. I am sure that, as Christians, Alex and Brett Harris would agree that the Christian life includes all of these things, but it is a weakness of the book that such activities are de-emphasized, even overwhelmed by the idea of doing something huge for God. Even a whole chapter on "Small Hard Things" does not do enough to correct the imbalance.

Alex and Brett are unashamedly Christian. Not having exactly the same Protestant background that we are used to, their different views on theology are to be expected. For example, they seem to have high hopes for starting a movement that will inspire a generation and change the whole world—this world—for the better; no mention is made of this life as a pilgrimage while we hope for "a better country, that is a heavenly" (Heb. 11:16). They have different practices, too. For example, they talk often about films and movies as good things. Regardless, these things will not hinder the discerning reader from gleaning many good ideas out of their book.

I do recommend that you read *Do Hard Things*, especially for the aspect of fighting against low expectations. Read it as a student. Read it as a teenager. Read it as a Christian. It will be worth your while. ❖

Tom is a member of Providence Protestant Reformed Church in Hudsonville, Michigan.

Church News

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 Elizabeth, daughter of Mr. & Mrs. Brad Pastoor—First, MI
Alice, daughter of Mr. & Mrs. Scott DenHerder—Hudsonville, MI
Rylee, daughter of Mr. & Mrs. Doug Feenstra—Hudsonville, MI
Joseph, son of Mr. & Mrs. Ross Zuverink—Hudsonville, MI
Anthony Michael, son of Mr. & Mrs. Ben Bomers—Trinity, MI
Leyton Joseph and Nolan John, twin sons of Mr. & Mrs. Nate Schipper—Trinity, 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:

Ashley Smeda—Faith, MI
Ben Bleyenberg—Redlands, CA
Steve Jaramillo—Redlands, CA
Taylor Dykstra—Trinity, 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. David Dijkstra and Miss Becky Gunnink—Byron Center, MI
Mr. Allen Jordan and Miss Michelle VanBaren—Grace, MI
Mr. Jordan Koole and Miss Megan Elzinga—Faith, MI
Mr. Dwight Quenga and Miss Cynthia Teerling—First, MI
Mr. Jeff Uittenboogard and Miss Becky Kalsbeek—Hope, MI
Mr. David Rozeboom and Miss Amanda Korver—Hull, IA
Mr. Mark VanVoorthuysen and Miss Jade Regnerus—Randolph, WI
Mr. Jon Kuiper and Miss Erinn Pastoor—Southwest, MI

"LITTLE LIGHTS"
... let it shine !

The Journey Home... for Butterflies

by Connie Meyer

Delicate, paper-thin wings glide on the breeze of a hazy August afternoon. In a beautiful pattern of orange, black, and white, the monarch butterfly flits among wild daisies and thistles in bloom. He is feasting on as many flowers as he can. He knows his time is short. Soon he must embark on a very long and difficult journey that will take him south to warmer temperatures. But for now, the warmth he finds from the sun here in Canada is enough. So are the flowers in bloom this time of year. God provides.

His parents did not live so long as he will. Nor did the generation that lived before them. They did not need to. In a matter of weeks they could find food and warmth in the spring and summer as they flew north and settled in this spot. Eggs could be laid, caterpillars hatched, and milkweed leaves eaten. Then the creeping white, yellow, and black striped caterpillars would nestle within their cocoons and transform into graceful butterflies of the air. The change appears almost like a miracle. Who can conceive of such a thing? But this is how God created them to mature and grow.

That might be enough of a wonder, but there is more. The butterfly is busily feeding because he is storing energy for an equally unbelievable trip. He's going home—though he's never been there before. From Canada this tissue-winged insect must migrate thousands of miles south, all the way down to Mexico. He will need to fly fifty miles a day, with little time to eat or rest on the way. He will need to live for almost eight months in order to get there. His parents lived for much less than half that time. How can all this happen? God has prepared him, and made him special. God will give him the strength and endurance. This butterfly will be able to make the trip.

