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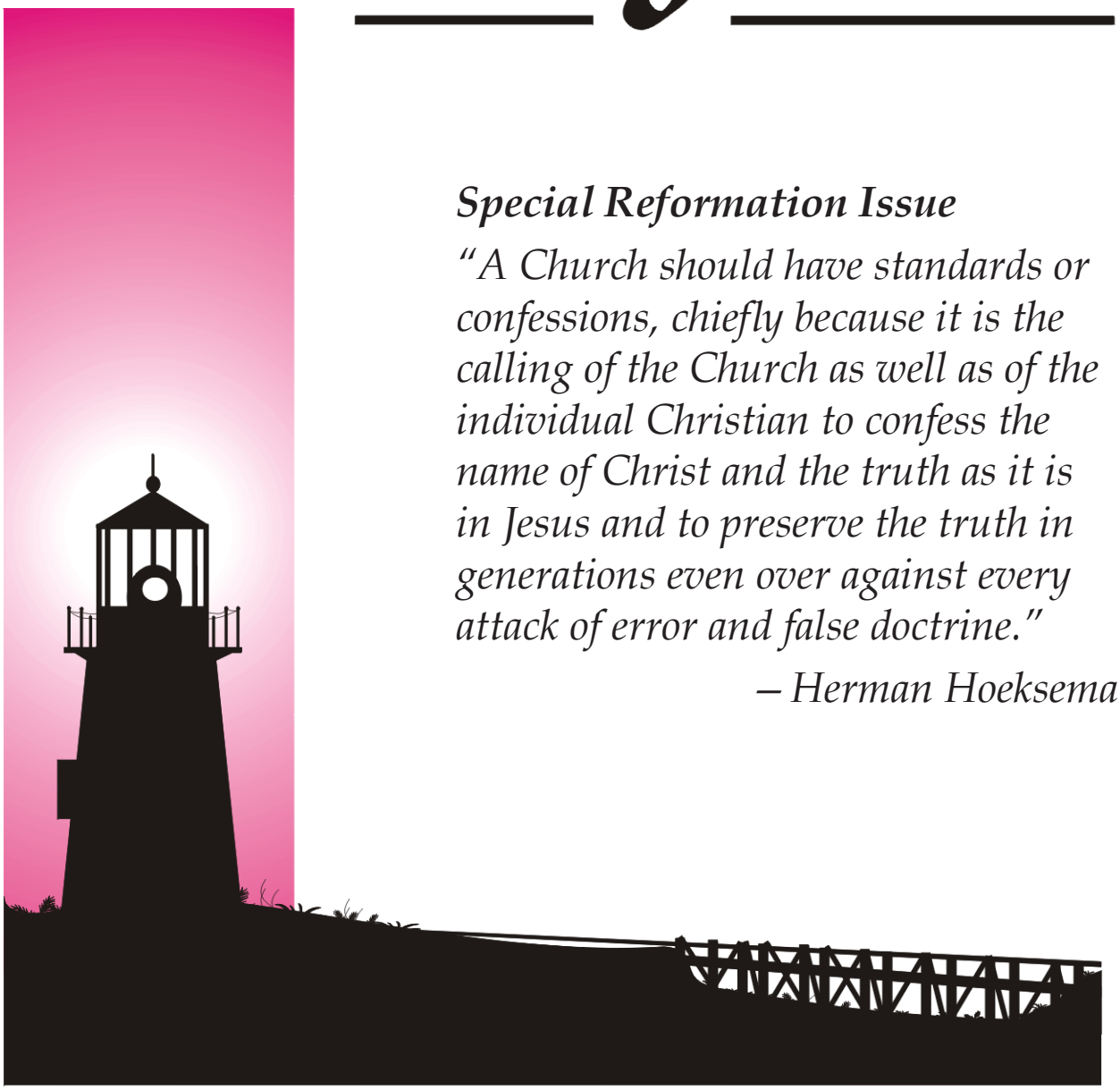

Special Reformation Issue

"A Church should have standards or confessions, chiefly because it is the calling of the Church as well as of the individual Christian to confess the name of Christ and the truth as it is in Jesus and to preserve the truth in generations even over against every attack of error and false doctrine."

– Herman Hoeksema

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Dear Reader:

This October issue of *Beacon Lights*, you might notice, looks a bit different than most. We decided to make the month of October a Reformation issue, with a special focus on our confessions—the Heidelberg Catechism, Belgic Confession, and Canons of Dordt. In addition, you will find that most of the writers for this issue are from the *Beacon Lights* staff. We pray that you are blessed by these articles and that you grow in your love and appreciation for our confessions.

Beacon Lights staff

Are You Reformed?

by John Huizenga

You might consider yourself "Reformed," but does it show in your life? You might be a member of a Protestant Reformed church or some other Reformed denomination, and you might claim a Reformed heritage, but what does that mean for you? Perhaps you have sat under hours of Reformed preaching and catechism instruction, but does all that Reformed atmosphere and spiritual food make a difference in your life so that the decisions you make, the feelings you have, and the things you do or don't do are different from someone who is not Reformed? Perhaps you don't think much about it until you meet other people who are not Reformed and it may strike you that these are good Christian people with whom you seem to have much in common. Questions of being Reformed suddenly become pressing when your parents won't let you date someone you like because they are not Reformed. What difference does it make if we both confess to be Christians, you might ask? Does it really matter if I am Reformed? It certainly does. It is essential for the preservation of the truth and the beginnings of our enjoyment of salvation here in this life that we be Reformed in doctrine and in life.

You Know You're Reformed When …

…**You enjoy singing the Psalms.** God created us to sing his praises, and he gave his people a whole book of the Bible with lyrics that well up from the soul of believers and are inspired by God himself. The singing of Psalms had largely died out under the oppressive liturgical drones and chants of the Roman Catholic Church. Martin Luther loved to sing and worked hard to put the singing back into the voice of the congregation. John Calvin recognized the great value of the Psalms for singing and wrote in the preface to the Genevan Psalter, "Wherefore, although we look far and wide and search on every hand, we shall not find better songs nor songs better suited to that end than the Psalms of David which the Holy Spirit made and uttered through him. And for this reason, when we sing them we may be certain that God puts the words in our mouths as if he himself sang in us to exalt his glory." The Reformed believer does not grow tired of the Psalter and yearn for something new to sing and listen to.

…**You go to God's word for the final authority.** Most people are willing to go to God's word for some guidance in life and tidbits of truth, but if they feel that something is too archaic, too strict, or simply not for them, then their feelings or personal "wisdom" becomes the final authority. The pope saw

power and wealth in a biblical principle and seized it for that end. It is the principle that God uses the church to develop truths and expound his word through the preaching of ordained ministers. When the plain truth of God's word did not suit his purposes, the pope decreed that God had ordained him to be the final authority. It is our nature to twist, manipulate, and selectively ignore God's word when it doesn't quite fit our agenda for life. Luther recognized this danger and the terrible abuse by the Roman Church, and restored the principle of *sola scriptura*. So when you really want to buy this particular car, and you can afford it with your current income and other expenses, but you will need to cut back on church collections, the Reformed believer opens God's word and submits to the principles clearly laid out in Scripture concerning the money God entrusts us with. Feelings, dreams, financial juggling acts, etc. do not make the final call. When God gives a woman work in her home to care for her husband and children, and she is pulled away from this work with the lure of more money, prestige, fulfillment in employment, the Reformed woman goes to God's word for the final authority for her calling.

…You find yourself often going to the Reformed creeds. The Reformed believer understands the fact that God uses the church to develop the truths of Scripture and appreciates the great value of creeds that clearly state what the church has learned. Many today despise creeds and claim to have no creed but Christ. By nature we like to imagine that we don't need any help understanding God's word or that the truths developed in the creeds are irrelevant for today. But more often than not, the issues and false doctrines are only dressed up in new clothes, and we find that many of the questions and issues we face today were already faced by our fathers. What a great help it is for our spiritual growth when we can continue to build upon what they have established. Not only is a well-worn copy of the church confessions a sign of a healthy Reformed believer, we demonstrate wisdom, humility, and a love for the church when we turn often to the confessions.

…Your wedding plans have God and his glory as the focus, and not the bride. So many Christians today seem to have fallen for the worldly concept that the wedding day is all about the bride. It is her day to have all the attention. Proud parents are willing to borrow lots of money if needs be to make the day everything she dreamed of. John Calvin and Martin Luther held marriage in high esteem, but beneath all their teaching and doctrine was the theme, "to God alone be the glory." This fundamental theme is seen in a Reformed wedding. A Reformed young couple planning their marriage will ask how they can best give glory to God alone on the wonderful day of marriage. Their plans and ceremony will reflect their desire to give glory to God, their love for the familiar Psalter numbers, and their desire to bring fellow saints together to witness their vows. You know you're Reformed when attention is given to the manifestation of God's glory in all the celebrations you plan—graduation, birthdays, etc.

…You are glad to write a large check for Christian school tuition. The Reformed believers are liberal and generous in giving because they are able and desire to give out of thankfulness and not out of obligation, merit, or necessity. The Roman Catholic always has merit in the back of his mind. Many Christians today think their money is God's reward to them. Many will give if they see some benefit for themselves or they believe their contribution will make the world a better place and usher in a reign of Christ on this earth. But at the heart of the Reformed believer's giving is his thankfulness to God for his sovereign and gracious work of salvation. He understands that God entrusts money to him as a steward to be used in the kingdom of God. And when God provides a Christian school where his covenant children can be trained, he is delighted to have the opportunity to use that money for the books, building, and financial support of godly teachers.

…You are truly happy. Of all people, the Reformed believer has more reason for peace and joy of soul than anyone. Those who flirt with arminian doctrines are lured by Satan away from the assurance of salvation in Christ alone by grace alone. They are led astray by the old lie that we can do something of our own strength to please God. The satisfaction that I have done some good in my own strength and can even cooperate with God gives a false sense of joy and peace that quickly melts away under fiery trials. The Roman Catholic lives a life of fear, always wondering if his sins are covered and if he has done enough. The Reformed believer alone, however, when he receives by faith the gospel—the good news that Jesus

has covered the whole debt, made us righteous, and irresistibly grafts us into Christ—experiences the peace that passes all understanding. He does not worry about sins that need to be paid for. She does not worry about straying from the flock to the point where she is beyond the power of God to bring her back. Peace and joy is diminished only in so far as the Reformed believer foolishly forgets his life of thankful obedience and begins to serve himself. But when living humbly, and in thankful obedience to Christ, trusting wholly in God, the Reformed believer alone finds true joy and peace.

… You are weary from fighting hard in the spiritual battles. While the Reformed believer tastes the joy of salvation, his life on this earth is not a life of ease. When the ugly head of sin appears in his life, it does not strike terror, but neither is it dealt with flippantly, rather the Reformed believer knows exactly where to go: the cross of Christ. Being assured that the victory has already been won, he seeks the power of God's grace to fight against sin in his own life, as well as false doctrines by which Satan would draw him away from the cross. As a Reformed believer, he has an advantage because he is able to study past battles and gain instruction from the creeds about how God's word was used before to fight the same errors.

What a precious heritage we have. There are many believers throughout the world who are not familiar with John Calvin or Martin Luther, though they have been brought by the grace of God to a knowledge of the same precious truths. Even so, when they search Scripture and the development of the truths of God throughout history, they too rejoice to see how the thread of the truth of sovereign grace was preserved and sharpened by these men of God in the Reformation. They gladly adopt the name "Reformed." The life of a Reformed believer is nothing more than the life of a Christian who drinks deeply of the rich heritage of truth that God's people have been blessed with throughout history. Reforming, returning to Christ, is a daily and familiar activity for the Reformed believer. ❖

Elector Frederick III: Father of the Heidelberg Catechism

by Ryan Barnhill

How much do you value your Heidelberg Catechism? You and I have the opportunity to sit under Catechism preaching nearly every Sunday of the year. What a delight! Talk to seasoned ministers and older members in our churches; they will tell you that they have grown in their appreciation for this treasure over the years. Not only is the Catechism very logical in its treatment of doctrine, but it is also written and presented beautifully. Every Lord's Day is permeated with the comfort that every Christian needs. What in literature can possibly compare in beauty and depth to this monumental work?

To focus on the whole history of the Catechism would be too much for this article. We would, however, do well to highlight some of the important events which led up to the writing of it. I want to especially focus on the work and influence of Frederick III, the father of the Catechism. There is much application for us today in this interesting history. The history of the Catechism takes us to the Palatinate. The Palatinate was the largest and wealthiest province in Germany around the mid-1500s, and Heidelberg was its capital. Frederick III was one of seven electors in various provinces responsible for choosing the emperor. The Palatinate elector was head over all the other electors, and so he possessed considerable political sway.[1]

1 Fred H. Klooster, *The Heidelberg Catechism: Origin and History*, 1987/1988, 9.

In order to understand how God's providential hand brought about the formulation of the Catechism, we should step back in history and briefly examine just a few of the controversies and troubles that Heidelberg experienced. Heidelberg held a mixture of groups—Lutherans, Melanchthonians, Calvinists, and Zwinglians. These varying traditions brought much unrest to Heidelberg. One man in particular, Tilemann Hesshus, a strict-Lutheran, stirred up much controversy. He became the general superintendent of the churches, dean of the theological faculty, and a pastor in the Church of the Holy Spirit. His hunger for power knew no bounds—he wanted all the attention and all the fame. In his mind, he could do nothing wrong.[2] He introduced certain elements in the liturgy that again paved the road back to Roman Catholic practices, especially in regard to the Lord's Supper. In another instance, he tried to refuse one young man, Stephen Sylvius, from obtaining his doctor's degree because he would not insert material Hesshus wanted him to include in his thesis. Hesshus' obnoxious, unrelenting personality could not be tolerated. The university senate barred him from their meetings. He lashed out, saying that the Heidelberg professors promoted godlessness and were not worth a cent.[3] Hesshus also directly attacked another university student, Wilhelm Klebitz, for his views of the Lord's Supper, which closely reflected Calvin's views.[4]

More trouble was brewing, especially controversy around the Lord's Supper. In 1559, a special synod agreed upon the Stuttgart Confession which contained the doctrine of ubiquity, teaching that the human nature of Christ was everywhere present. Applied to the Lord's Supper, this meant that Christ was present in the Supper. Acceptance of these views only sharpened the differences in Heidelberg, widening the gulf between the strict-Lutheran and Reformed positions concerning the Lord's Supper.[5] Additionally, in 1560, area theologians engaged in a formal debate on the Lord's Supper in what is known as the Wedding Debates, during the wedding of Frederick's third daughter, Dorothea Susanna. As one author humorously adds, "What could be more appropriate during the long week of celebration than a formal debate on the Lord's Supper?"[6] While the debaters discussed nothing new, the debate did prove to deepen the divide between the parties involved, and Frederick started to favor the Calvinist position on the Lord's Supper more and more.[7]

Something we should take notice of here before we go on is that Frederick did not come to his conclusions merely from discussions with theologians. True enough, debates and controversies sharpened his views, but more importantly, he became convicted of the biblical position of the Lord's Supper, as outlined in the Catechism's treatment of it, through personal study. "He was a diligent student of Scripture and accepted only that advice which his own study confirmed. Recognizing that he was only 'a poor simple layman,' he was confident, nevertheless, that patient study, prayer, and the guidance of the Holy Spirit would enable him to understand the Scriptures and reach the truth in the problems faced."[8]

Sometimes I believe we can rely entirely upon our ministers, elders, teachers, and parents to give us all the answers we need. It is good and right that we look up to them and listen to them, but we are also called to study the Word ourselves and to compare their teaching to the teaching of Scripture.

How important this is today for us, young people! Sometimes I believe we can rely entirely upon our ministers, elders, teachers, and parents to give us all the answers we need. It is good and right that we look up to them and listen to them, but we are also called to study the Word ourselves and to compare their teaching to the teaching of Scripture. We must never blindly follow a man or woman whom we trust; humans make errors, often unintentionally. God's Word is the final Word in all matters, and we must all become well-acquainted with its pages.

Back to the history. As can be seen, controversy riddled Heidelberg. The unrest and fighting needed to be settled quickly before more damage was done. In

2 Klooster, *The Heidelberg Catechism*, 85.
3 Klooster, *The Heidelberg Catechism*, 86.
4 Klooster, *The Heidelberg Catechism*, 87.
5 Klooster, *The Heidelberg Catechism*, 95, 96.
6 Klooster, *The Heidelberg Catechism*, 99.
7 Klooster, *The Heidelberg Catechism*, 99.
8 Klooster, *The Heidelberg Catechism*, 113.

early 1562, Frederick ordered the formulation of the new Catechism for the Palatinate.[9] Frederick listed his reasons for commissioning the new Heidelberg Catechism in his Preface on January 19, 1563. Let me allow Frederick to speak for himself:

> [Some of the area schools and churches were] entirely without Christian instruction, others being unsystematically taught, without any established, certain, and clear catechism, but merely according to individual plan or judgment; from which, among other great defects, the consequence has ensued, that they have, in too many instances, grown up without the fear of God and the knowledge of His word, having enjoyed no profitable instruction, or otherwise have been perplexed with irrelevant and needless questions, and at times have been burdened with unsound doctrines.[10]

Put simply, schools and churches were not always teaching the Truth of God's Word, and many of the teachers proved unorganized and sloppy in their teaching. The result? Those who sat under this teaching became confused with perplexing questions, and even worse, lacked the fear of God and knowledge of his Word. Heidelberg was filled with controversy, ignorant and deceiving teachers, and great unrest; God in his providence gave this Catechism at just the right time!

Frederick's words quoted above should strike us. How similar conditions in Heidelberg are to our day! We live in a church-world full of confusing, perplexing, and unnecessary questions. In addition, the preaching in many churches is more like a lively conversation, more concerned about social ills in the world than teaching about sin, Jesus Christ, the greatness of God, and salvation. Instead of carefully preparing biblically sound sermons from week to week, many ministers hastily type out a couple pages of notes on Saturday night, mostly containing opinions with only a thread of biblical teaching. The sheep in these congregations are starving. Not only is the feeding of the sheep put aside, but the leaders of these congregations neglect to do maintenance to the fencing around the pasture, allowing the wolves ready entrance to devour the sheep. False prophets easily deceive and devour malnourished sheep. Satan smiles.

Returning back to the history, the question must be asked, what was the reaction to the Catechism after its appearance in public? As could be expected, both Elector Frederick and the new Catechism received harsh criticism, especially from Frederick's Lutheran relatives. One such critic was Frederick's own son-in-law, Duke John Frederick of Saxony. John Frederick was bold enough to say that his father-in-law was in the grip of satan.[11] Elector Frederick's answer to his son-in-law is both instructive and beautiful:

> You have been unnecessarily anxious, as if I were in danger of being deceived by the devil's instruments; but thank God, I have attained to such an age, and to such knowledge and understanding of the divine Word that I am not moved about by every wind of doctrine. I would also most heartily wish that all others, setting aside their own feelings and the views of men, might be governed and led by God's Word alone. In other respects I acknowledge before God, as is proper, that I am a poor sinner, and I pray daily for the forgiveness of my sins, and that by the power of the Holy Ghost I may grow more and more in the knowledge of His dear Son, my faithful Savior, Jesus Christ. Amen.[12]

Truly, the Catechism we have today reflects Frederick's words of being led by God's Word alone, and not the feelings and views of men! How important this is! We must be young people led, directed, guided, and completely bound by the Word of God. Feelings are real, but they must not be our guide.

We must be young people led, directed, guided, and completely bound by the Word of God. Feelings are real, but they must not be our guide.

Again I ask—how much do we value our Heidelberg Catechism? Knowing the controversies out of which it came should make us more thankful for it. Do we realize the importance of a regular, organized system to study the Word of God? Frederick recognized its importance: "It is essential that our youth be trained in early life, and above all, in the pure and consistent doctrine of the holy Gospel, and be well exercised in the proper and true knowledge of God."[13] The Catechism is thoroughly biblical, taking its

9 Klooster, *The Heidelberg Catechism*, 146.
10 Klooster, *The Heidelberg Catechism*, 150.
11 Klooster, *The Heidelberg Catechism*, 205.
12 Klooster, *The Heidelberg Catechism*, 206.
13 Klooster, *The Heidelberg Catechism*, 151.

content from the Word of God, laced with the theme of comfort. Its strength is that it takes the various teachings of Scripture and condenses them into a very clear, logical format. The result? A spiritual feast! What a blessing to have this same Catechism taught in catechism classes and preached on Sunday from week to week. May this very brief history, young people, deepen our love for this gift of God to the church of Jesus Christ! ❖

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

Lord's Day 1, Question & Answer 1: Comfort In The Hope of Heaven

by Lenora Vander Kolk

When asked to write a reflection on my favorite Lord's Day of the Heidelberg Catechism, the first Question and Answer immediately came to mind. This Lord's Day is a favorite for many and probably the most familiar as well. I write on this Lord's Day with slight hesitation because I know that this short reflection can not begin to do it justice. It has been a favorite of mine partly for sentimental reasons but even more than that because of the comfort and assurance that it gives. I can vividly remember sitting in the church sanctuary for my grandmother's funeral while I was yet in grade school, and hearing the minister read this Lord's Day. He told us how it brought her comfort as she lay on her deathbed. I was so impressed by the words of this Lord's Day, and in a time of sorrow I was comforted by its words. It was like I was hearing those words for the first time and I finally understood the meaning of them. How comforting those words were to me at that time and how comforting they have been to me always. What assurance I have that I have been purchased by the shed blood of my Lord Jesus Christ, preserved and protected by my heavenly Father, and prepared by the Holy Spirit for eternal life in my heavenly home.