The time for feeding is over and he heads south. Cool autumn breezes begin to fill the air. But this presents another problem. Butterflies cannot get warm on their own. They need the warmth of the sun soaking into their wings to be able to fly and live. How can he continue on? He flies high. Warm air rises, and so he soars thousands of feet high in the sky on his way. God has provided this path, too.

But obstacles are not yet over. This particular butterfly has come to the Gulf of Mexico. Hundreds of miles of open water is spread before him. Can he cross it? He can. And he will keep climbing when he gets to land, for there, 9000 feet above the sea in a mountain forest of Mexico, he finds home.

How did he know the way? We can't tell, but he is not alone. Millions of other monarchs have reached this place, and other nearby spots. Here they will spend the winter together, and here they will raise a new generation that will again head north in the spring. It is the way God made these amazing creatures. It is the journey God gave only to them.

It is a journey, perhaps, not unlike ours.

Find the following underlined words in the puzzle below:

"Now the Lord had said unto Abram, Get thee out of thy country, and from thy kindred, and from thy father's house, unto a land that I will shew thee: and I will make of thee a great nation" (Genesis 12:1, 2).

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

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

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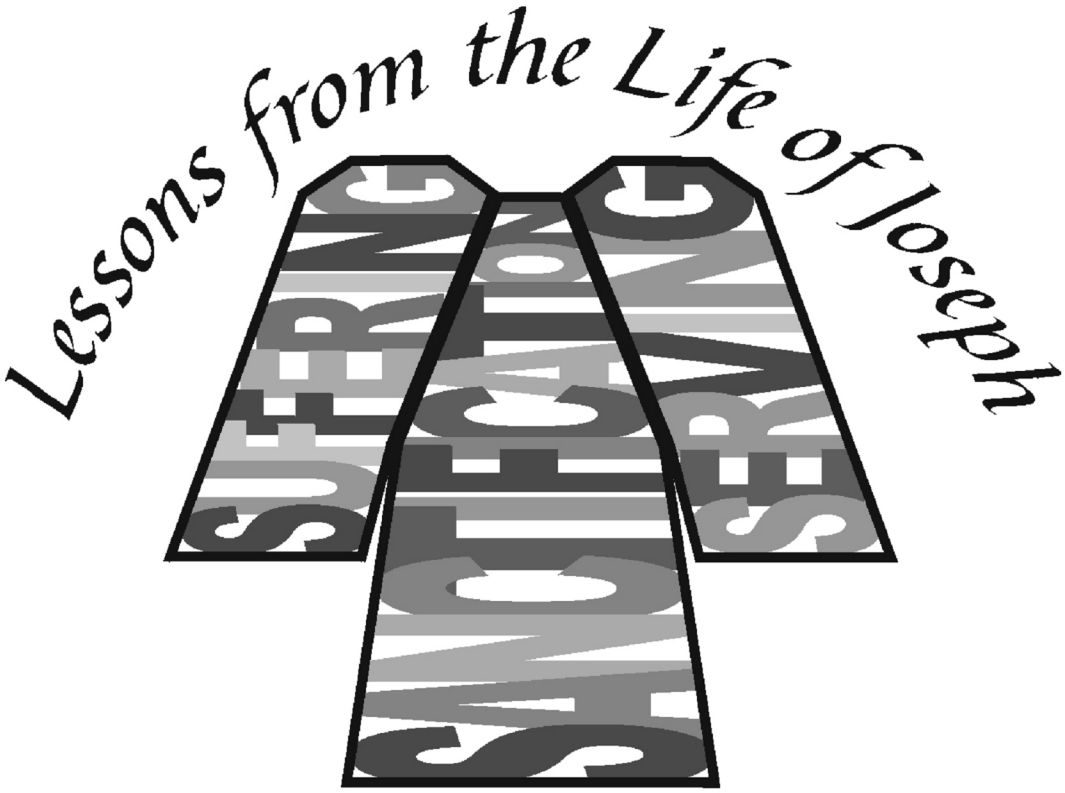

The convention is finally here;
We hope the weather is clear.
And when the week is all done,
You will have learned and had great fun!

If you would like to view pictures of the convention during convention week, visit www.prcconvention.com and click on the link.