In times of sorrow or struggles, the people of God are granted the blessed assurance that is given in Lord's Day 1. My only comfort in life and death is "That I with body and soul, both in life and death, am not my own, but belong unto my faithful Savior Jesus Christ…" I belong! My life on this earth is not up to my own self but I have a Savior, a faithful Savior. No matter what I may be going through, no matter what trials are set before me, I belong to Christ. I am never alone. He guides me, guards me, and protects me. He purchased me, a dreadful sinner, and paid for all my sins. "O wretched man that I am! Who shall deliver me from the body of this death?" (Rom. 7:24). I, who am a sinner and deserve nothing more than the terrors of hell, have been delivered from that terrible judgment. The perfect, holy, Son of God was crucified on the cross to pay for all the sins of his people so that we can belong to him. I am his and he is mine. He has also delivered me from all the power of the devil. I am no longer enslaved to my human nature, prone only to sin, but I have been justified and sanctified so that I flee from sin and turn to God. "He delivered me from all the power of the devil, so that he is no longer my lord, I am no longer his slave, and sin hath no more dominion over me" (pg. 47, *The Triple Knowledge*, Vol 1). Without Christ, there is only death and so there is no life. By his death, I have been forgiven and delivered from that debt and now I belong to him, body and soul, in life and death.

Not only has he purchased me so that I belong to him, but he also preserves me. God so preserves us that not even a hair can fall from our heads that he doesn't know about. God knows everything, he sees everything, and he is watching over us. We are not alone. We can be assured that no matter what happens, all things are working together in his perfect plan. Difficulties come by his providence. At times we may be tempted to want to question God. It is hard for us to understand when God gives us afflictions. It may be that we have been

given a physical infirmity that we must live with, or that we suffer to make ends meet, or that a loved one is taken away from us before they have turned old and gray. Sometimes we ask something of God but he makes us wait or doesn't give it to us at all. In all things, it is important that we remember to trust in him. He sees our sorrows but he works all things for good. "And we know that all things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are the called according to his purpose" (Rom. 8:28). He worketh all things to be subservient to my salvation. God is preserving us and he has a plan for us, a perfect plan.

There are difficult times in life but in all these things, I am assured of eternal life and am made willing and ready to live with him and for him. We have been given much and so it is sometimes easy for us to become too comfortable on this earth. There will come a day when life for God's people won't be so comfortable. The time is nearing for Christ to return. There will come a time when God's people will suffer persecutions. We will be confronted for our faith and sought after to be brought low. What a comfort it is to know that we belong to him and that we have the assurance of eternal life. We have been so blessed in our lives on earth but how much better will be the day when we will live with him. The wicked have no comfort when a loved one passes away. What can they possibly say that could give comfort? They do not have the hope of the resurrection. "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. My Father, which gave them me, is greater than all; and no man is able to pluck them out of my Father's hand" (John 10:27-29). We live in the hope of that day, where there is no more sin or death. We look forward to that day of eternal life in heaven and we are assured that that day will come.

My comfort lies in the knowledge of these things, the knowledge of the promise of God. Our life on this earth and the trials we endure are only a means to an end, the path to our heavenly destination. When I truly understand the words of Lord's Day 1, I do not fear death, but I look forward in hope. I belong to him and I am his. What an amazing thing, what a humbling thing, and what a comforting thing. The greatness of my sins and miseries have been made known to me, I have been delivered of them, and now my prayer is that by this knowledge and assurance, I do show evidence of my thankfulness to him in all my life. ❖

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The Story of Guido de Bres: Author of the Belgic Confession

by Joe Holstege

Today the truth so beautifully expressed in the Reformed Confessions which we hold so dear is under attack. Men who profess themselves to be wise sit in their comfortable studies and write in ways so as to subtly discredit the place that those Confessions have in our lives. In his book, which was issued as a text for a religion course I recently took at Calvin College, Dr. Donald McKim writes: "Social, cultural, and political assumptions are inevitably expressed in confessional writings. All are historically conditioned, even the great, classical statements of Christian belief."[1] Though Dr.

1 McKim, Donald K. *Introducing the Reformed Faith: Biblical Revelation, Christian Tradition, Contemporary Significance*. Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 2001. pg. 6. Print.

Guido de Bres in prison.

McKim claims earlier in his book that the Confessions have authority over the lives of Christians, in the above statement he essentially strips that authority by claiming that those Confessions are in some respects relative to the particular context in which they were produced. Once this kind of ground work is laid, the "brick wall of the truth"[2] which defends us from our enemies can be easily disassembled as the Devil sees fit. If the power of the truth set forth in the Belgic Confession and the other Reformed creeds, which is derived from the Holy Scriptures, is limited to certain people who lived at a certain time, then our defense will crumble when our day of tribulation arrives. While it is not my purpose in this article to construct an argument that defends our beloved Confessions from such attacks, I do hope briefly to recount the story of the author of the Belgic Confession, Guido de Bres, whose life testified to the power of the words he wrote not only for the church in his day, but in our day as well.

Guido de Bres was the fourth child born in a family of glass painters in the city of Mons, Belgium in the year 1522. He spent his teenage years and early twenties learning the family trade while the Reformation began to swirl around him. At some point in these earlier years Guido got hold of a Bible which he proceeded to read with great interest as he had heard stories of the fuss raised by Reformation leaders. He must have wondered why these men and women refused to recant their views, choosing rather to hold to their convictions to the point of death such as the English Bible translator William Tyndale in 1536. Most readers of this magazine likely have a Bible on their shelf or in their drawer, but in this place at this time owning a Bible was a serious crime in the eyes of the state as it was forbidden by the pope. In spite of the threat of death, however, Guido decided to satisfy his curiosity by studying the Word, through which study the Spirit led him to be converted to the Reformed faith.

From this point on, with the exception of periods of study in England and Switzerland, the life of Guido de Bres was under almost constant threat of death. All of the territory included in the modern day countries of Belgium and the Netherlands, then referred to as the Lowlands, were at this time under the authority of Charles V, the same great ruler who had presided over the Diet of Worms when Martin Luther made his famous stand in 1521. Charles V was no friend of the Reformation, the result being that persecution was a regular occurrence in Mons. Fearing for his well-being and even his life Guido fled to England in 1548 where king Edward VI reigned.

2 See Nehemiah 2: 17,18. The walls of Jerusalem protected the Jews from their enemies just as the truth of Scripture systematized into creeds defends us from the enemies of the truth.

Edward was just a young boy throughout his reign, and a sickly one at that. By the providence of God the lack of a strong ruler in England at this time made it a safe haven for Reformed believers. In fact, the Reformation flourished under the spiritual leadership of men like Thomas Cranmer, who was a generally sound Protestant Archbishop of Canterbury. Throughout the four years of his stay in England, Guido had ample opportunity to study the Scriptures and grow in the Word.

While Guido was studying in England, Charles V began lightening the load of persecution borne by Reformed Christians in the Lowlands with the hope of making peace in his kingdom. He had plans to step down from his throne, and he wanted leadership to pass to his son Phillip II smoothly. Guido heard that persecution was not so severe as when he had left, and so he returned to Belgium in 1552.

Guido dearly loved his home country, as evidenced by the amount of time he spent preaching the truth of the Gospel there in spite of his life being under threat. Having grown in his knowledge of the truth in England, he began to labor in the city of Lille with a congregation which was known as the Church of the Rose. As it turned out, however, the peace created by Charles V was not to last. Charles had not been a friend of the Reformation, but Phillip was bent on its total destruction. In 1556 he renewed the policies of his father that made it death to own a Bible or speak about the Reformation. These policies allowed men to tattle on their Reformed neighbors to the authorities and then collect a portion of the estate of the convicted. Besides simply renewing the old policies, Phillip II highly systematized the rounding up of Reformation followers for torture and death, putting his half sister Margaret into a new position of authority which presided over exactly that task.

Guido's Church of the Rose in Lille suffered the martyrdom of a blacksmith along with his wife and two sons. Perhaps Guido had this event in mind when several years later he wrote in the Belgic Confession concerning the providence of God "that He orders and executes His work in the most excellent and just manner, even then when devils and wicked men act unjustly."[3] God uses the means of wicked men to strengthen his church through persecution, of which knowledge Guido had personal experience.

Following the death of the blacksmith and his family, Guido led his congregation away from Lille to the city of Frankfurt, Germany which was outside of Phillip's clutches. It was in Frankfurt that two great men of God met each other, Guido de Bres and John Calvin.

From Frankfurt, Guido traveled to Switzerland (some suggest that this trip was per Calvin's recommendation) to continue his studies. He spent two years studying the original languages of Scripture at the Academy in Lausanne, where Theodore Beza was his instructor. From Lausanne he traveled to Geneva, where he continued to study for another year. These three years of study better prepared Guido for the ministry. No doubt the preaching and teaching of Calvin greatly influence Guido's theology, which he would soon be writing down in the Confession. Yet despite these years of peace and study, Guido itched to be back in the active ministry, and so he traveled to the city of Doornik, Belgium in 1559 where he became the minister in a congregation which called themselves the Church of the Palm.

Some of the most significant events in the life of Guido de Bres occurred in the city of Doornik. First of all, he was married to a godly woman in the congregation by the name of Catherine Ramon. It was quite a sacrifice for Catherine to marry a man who was wanted by the state because of his love for the truth. Young ladies and young men can take a lesson from this godly marriage of Guido and Catherine, that no matter what earthly circumstance your marriage may put you in, your primary criterion ought to be for your spouse to be in the Lord. It would be better to remain single than to marry a man or woman who loves not the Lord. God blesses good choices made by his children, just as he blessed Guido and Catherine with several children and a very deep love for each other.

At the beginning of his marriage to Catherine and ministry in Doornik, Guido wrote the Belgic Confession. By this time he had grown much not only in his knowledge of the Word by way of study, but in his experience in the ministry. He knew what it meant to be hated because he was a child of God. Yet he continued to labor for the Lord, and the Church of the Palm grew as a result of God's work through his hand.

The Devil, however, was not content to sit back and let the Gospel progress too far in Doornik. A man in the church by the name of Robert Du Four began to stir up trouble. Though Guido was against it, Du Four wanted to seek public recognition from the state by demonstrating the strength of Protestantism in Doornik, so in the year 1561 he led some five-hundred Protestants out into the night to publicly sing Psalms in the street. While this action certainly grabbed the attention of the magistrates, it far from achieved Du Four's vain hope of gaining free

3 Belgic Confession Article 13.

worship for Protestants in Doornik. It rather led to mass arrests throughout the city and the Church of the Palm was labeled with the Anabaptists as a rebellious group. Although the pastor of the church was sought for, Guido stayed hidden within the walls of the city for a time before escaping with his wife and child.

Before his departure, however, Guido threw a completed copy of the Belgic Confession along with a handwritten appeal to the magistrates over the walls of the castle at Doornik. His hope was that the officials would see that Protestants such as the Church of the Palm were not rebels. That Guido highly respected the authority of the state is clear enough in the Confession where he wrote that "it is the bounden duty of every one, of what state, quality, or condition soever he may be, to subject himself to the magistrates."[4] If the leaders at Doornik had had any love in their hearts they would have seen the truth in Guido's appeal. Lovers of Jesus Christ make great citizens. The Belgic Confession only spurred them on to greater hatred, however, and the hunt for Guido became more intense. Let us remember, however, to be subject to the law, whether it acts justly or unjustly to us, for it is a privilege to suffer for the sake of Jesus Christ.

After his escape from Doornik, Guido found his way across the border to France in an area where persecution was not so severe. Here he traveled among several different congregations preaching the word. He and Catherine had several children during this time, which must have been a great joy to them. However, the time spent with his children was soon to be cut short.

Several calls for pastoral aid ignited in Guido the desire to return to his homeland once more. A series of events landed him in the city of Valenciennes, near the border of France and Belgium, laboring among the Church of the Eagle in 1566. For several years the fiery preaching of one Peregrin de la Grange had caused a great response for the cause of the Reformation in Valenciennes. Thousands gathered openly in fields to hear the preaching. Guido's presence strengthened the resolve of the Protestant faction in the city, and though Guido was not in support of it, trouble broke out as they began defacing Roman Catholic Cathedrals and knocking the heads off statues of the saints. King Phillip's regent Margaret was forced to grant religious freedom to the people of Valenciennes. The joy over this seeming victory was short lived, however, because Phillip was outraged and decided to send reinforcements to take back the city, which he successfully did on Palm Sunday, March 23, 1567.

Guido was originally able to escape the city, however he was captured en route to France and sent to prison in the castle in Doornik, the same building to which he had delivered the Belgic Confession six years earlier. From the castle prison in Doornik he was transferred back to Valenciennes to await trial and execution in the worst prison imaginable. Known as the "Black Hole," it was a small dark room in which the only featured light came from a hole which allowed human excrement to pass from other cells in the prison. In spite of these wretched conditions Guido wrote a lengthy tract on the Lord's Supper and several letters including one to his poor wife, who was never to see her beloved husband again until her own departure from this valley of tears. On May 31, 1567 Guido de Bres was publicly hanged because he relied on Jesus Christ for his salvation from sin and desired the same salvation for those he preached and wrote to.

Far from lessening the power and authority of the Belgic Confession by making it relative to a certain context, the life of its author Guido de Bres adds weight to its meaning. When we learn about the hardships suffered by this man of God for the sake of the truth that he recorded for us by the guidance of the Spirit of that truth we ought to be spurred on to a greater love for our Savior. Let the affliction come! It is a privilege to suffer for Christ. What great comfort we have in the words Guido wrote in his final article in the Confession concerning the Christian's consideration of the final judgment, namely that it is "most desirable and comfortable to the righteous and the elect; because their full deliverance shall be perfected, and there they shall receive the fruits of their labor and trouble which they have borne."[5] May God give us grace to bear the reproach of men for the sake of our love for our Lord. ❖

Recommended Reading

If this history of a persecuted man that God used for many great things in the church caught your interest, then you would greatly enjoy the book *Glorious Heretic: The Story of Guido de Bres* by Thea B. Halsema. I used this book to obtain most of the information I presented in the article.

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

4 Belgic Confession Article 36

5 Belgic Confession Article 37.

Watching Daily At My Gates

by Chester Hunter

October 6 Read Genesis 41

One of the truths brought out in the life of Joseph is that of the providence of God. Think about his life in his father's house, his being sold into slavery, his stay in prison, and now his elevation to the second highest position in the kingdom. Then look at verse 57. We know how the story ends. It obviously God's hand in all of it. We can go to Lord's Day 10 of the Heidelberg Catechism to see this blessed truth defined. Do you see God's providence in your life? It is there, and in that providence God brings his people into the church. Sing Psalter 287.

October 7 Read Genesis 42

We may wonder why God chooses this way to reunite the brothers and Jacob with Joseph. We can speculate all we want, but the truth is it is God's sovereign will. That will, which we saw yesterday contains his providence, is his working out the salvation of all of his people. Sometimes we do not understand God's way, but as we see in the story of Joseph, God's will is right. We need not question God's ways for us; they will turn out for our good and his glory. Let us rest comfortably in that truth knowing that he will guide us in the right way in our lives. Sing Psalter 332.

October 8 Read Genesis 43

We do not know the spiritual character of Joseph's steward. The words of verse 23 could just be a recitation of what Joseph told him to say, or they could be the words of a man who had been converted by the actions and words of a Godly Joseph. Would we be able to live as Joseph did in a heathen land? He could have given up his faith, and reveled in his power in a powerful nation. He did not. He lived his faith. Do we live our faith in the midst of a wicked world? Sing Psalter 176.

October 9 Read Genesis 44

In the strange method of these chapters, God brings Jacob's sons to repentance. We do not know Joseph's motives in all of this, but we know that the sovereign God is in control, and he will bring his people to repentance when they stray. The brothers are brought face to face with their sins, and they repent as we find out in the next chapter. As we walk through this world, we, too, fall into sin. We, too, must be brought to repentance from those sins. Thanks be to God who has given to us Jesus Christ our Savior. In the way of God-ordained repentance, we can live a life of thankfulness to him. Sing Psalter 83.

October 10 Read Genesis 45

Notice Joseph's words of forgiveness in the first part of the chapter. Humanly Joseph could have punished his brothers very severely including sending them to their deaths. He forgives because he sees that God was behind their actions. We, too, must have this attitude toward our brothers in this life. We must forgive them when they sin against us. All things are in God's hands, as Joseph confessed. God has forgiven each of us great sins; we must also forgive those who sin against us. Sing Psalter 140.

October 11 Read Genesis 46

Here we have an account of Jacob's trip to Egypt. The merciful God assures him that this trip, unlike the one of Abraham many years ago, would be blessed by God. We also have an accounting of the church at that time. This was the purpose of that trip into Egypt. God would preserve his church and bring it forth many times larger. Joseph could have said to Pharoah let my family live in the best of the land, but no, Joseph made it so his family would be able to live separately from the Egyptians in Goshen. They would live the life of the antithesis even away from Canaan. Is that our life on this earth? Sing Psalter 354.

October 12 Read Genesis 47

People of God, are we ready to make the confession, "Few and evil have the days of the years of my life been…"? Do we see our sin and do we see that "all have sinned and come short of the glory of God"? This was Jacob's confession of faith. Here he stood before one of the greatest monarchs of the land, and he turned the attention away from himself. Do we do this? This is how we must live even in the Egypt of the world. We must be satisfied to go to the "Goshens" of our day and live away from the spotlight of the world. Sing Psalter 289.

October 13 Read Genesis 48

The story of God's people continues to unfold. In blessing Joseph's children, Jacob bestows on his son part of the double portion of the birthright. Jacob, by faith, blesses those sons and through that blessing blesses Joseph and us. He tells Joseph that even though he would not see Canaan again Joseph would. It happened not as Jacob understood it, but in the multitude of people that made up Manasseh and Ephraim. We, too, have a hope in a promised land. It will be the promised land which is heaven. Are we looking for it? Sing Psalter 276.

October 14 Read Genesis 49

Picture Jacob sitting on his bed with his sons gathered around him. And then picture their faces as he spoke the cryptic words which were their inheritances. These were words of prophecy. Some of them were not very nice. Others would not come to pass until later. Then look at Judah's inheritance once more. Judah received one of the parts of the birthright blessing. He received the part that has been passed down to us. He and we received the promise of Christ. What are we doing with our inheritance? Let us use it in this life well so that when God calls us to heaven we may leave, like Jacob, in peace. Sing Psalter 27.

October 15 Read Genesis 50

This chapter, which closes this book of beginnings, is a chapter of faith. First of all, there is the family's faith as they carry their father's coffin to the cave of Machpelah. Secondly, there is the faith of Joseph when he tells his brothers that he will continue to care for them in Egypt. He knows the whims of rulers, but he trusts in God's providence to carry them through until they are delivered from this land. Finally, Joseph shows his faith in eschewing a state funeral in Egypt for a burial of his bones in Canaan. This is the faith we must have as we live in our Egypts looking for our final resting place in heaven. Sing Psalter 313.

October 16 Read Exodus 1

From the book of beginnings we go to the book of the going out. The chapter begins with a roll of names that made up those who went to Egypt. Then we have that significant verse: "Now there rose up a new king over Egypt, which knew not Joseph." Throughout history this has been true in many countries. The government has been favorable to Christians, and then with a change in government comes a change in policy, and Christians are persecuted. This is a sign of the times. Even as we look for Christ to return, there will be many "kings who don't know Joseph." Our faith must be strong in such days; as those days bring us ever closer to our entrance into the promised land which is heaven. Sing Psalter 213.

October 17 Read Exodus 2

By faith Amram and Jochebed did what they did. They obeyed God and disobeyed the evil command of the king in saving their son alive. They believed in the covenant and the signs of the covenant. They saw in their children the promises that God had given to them. And as we read in the last part of the chapter, "God remembered his covenant." Of course, God had not "forgotten" them as we think of forgetting. God, through the trials in Egypt would bring them out ready to enter the promised land. Are we faithful to our covenant God? Do we believe that he will care for us in this wicked world? Let us pray for the faith of Amram and Jochebed even as we see the world coming to an end, and persecution may loom on the horizon. In this faith we will see the blessings that will be ours in heaven. Sing Psalter 278.

October 18 Read Exodus 3

After leaving his familial home, after leaving the luxuries of the palace, Moses spends the second forty year period of his life in God's school in the wilderness. As his schooling comes to an end, he hears the call from Jehovah, the I Am that I Am. Now, Moses is ready even though he thought he was not. God reveals to Moses the big picture of what would happen. God would bring judgment on wicked Egypt, and in that judgment would save his people from that wicked nation. This is the picture of our deliverance from this world that grows more wicked every day. Are we ready for our deliverance? Are we watching for Christ's return? Sing Psalter 289.

October 19 Read Exodus 4

Moses continued to protest his fitness for the task to which God had assigned him. Patiently God worked with his servant. Then Moses meets his brother and goes to the people of Israel. We read that they bow their heads and worship believing that God would deliver them. This acceptance was for Moses's sake for we know that later the people would be anything but willing. God is patient with us as well. Let us bow our heads accepting the way that he leads us in this life knowing that God will lead us to the promised land in the way of our pathway on this earth. Sing Psalter 217.

October 20 Read Exodus 5

The path on which we are led on this earth is not an easy path. We see that even as Pharaoh speaks his first refusal to Moses. As Israel is led on this path, we know that it is for the strengthening of the faith of the faithful and also for the hardening of the wicked. More than Pharaoh's heart was hardened by the events of this part of Exodus. God would winnow out those who did not believe. As we walk on our path, let us constantly pray that God will deliver us in his way, hard though it may be. The end of that path has a glorious end. Let us keep our eyes and our hearts fixed on that end. Sing Psalter 208.

October 21 Read Exodus 6

Our lives on this earth are part of the process by which God brings his whole church to the eternal Canaan. Moses had to see his part in this process. After God once more reveals to him the covenant promise, he is told to go and announce to Israel and to Pharaoh that they are to leave Egypt. When Israel fails to believe Moses's words, he is discouraged and does not want to see Pharaoh. Then God shows to him the covenant line and his place in it. Do we see our place? Do we heed God's commands as we should? Sing Psalter 147.

October 22 Read Exodus 7

In this chapter the first of the ten strokes is laid upon Egypt. After not believing the initial miracles, God through Moses turns the Nile River into blood. This was one of Egypt's most important gods. In striking the Nile, God shows his sovereignty. When the magicians through sleight of hand or Satan's hand (by God's permission), also make water turn into blood, Pharaoh's heart is hardened, and the process of his destruction is put into motion. Israel's faith is also being tested, as they go through this process as well. As we read about this process, let us see that it was for us that this was done. Sing Psalter 289.

October 23 Read Exodus 8

After seven days of water turned into blood, we might think Pharaoh was ready for Israel to leave. But no, his reprobate heart was hard, and this chapter recounts three more plagues. Like the first plague these two affected their comfort. First of all frogs were brought throughout the land. Now a frog might be cute, but many frogs were a plague. After Pharaoh seemingly relents and then hardens his heart, the third plague, that of the lice, is brought without warning. In this plague God separates himself from Egypt's so-called gods. The Egyptian magicians were unable to produce lice. Then comes the fourth plague. In this one God separates his people from the Egyptians. Not one of the flies comes to Goshen. The line of the antithesis is drawn in Egypt. Pharoah's heart is still hard. Sing Psalter 253.

October 24 Read Exodus 9

With Pharaoh's continued obstinacy come plagues five and six. First a sickness is sent upon Egypt's cattle. The sovereign God strikes another of Egypt's gods. Israel's cattle are untouched. Then from the furnaces, over which Israel had been made to slave, ashes are thrown into the air and grievous boils are brought upon the very bodies of the slave masters, and the whole country feels the pain of those boils. Again Pharaoh refuse to acknowledge almighty God. Finally a storm is brought upon the land. It was announced, and those who were stubborn did not heed the warning but let their livestock be pummeled and killed by the lightning and hail. Was Egypt and their cantankerous ruler convinced? No! Sing Psalter 206.

October 25 Read Exodus 10

Our God is a sovereign God. One of the purposes of the plagues was to show Pharaoh this fact. Pharaoh would confess this with his lips for a short time, but then his heart would harden, and in his unbelief he would refuse to continue in his confession. The eighth plague wiped out all the crops that remained after the hailstorm. Then Moses announces the ninth and tenth plagues. During the three days of darkness all of Egypt had to contemplate the truth that God was God. For three hours those at the cross had to contemplate what they were doing. Do we contemplate God's love for us? Sing Psalter 154.

October 26 Read Exodus 11

This short chapter tells of the last stroke upon Pharaoh and Egypt. Israel's stay in the picture of hell was coming to a close. But even this had to be part of the process by which God would redeem his people. Israel, too, must know and confess that God was God. As we live in Egypt today we must look toward Canaan. This world is not our home. Even as true Israel anticipated the final plague and the resulting order to leave Egypt by faith, so we must live our lives by faith. Sing Psalter 107.

October 27 Read Exodus 12

This long chapter tells us about the Passover Feast and the reasons behind it. For Israel it was to remind them how God had not only led them out of the land of Egypt, but also had given them favor in those wicked people's eyes. It was also for them to look ahead to the final Passover lamb, our Lord Jesus Christ. Children were to learn from all the ceremony that went with this feast. We, too, must teach our children about Christ. Our sacraments give to us opportunities to do this. May we look ahead, just as Israel did, for the coming again of Christ on the clouds of heaven. Sing Psalter 203.

October 28 Read Exodus 13

God went with Israel as they made their way out of Egypt toward Canaan. He led them by a very visible presence—the pillar of cloud by day and pillar of fire by night. God leads us as we make our way through the Egypt of this world toward the Canaan of heaven. He leads us by a very visible presence, his Word. Are we following that Word? Do we keep it in view by reading and studying it throughout our daily lives? Once again in this chapter it mentions the education of the children in the things of God. Do we "suffer the little children" to come unto Christ day by day? Sing Psalter 290.

October 29 Read Exodus 14

God was not finished with showing to Egypt that he was the sovereign God. He also was not finished with showing Israel that he was Jehovah God. God led Israel to a way in which there seemed to be no escape. Pharaoh probably was exulting over this final slaughter of Israel. Then God showed that he was God. Pharaoh and all his armies met their destruction in the sea while Israel was led by God's hand to dry land beyond. Israel believed God and his servant Moses. Let this be for our edification as we walk toward our Canaan. Sing Psalter 88.

October 30 Read Exodus 15

After singing the song of Moses that exalted the power of Jehovah, the people began their long journey. It was not long, however, before their faith was tested. God took them this way in order that he might make them ready to enter Israel. They had many lessons to learn, and God would have

them learn those lessons in the school of the wilderness. They had to learn about Christ even as it was shown them by the tree at the waters of Marah. But God was gracious to them even in the rest found in the oasis of Elim. As we visit our Marahs and Elims, let us keep our eyes fixed on the goal-communion with God and his Son in heaven. Sing Psalter 71.

October 31 Read Exodus 16

God's people throughout the ages are a complaining and stubborn people. After the ten plagues, after the miracle at the Red Sea, after Marah, Israel still had not learned to trust in Jehovah for everything. How quickly they had forgotten the toil and troubles in Egypt when they ran out of food. God once again showed his grace to them when he gave them manna. They had to learn what it was and how it would sustain them. We have been given the manna of Christ and the Word. Do we know what it is and how it sustains us? We need that manna; let us use it in the way God has commanded us. Sing Psalter 213.

November 1 Read Exodus 17

At Rephidim God showed Israel his care in two ways. First of all, from a rock he gave them water. That rock and that water were both pictures of Christ who is our rock and our living water. Paul in one of his epistles to the Corinthian church tells us that fact. We receive from Christ all that we need to be sustained in this world. Secondly, God showed Israel how they would defeat Amalek. Through the rod and Joshua's prowess as a leader, God gave Israel the victory. Is Jehovah our banner, our Nissi, even as he was Israel's? Sing Psalter 147.

November 2 Read Exodus 18

One of the reasons God led Israel in the way of the wilderness to Canaan was so that they could learn how to be a nation. Through the wise counsel of Jethro Moses set up a judicial system that would guide Israel for many years. God has given to the church today men who are to guide us in our lives. These are the officebearers of the church. We need to respect them for the office that God has given to them. We need to see that in them God leads us in the right way on our path to the heavenly Canaan. Let us give thanks for such men and their work in Christ's church. Sing Psalter 53.

November 3 Read Exodus 19

God brought Israel out of Egypt to the mountain of Sinai where he would give to them through Moses the various laws that would govern them. Chief among those laws was the Ten Commandments. That law, which served as Israel's guide to point them to Christ, is our rule of thankfulness. We, too, have been borne on eagle's wings just as Israel was. We, too, must have these ten words to guide us and show us the way. It is a blessing to us that we hear the law each week. Thank God for that blessing. Sing Psalter 306.

November 4 Read Exodus 20

After giving to Israel the Ten Commandments from that smoking, quaking mountain that showed God's power, judgment, and justice, God began to show Israel how he must be worshiped. Altars were part of their culture for many years, ever since the first sin. But now ordinances were given to guide them in their worship. Jesus fulfilled all those ordinances with his death on the cross. But yet we, too, must worship God in the way that he has ordained in the Bible. In the way of proper worship, we come to our Creator and Savior. Sing Psalter 40.

November 5 Read Exodus 21

There were three types of laws given to Israel at Sinai. First of all, there was the moral law, which were the Ten Commandments. Then there were the ceremonial laws that showed Israel how God was to be worshiped. These first two types of laws are summed up in the words, "Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart…" The second of the great commandments was shown to them in the third type of laws, the civil laws. This showed to Israel how they must live with their neighbors and function as the nation of God. While we are no longer under these laws, the principles found in them should guide us every day of our lives on this earth. Sing Psalter 331.

November 6 Read Exodus 22

This chapter contains several of the civil laws that we mentioned yesterday. As we read through them, we see their common sense nature and practical nature for us of the new dispensation. Notice, however, at the end the two great commandments are brought together. We love our neighbor because we are God's holy people. If we concentrate on what Christ called the two great commandments, we will find that we have great peace in our homes, in our schools, and especially in our churches. Let us seek that peace by obeying God. Sing Psalter 223.

November 7 Read Exodus 23

One of the lessons that Israel had to learn as they traversed through the wilderness was to obey God. Sometimes we look at their history and shake our heads and wonder why they were so stubborn. If we do this, we had better go look in the mirror as James says. We are like Israel. We see just as many mighty works and just as much grace, and how do we treat God and our neighbor? We want the gods of the nations round about us. We like to follow many modern day gods. If we do, they will lead us not to Canaan but back to Egypt. Follow God, and he will lead you in the green pastures. Sing Psalter 55.

Discussion on the Canons

by Rev. H. Hoeksema and Rev. C. Hanko

This discussion is reprinted from the first issue of *Beacon Lights*, January, 1941. It asks and answers some very important questions about creeds and confessions that we must know. This discussion is continued in the four installments of *Beacon Lights* following January 1941. You can see them at beaconlights.org. A couple of typing mistakes found in the original are corrected in brackets [ ].

Questions

1. What are Standards or Confessions?
2. Should a church have Confessions? What is their value and purpose?
3. Do Confessions have the same authority as Scripture?
4. Do they not bind the conscience of the Christian?
5. Can Confessions be altered? In what way?
6. Which are the Standards of the Reformed Churches?
7. What is the difference between the Christian Reformed and the Protestant Reformed Churches as to their Confessions?
8. What is the meaning of the word Canon?
9. What was the occasion of the formulation of these Canons of Dordrecht?
10. What are Pelagians? Arminians? Remonstrants ? Contra-Remonstrants?
11. How many chapters do the Canons contain? What is the subject of each?
12. What do you understand by divine predestination? By election? By reprobation?
13. Can you prove the doctrine of election from the Bible? Reprobation?
14. Why does chapter I begin with a statement of the sin of all men in Adam? See art. 1.
15. What, according to this first article is the standpoint of the Canons, Supra- or Infralapsarian?
16. Of what does art. 2 speak?
17. Can men be saved outside of the sphere of the preaching of the gospel?
18. To whom is the gospel preached? See art 3.
19. Why is the gospel preached to all men? Why not only to the elect?
20. What distinction is caused by the preaching of the gospel? See art. 4.
21. What is the significance of the preaching of the gospel for the reprobate unbeliever?
22. Are children also saved by means of the preaching of the gospel if they die before the age of discretion?
23. What does it mean to receive and embrace Christ? See art. 4.
24. Whose is the guilt of unbelief? Whence is the gift of faith? See art. 5.
25. Why do some receive the gift of faith, others not? See art. 5.

The Synod of Dordt

Answers

1. Standards or Confessions (creeds, rule of faith, symbol) are comprehensive formulas, expressing with ecclesiastical authority what a church or group of churches believes to be the truth of the Word of God. They are called standards or symbols, because they are criteria of what is taught and confessed in the church or churches uniting around them; and because they declare publicly the faith of that church or those churches. They are called Creeds or Confessions from the viewpoint that their contents are the object of the faith of the church.

2. A church should have standards or confessions, chiefly because it is the calling of the church as well as of the individual Christian to confess the name of Christ and the truth as it is in Jesus and to preserve the truth in generations even over against every attack of error and false doctrine.

Their value and purpose:

a. As summaries of the truth revealed in Scripture they are an aid to the understanding of the Word of God.
b. They preserve the labor of the church of the past in expounding the Scriptures under the guidance of the Spirit.
c. They are a basis and bond of union among believers and churches that subscribe to them.
d. They are a means for the instruction of the children of the church in sound doctrine.
e. Their purpose is to declare unto the world the faith of the church and preserve the church from error.

3. They certainly do not have the same authority as Scripture. Scripture has original and absolute authority; confessions have derived authority, i.e. only as they are in harmony with Scripture and relative, i.e. it is admitted that a standard or creed may be changed and expanded, according as the church gains a fuller insight in the Scriptures.

4. This is the indictment brought against creeds by all their opponents, such as Unitarians, Socinians, Quakers and Rationalists. They claim that creeds interfere with the free interpretation of the Bible and bind the conscience of the believer by the doctrines and institutions of men.

This would be true if the creed is placed above Scripture instead of being subordinated to it; and if subscription to creeds were not the free choice and act of every believer. Any Christian is at any time at full liberty, should his conscience so dictate in the light of the Word of God to break with a creed, which implies that he breaks with the church professing the same. 5. Confessions certainly can be altered and often are altered, either because the church develops and grows in the knowledge of the truth, or because the faith of the church must be defended against new errors that arise.

The alteration must be based on the Word of God. If it is not it is a corruption.

The alteration may be suggested or requested in the regular ecclesiastical way by an individual member or group of members.

The alteration must be officially approved and adopted by the largest representative gathering of the church.

The alteration even so must be submitted to approval or tacit acquiescence by the members of the church.

6. The standards of the Reformed churches are: The Heid. Catechism, The Netherland or Belgic Confession [, and The Canons] of Dordrecht.

7. The difference between the Christian Reformed Churches and the Protestant Reformed Churches with respect to their Confessions is, that the [latter] merely acknowledge the Three Forms of Unity, the [former], since 1924 have added Three Points of doctrine to the Reformed Confessions, which are essentially corruptions of the Reformed Symbols.

8. The meaning of the word Canon is rule. Applied to a Confession it is a rule of faith, or of the truth. This is, therefore the meaning in the title: Canons of Dordrecht.

9. The occasion of the formulation of the Canons of Dordrecht was the teaching of James Arminius and his followers in the last part of the sixteenth and the first part of the seventeenth century, which implied a denial of the truth of predestination and related doctrines.

10. Pelagians are followers of Pelagius, a heretic of the fifteenth century, who taught that man has a free will to do good by nature, denying original sin and total depravity.

Arminians are followers of Arminius of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, who taught that God's election and reprobation depended on foreseen faith and unbelief and related errors.

The Arminians of the sixteenth century are called Remonstrants because a representative group of them in 1610 drew up a document which they called a remonstrance, in which they briefly set forth their belief in five formulas of doctrine.

Contra-remonstrants is a name applied to the Reformed fathers of the sixteenth century, because they formally answered and opposed the Remonstrants.

11. The Canons contain five chapters, as follows :

I. Of divine predestination.

II. Of the death of Christ and the redemption of men thereby.

III-IV. Of the Corruption of man, his conversion to God and the manner thereof.

V. Of the perseverance of the saints.

12. Predestination is God's eternal counsel with respect to the eternal destiny of his rational-moral creatures; men and angels.

Election is God's sovereign, eternal, and gracious decree to ordain and save some to eternal glory in Christ and in the way of faith.

Reprobation is God's sovereign, eternal and righteous decree to ordain some to eternal damnation as punishment for their sin.

13. Election: Rom. 8:29, 20; Eph. 1:3, 4, 11; II Tim. 1:9; II Thess. 2:13-15; John 6:37, 39, 65; 10:27-30; Rom. 9:15, 16, 23.

Reprobation: Prov. 16:4; John 10:26; Rom. 9:17, 21, 22; I Pet. 2:8.

Both: Matt. 11:25, 26; Rom. 9:13, 16, 18.

14. Because the Canons present the doctrine of election as the decree of God according to which he chose some to eternal life out of the fallen human race. It is the purpose of the Canons to maintain that God could righteously do so, because he might have left all in their sin. It follows, that the doctrine of reprobation is presented as meaning that God left others in their sin.

15. It is evident, then, even from this first article, that the standpoint of the Canons is Infra-lapsarian.

Infra- and Supra-lapsarian are two views, both acknowledged to be Reformed, of the decree of Predestination. The terms are derived from the Latin: *supra*, i.e. above, *infra*, i.e. below and *lapsus*, i.e. fall. By these terms is expressed, that predestination is before the decree of creation and the decree of the fall. The order in the decree is, therefore, as follows: 1. Gods determination to glorify himself. 2. Predestination, i.e. the decree to glorify himself in vessels of honor and vessels of dishonour. 3. Creation, i.e. the decree to create all things good. 4. The decree of the fall.

Infra-lapsarianism presents the order as follows: 1. God's determination to glorify himself. 2. The decree of creation. 3. the decree of permitting the fall. 4. The decree of predestination.

Although the Canons proceed from the Infra-lapsarian viewpoint, the Supra-lapsarian view was never condemned and always acknowledged to be Reformed.

Better it is to proceed from the question, what in God's decree is purpose or end, and what is means unto that purpose or end. Then we have the following order in God's decrees: 1. God determined to glorify himself. 2. He predestined the church in Christ. 3. He predestined the reprobate to serve the realization of the church, as chaff must serve the wheat. 4. He ordained all things in heaven and on earth to serve the realization of election and reprobation.

16. Article 2 speaks of the manifestation of the love of God in the sending of his Son into the world, for the salvation of them that believe. Notice, that the Canons approach the doctrine of election from the viewpoint of the salvation of believers. The following is the line it follows: a. Man is fallen. b. God will save them that believe in his Son. c. He calls to faith by the gospel, d. He gives the faith to whom he wills. e. He wills to give faith to the elect only.

17. There is no Scriptural ground for the position of some, that even in the heathen world, outside of the sphere of the preaching of the gospel, there is salvation. We may surely believe, that God will send his gospel wherever there are his people. The apostles were sometimes forbidden to preach the gospel in a certain place while in other places they must labor for some time, because God had much people in the place.

18. The gospel is preached to whom God wills. For it is God that prepares the field for the preaching of the gospel; it is God that prepares his church to preach the gospel; it is God, too, that in due time prepares men and calls them to preach the gospel. After all, it is Christ that gathers his church.

19. The gospel is not preached to all men. In fact, there are comparatively but a few that ever hear the gospel. Ultimately it must be preached to all nations, but it need not be preached to every individual. The reason undoubtedly is, that the gospel must be preached only in those places and at that time, where and when God has his elect in such places. Nevertheless, the gospel is not to be preached only to the elect, even if this were possible. The reason is, that God wills that also some reprobates shall hear the gospel, that sin may become fully manifest as sin.

20. The distinction between those that believe and have eternal life; and those that do not believe and are hardened. A distinction that must ultimately lead to the conflict of Christ and Antichrist.

21. The significance of the preaching of the gospel for the reprobate unbeliever is: a. That it reveals the perverseness

of his sinful nature. b. That it hardens him in sin. c. That it aggravates his guilt. d. That it makes his condemnation heavier.

22. Children are not saved through the preaching of the gospel, if they die before the age of discretion. Regeneration in the narrower sense is immediate.

23. There is a difference between receiving the gospel of Christ and embracing him. Receiving him rather looks at the matter from the viewpoint of that act of Christ whereby he imparts himself to us and he prepares a place for himself in our hearts. Embracing or accepting him rather looks at it from the viewpoint of the activity of saving-faith, whereby we appropriate him as our personal Redeemer.

24. Unbelief is sin. Of all sin, also of the sin of unbelief man is the author. He will not come to Christ, because he is wholly depraved. For the same reason, faith is solely the gift of God. No man would believe unless God would work the power of faith in him.

25. This is solely to be attributed to God's sovereign election and reprobation. No other considerations enter in. It is on this point that Reformed people radically differ from all others. Only when this is maintained can absolute predestination be accepted as the truth. ❖

From the Pastor's Study

Be Sober and Watch

by Rev. Rodney Miersma

"Ye are all the children of light, and the children of the day: we are not of the night, nor of darkness. Therefore let us not sleep, as do others; but let us watch and be sober. For they that sleep sleep in the night; and they that be drunken are drunken in the night. But let us, who are of the day, be sober, putting on the breastplate of faith and love; and for an helmet, the hope of salvation. For God hath not appointed us to wrath, but to obtain salvation by our Lord Jesus Christ. Who died for us, that, whether we wake or sleep, we should live together with him."

I Thessalonians 5:5-10

The first eleven verses of this chapter speak of the coming of the Day of the Lord. This is the Day when the dead in Christ shall rise and the Lord himself shall descend from heaven with a shout and the voice of the archangel and the trump of God. What a Day that will be! The present universe will be destroyed in the fervent heat of the fire of God's wrath. This is the Day of the final judgment. The ungodly shall be cast into hell forever and the children of God will enter the joy of their Lord in the new creation.

The question is, Are you prepared for that Day? Not *will* you be prepared, but *are* you prepared *right now*? We do not know the day of the Lord's coming. Of the times and season, the time when the Day of the Lord comes, of that the apostle says, "there is no need that I write unto you." Jesus himself tells us in Matthew 24 that no man, not even the angels in heaven, knows the day or the hour. What we do know is that the Day of the Lord comes as a thief in the night. When the world is saying "Peace and safety" sudden destruction will seize them and they shall not escape.

But that is not true of the children of God, for you are not of the darkness that that day should overtake you as a thief. You are children of the light. Because we are children of the day the Scriptures exhort us here in our text.

The exhortation is "Watch and be sober." One must be sober in order to be able to watch. It is only in the way of being sober and thus watching that you shall

be prepared for the Day of the Lord. To be sober is the opposite of drunkenness. That means that you are never to be drunk. This is a terrible sin about which the Bible says, "No drunkard can inherit the Kingdom."

The apostle is here figuratively speaking. The figure is of a drunkard who cannot see clearly nor think straight. His actions are impaired so that he cannot control himself. He reels about unsteadily and is not able to see reality. The drunkard pictures the ungodly who belong to the night of sin. They are drunk with the wine of the pleasures and treasures of this world. Their entire life is a frantic and frenzied reaching out for the satisfaction of their own lusts. This we clearly see today. The spiritual drunkenness of the ungodly explains the drug addiction, the crimes, the immorality, and the desperate search for release from the pressures of modern living. This is certainly true of the ungodly youth of today. Thus this warning not to follow in their way.

With the godly youth of the church it should be different for in distinction from the children of darkness who are drunken in the night of sin and death, they are of the day and are children of the light. They have been redeemed out of that darkness and taken into the light of God's fellowship. Therefore, be sober. That does not mean that you may not be happy or that there is no joy for the children of God. You, the youth of the church, have every reason for joy, real happiness which cannot be diminished or taken from you.

You must be spiritually temperate which means six things. 1) You must constantly fight those sinful lusts which remain in you. 2) You must be of sound mind, clear-headed spiritually, so that you are able to discern the reality of the coming of the Day of the Lord. 3) You must look forward with a full measure of joy for the coming Day of the Lord. 4) It means that you are strangers among the drunken ungodly. 5) It means that you are constantly putting off the old man of sin and putting on the new man. 6) Finally, it means that your joy is in God and not in the world.

Therefore, watch! The drunken ungodly are sound asleep, reveling in all their wickedness, in mad pursuit of the perishing things of this earth, totally oblivious to the coming of the Day of the Lord. When the church speaks of the coming of that day they scoff and say, "Where is the promise of his coming? All things continue as in the beginning." Peace and safety is their cry. We will solve all the problems. If we can put a man on the moon, we can surely clean up the environment. If we devote enough energy, we can solve the overpopulation problem. With enough expertise we can do something about the shortage of natural resources. We are able to eradicate hunger and get rid of crime. Day of the Lord? Foolishness! That is the attitude of the sleepers. They belong to the night.

The children of God, however, WATCH. They are alert, wide awake. That means that you pay strictest attention to yourselves and to what is happening all around you. Literally the text says, "Keep on watching." It must be a constant activity of the children of the light.

You do this by putting on the armor of God. There are three virtues to this armor. The first is faith which essentially is the bond that unites us to Christ through which flow all the blessings of salvation. It has two elements: certain knowledge of God and a hearty confidence that he is my God. The second virtue is love which is the bond of perfectness that exists in God first of all. That love he sheds abroad in our hearts by the Holy Spirit so that we love God and our fellow saints as members of the one body of Jesus Christ. The third virtue is hope which is a certain expectation of our final salvation. It is a reaching out with eager and intense longing for the glory of the coming of that Day. In hope God's children look away from the perishing things of the earth to the abiding realities of the kingdom of heaven. In hope we pray, "Come Lord Jesus, yea come quickly."

That is your armor. Faith and hope are your breastplate; hope is your helmet. These are defensive pieces of armor. To put these on there must be active faith, love, and hope. You are best protected when you are actively on the offensive, cultivating faith, love, and hope. Put these pieces of armor on. As to faith, grow in the knowledge of God through Jesus Christ. Then you will have more and more confidence that you belong to him in life and in death. As to love, more and more yield yourselves to the service of God; love him with your whole being and reveal that love among your fellow saints. As to hope, turn from the perishing things of the world of sin and darkness. Hope to the end for the grace of God to be revealed in you. Let your life be a reaching out for the glory of the final salvation. Then you are strangers in the earth, children of the light in the midst of darkness, looking for the Savior to appear.

How do you put these on? It is by the means of grace. By the preaching of the Word you hear the voice of Christ and he by his Spirit increases your faith, love, and hope. Through the mighty *power* of the Word preached your faith grows stronger, your love for God and for your fellow saints deepens, and your hope is encouraged. And this, young people, includes catechism, which also is the official preaching of the Word. Do not neglect your study of it in any way. It is only in this way, the way of putting

on faith, love, and hope that you, sober and watching, are prepared for the coming of the Day of the Lord.

The ground for all of this is that God hath not appointed you to wrath, but to obtain salvation. This means that God has predestined you to obtain salvation by your Lord Jesus Christ. That is the heart of the gospel. What a comfort for God's sober, watching, armed saints in this night. Time marches on, but sin's power has been destroyed. There is no more death for you and nothing can separate you from the love of God which is in Christ Jesus our Lord. Whether you are awake or asleep, that is, alive or dead, you are together with Christ. This is the gospel. Do not be afraid. Do not be anxious and despairing as you walk in the darkness of the night. Rather, be sober. Watch for the Day of the coming of the Lord. That will be glory for you. There will be no more sin, no sorrow, no crying, no pain. That cannot fail for God has appointed you to obtain salvation by the Lord Jesus Christ who died for you. In that faith, out of that love, and with that hope go on being sober, watching, and praying, "Come Lord Jesus." ❖

Rev. Miersma is an emeritus minister of the Protestant Reformed Churches.

Beacon Lights is available read on CD for the visually impaired as well as on tape. Those interested can contact Brad VanderVeen by calling (616) 291-0465.

Fearfully and Wonderfully Made

Diabetes (2)

by Angie DeVries

In the last issue, we learned about the disease and its impact on life. In this issue, we continue with the symptoms and conclude by looking at this disease in the light of Scripture.

Another bad episode was a few years ago. I was in a mad rush to get the kids out the door to meet my parents at a restaurant. I was late and frantically struggling to get the kids to understand that we NEEDED TO GET IN THE VAN! When all of the sudden I found myself sitting in my recliner in my living room talking on the phone. The person I called was a very good friend who's daughter is a diabetic and she clearly could tell that something was wrong. She tried to get me to hang up the phone so that her line was free to call my brother but I was so out of it I sat there with the phone in my hand just looking at it and wondering "how do I hang it up?" My brother showed up but the house was locked and he had no way of getting in. He saw me through the living room window and tried to get me to open the door. I looked at him in a delirious state and was like "how do you open a door?" Again I was thankful beyond words that I had picked up the phone and just so happened to call that specific friend.

High blood sugars happen when there is too much sugar in the body and not enough insulin to transport it to the cells in the body. Signs for me of a high blood sugar feel like a bad stomach flu. Most of the time it's taken

care of with a shot or two of insulin (and also continuous monitoring of the blood sugars). But there are times when insulin just doesn't cut it. You start to get dehydrated and your veins close up—and what's needed is a trip to the ER for IV fluids and more insulin.

I ended up in the ER more times than I care to count due to Diabetic Keto Acidosis (or high blood sugars). Quite a few times it almost happened that I never left the hospital alive.

Throughout Junior High and High School I rebelled against my disease. I would refuse to test my blood. I didn't take my shots and this would all lead to high blood sugars. I even suffered from a form of what's called Diabetic Anorexia. I had a terrible self image problem and was not happy with the way I looked. I realized that if I took shots that meant I had to eat, otherwise I would suffer a low blood sugar. I found out that if I skipped my shots, either my sugars would go up high and I would get sick—throwing up—or I wouldn't have to eat at all. I failed to see that what this was doing to me wasn't helping and causing me great harm. Instead of seeing myself as committing a slow suicide, all I saw was me getting thin.

Complications from this disease are blindness, nerve damage, kidney damage and heart damage—but eventually death if the Diabetes is not controlled or treated properly. I've developed a few of these complications—my eye sight isn't as good as it once was and I've had to endure many eye surgeries to correct bleeding blood vessels in my eyes. I've also had nerve damage to my feet and in my hands—can't feel when my feet are in hot water or ice cold water. Diabetes is a constant. You don't just take your insulin and forget about it for the rest of the day. You go to sleep with it being on your mind and you wake up with it being on your mind. You never get a vacation or even a small break from it—no matter how many times you wish for one.

Someone once asked if I was ever teased about my disease. I was never teased about having Diabetes. I think for me the biggest problem was not knowing anyone else that had it. I felt alone and abnormal in a way. I was different—and who likes to be different? Diabetes made me different and from that very day that I turned 6 I developed a hatred towards it for stealing away my "normal" life. I never really looked at it as God giving it to me for my good. If you were to have asked me then if I was "fearfully and wonderfully made" my honest answer to you would be no. How could this all be so wonderful? Where was the good in it all?

It took a lot of second chances for me to finally realize just how important it was that I come to grips and accept my disease. It wasn't going anywhere and no matter how hard I tried to rid myself of it or not think of it—it was always gong to be there. There is no cure for it—yet. My outlook is a positive one. I believe that the day is going to come when I'm free from this and able to live life like each and every one of you.

Looking back and seeing all that I went through: the depression, the rebellion, the denial and even the eating issues I had, I know now that as hard as that road was to travel on—it has led me to where I am at today. Would I have done anything differently? Sure. I wish I wouldn't have put my body and my family and loved ones through the torture I did. But that's the thing, we can't turn back time—what's done is done. We grow from the mistakes we make. God has a purpose in the journey I had to travel on. It's caused me to see that my disease isn't so much a burden (although there are some days when it sure seems to be), but it's an opportunity for me to share with others my struggles and possibly help others that suffer from it or the issues associated with it.

Had I not had Diabetes, would I be as sympathetic to others with a disease or disability? Would I be here today talking to you about it? Who knows? All I know is that I have it and I'm here today to share with you my experience of it. Maybe this was God's purpose in me having my disease, to realize that each of us are given trials by God, ones that were specifically chosen JUST for us. My trial just so happens to be Diabetes. I probably haven't 100% accepted it, as I said, there are days when I'd love to scream WHY? But I look at how far I've come in life and I see the intense truth that scripture states "All things work together for good to them that love God." I am constantly reminded that through trials God also bestows great joy and blessing. I am married to a wonderful man who shares with me the same belief of our heavenly Father and he loves me—diabetes and all. And God has blessed our life with 4 healthy and beautiful children.

At 6 years old I may have felt alone and strangely abnormal in some ways. But at the age of 35 I know now that I've been created just how I was supposed to be and that I've been fearfully and wonderfully made by God. ❖

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

Disabilities and the Suffering of Job

by Natalie Jefferson

I read with interest three *Beacon Light* articles (June and July 2011) on the subject of the disabled. Two articles by Karen Daling, who now suffers from multiple sclerosis, analyzed her feelings, including the four ways fellow Christians have reacted to her disability: the avoiders, the Pollyanna encouragers, the mourners, and the listeners. One article by Stephanie Buteyn gave admonition that people with Downs Syndrome need to be included socially in the body of Christ. These articles alerted me to the fact that most of us Christians need more sensitivity training regarding those with special needs.

The day after reading these articles, I was back in my study of the book of Job. I had reached chapter 12, where Job responds to the first set of speeches by his three friends. And there it was, reminiscent of the *Beacon Lights* articles: Job is a diseased, disabled person, and his "friends" are being insensitive.

Job starts out by rebuking his friends, telling them he is not inferior in intelligence or wisdom to them, even though his body is wracked with pain from head to foot. In the past, his friends had respected him, but now that he has lost everything and is diseased besides, they are mocking his words, as if they have all the answers to his problems if only he will listen to them.

In verse 5 Job tells them, "He that is ready to slip with his feet is as a lamp despised in the thought of him that is at ease." I think Job sees his influence as greatly reduced because of what has happened to him, almost like a lamp that gives off very little "light" at present. And what do his three friends who are healthy and prosperous do? In their "ease," they despise him now that he has told them how much his body hurts and how it is so bad that he wishes he had never been born.

Job goes on to say that "the tabernacles of robbers prosper, and they that provoke God are secure; into whose hand God bringeth abundantly." This should remind us of Psalm 73, where Asaph tells us, "As for me, my feet were almost gone; my steps had well nigh slipped. For I was envious at the foolish, when I saw the prosperity of the wicked. For there are no bands in their death: but their strength is firm. They are not in trouble as other men; neither are they plagued like other men. Therefore pride compasseth them about as a chain" (vv. 2-6). Job brilliantly puts his finger on the attitudes his three friends are exhibiting.

Then Job says that even the brute creation knows that the hand of the Lord has wrought everything: "Behold, he breaketh down, and it cannot be built again: he shutteth up a man, and there can be no opening" (v. 14). Does not this suggest that any infirmity we suffer somehow serves God's purposes and we need to trust it is for our ultimate good?

I really paid attention to verse 20: "He [God] removeth the speech of the trusty, and taketh away the understanding the aged." I had never really considered old age as a disability, but of course it is. The "trusty," according to *Strong's Concordance*, is someone who has supported the lives of others and been faithful and trustworthy in his duties, such as parents are to their children. But what happens when parents reach their older years? Their strength and energy is failing. They can't lift heavy things anymore. Maybe their eyes have developed macular degeneration and they can no longer even read their Bibles. They may not be able to go places except in a wheelchair. Their deteriorating minds may not be able to figure things out as formerly, and someone else may need to take over their checkbooks, tax returns, and health insurance applications. They need help, and I observe, at least in Protestant Reformed circles, that church office-bearers and the children and grandchildren of aged parents are very good about taking care of their elderly. The caretakers themselves could probably use some help from others.

Chapter 12 of Job speaks not only of disabilities, but also so strongly about God's sovereignty that it could be used in proof texts. Read it for yourself, and see if this isn't true. Thank you, *Beacon Lights*, for opening up this chapter in Job for me in a new way. ❖

Natalie is a member of Southwest Protestant Rreformed Church in Grand Rapids, Michigan.

The Shining Beacon Fails to Illuminate a Hidden Shoal

Back in the May issue of *Beacon Lights*, a writer stated, "I do know a fantastic Christian psychologist (as well as many other fellow Christians) who has heard Meyer speak many times and has also read a few of her books. They have all found her teachings to be quite helpful and firmly based on the Word of God." Left with that, the readers of *Beacon Lights* could understandably conclude that we promote her books and messages as being in harmony with the Reformed faith. But she is not Reformed, and much of her teaching is based upon false doctrine. As the editor, I should have either given some warning that Joyce Meyer has some very serious false teachings or left such statements of endorsement out of *Beacon Lights*. While it may be true that the writing and speaking of someone associated with a heretical movement are found to be useful in our practical life, I want to warn our readers of the false teachings of Joyce Meyer's ministry and apologize for including the above statement in *Beacon Lights* without due warning.

Without digging into her books or radio addresses, it is clear from the "Statement of Faith" at http://www.joycemeyer.org/AboutUs/WhatWeBelieve.aspx that the doctrinal basis Joyce Meyer rests upon has been found by the church to be heretical. It is easy to see the arminian and conditional theology in the following statement based on Ephesians 2:8, 9; Romans 5:1; Romans 3:24:

> We can have a personal relationship with God through salvation, God's free gift to man. It is not a result of what we do, but it is only available through God's unearned favor. By admitting we have sinned and believing in the death, burial and resurrection of Christ, and accepting Him as Lord, we can spend eternity with God.

While we know that God providentially upholds all things, and governs sickness as well as health, Joyce Meyer believes that the time of miraculous healing when Jesus and the apostles walked upon the earth continues today. Her statement of faith based on Luke 9:11; Matthew 9:35; Acts 10:38 & Matthew 10:1 says the following:

> Divine healing is active in the lives of people today through Jesus, who is the Healer. Healing includes physical, mental, emotional and spiritual restoration.

The following statement based on Hebrews 9:27, Revelation 20:12-15, and John 3:16-18 denies the sovereignty of God in salvation:

> The Bible describes hell as a real place. It is a place of suffering and a place of permanent separation from God for those who die without accepting Christ. God's desire is that no one be separated from Him for eternity, which is why he sent his Son, Jesus Christ, to earth.

These are not the only points of error that serve as a foundation for the ministry of Joyce Meyer. It is not my intention to give a detailed analysis of the doctrinal foundation or the wayward movement that naturally is built upon such a foundation, though such an analysis would be profitable. One needs to be very discerning if he desires to glean with profit from the work and instruction built upon that foundation. Often a statement of faith can look biblical until it is closely examined. We do well to examine how much diligence was given to discovering the false doctrine in the statements of the Remonstrance and the establishing of a biblical creed in the Canons of Dordt. God gives us a warning through Paul in the following words: "According to the grace of God which is given unto me, as a wise masterbuilder, I have laid the foundation, and another buildeth thereon. But let every man take heed how he buildeth thereupon. For other foundation can no man lay than that is laid, which is Jesus Christ. Now if any man build upon this foundation gold, silver, precious stones, wood, hay, stubble; Every man's work shall be made manifest: for the day shall declare it, because it shall be revealed by fire; and the fire shall try every man's work of what sort it is. If any man's work abide which he hath built thereupon, he shall receive a reward. If any man's work shall be burned, he shall suffer loss: but he himself shall be saved; yet so as by fire" (1 Cor 3:10-15). ❖

The Editor

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:

Rebekah Faith, daughter of Mr. & Mrs. Gareth Halliday—Ballymena, N Ireland

Josiah Jae-hun, son of Mr. & Mrs. Brent VanderKolk—Byron Center, MI

Grady John, son of Mr. & Mrs. Jeremy Driesen—Calvary, IA

Miranda del Sol, daughter of Mr. and Mrs. Barry Boer—Crete, IL

Landon James, son of Mr. and Mrs. Joshua Dotson—Crete, IL

Maddox Ty, son of Mr. and Mrs. Tyler De Jong—Crete, IL

Emma Nicole, daughter of Mr. & Mrs. Todd Mark VanBaren—Crete, IL

Emily Grace, daughter of Mr. & Mrs. Brent Boon—Doon, IA

Makayla Ann, daughter of Mr. & Mrs. Tyler Doezema—Faith, MI

Ian David, son of Mr. & Mrs. Shawn Kamminga—Faith, MI

Tyler Nathan, son of Mr. & Mrs. Philip Kleyn—First, MI

Isabelle Grace, daughter of Mr. & Mrs. Ryan Roth—First, MI

Triston Edward, son of Mr. & Mrs. Kevin Koole—Grace, MI

Hannah Elise, daughter of Mr. & Mrs. Brad VanderVeen—Grace, MI

Madison Joy, daughter of Mr. & Mrs. Todd Kooienga—Grandville, MI

Drew Austin, son of Mr. & Mrs. Andrew Karsemeyer—Grandville, MI

Cole Davis, son of Mr. & Mrs. Dan Drnek—Holland, MI

Justin Thomas, son of Mr. & Mrs. Jason Holstege—Hudsonville, MI

Avery Jean, daughter of Mr. & Mrs. Greg Holstege—Hudsonville, MI

Noah Christopher, son of Mr. & Mrs. Caleb Kamps—Hudsonville, MI

Eloise Lorraine, daughter of Mr. & Mrs. Jon Mingerink—Hudsonville, MI

Carson Daniel, son of Mr. & Mrs. Dan Gritters—Hudsonville, MI

Jaxon James, son of Mr. & Mrs. Justin Regnerus—Hull, IA

Connor Jacob, son of Mr. & Mrs. Joel Zylstra—Immanuel, Lacombe, CAN

Wyatt James, son of Mr. & Mrs. Nathan Holstege—Loveland, CO

Matthew Reece, son of Mr. & Mrs. Raphael Neff—Lynden, WA

Cara Elizabeth, daughter of Mr. & Mrs. Alex Kalsbeek—Peace, IL

Simon James, son of Mr. & Mrs. Michael DeJong—Peace, IL

Abigail Joy, daughter of Mr. & Mrs. Kenton Kalsbeek—Peace, IL

Elena, daughter of Mrs. Susie Daesis—Philippines

Joshua, son of Mr. & Mrs. Jason Koll—Providence, MI

Levi Daniel, son of Mr. & Mrs. Wayne Bleyenberg—Providence, MI

Sophia Jean, daughter of Mr. & Mrs. Keith Wynia—Sioux Falls, SD

Addisyn Ann, daughter of Mr. & Mrs. Kenneth VanDenTop—Sioux Falls, SD

Wyatt James, son of Mr. & Mrs. Tony VanDonselaar—Southwest, 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:

Ron Kruger—Calvary, IA

Martin Scott—Byron Center, MI

Jennifer Warnjes and Meagan VanEngen—Calvary, IA

Zachary Kooiker—Crete, IL

Craig Ferguson—Edmonton, CAN

Jessica VanBaren and Amy VandenTop—Grace, MI

Patrick Streyle, Kyle Tanis, Deanna Klamer and Jordanna Oosterhouse—Hope, MI

Sarah Schwarz—Loveland, CO

Brian Buiter—Redlands, CA

Jessica Brecker—Southeast, 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. Kalen VanMaanen and Miss Amber Soodsma—Calvary, IA

Mr. Jordan Heimstra and Miss Jessica Kamps—Crete, IL

Mr. Jonathan Miersma and Miss Elsie Nieuwenkamp—Edomonton, CAN

Mr. Benjamin Noordermeer and Miss Kelly Mol—Faith, MI

Mr. Casey Baas and Miss Sara VanderSchaaf—Faith, MI

Mr. Kyle Corson and Miss Lyndsey Popma—First, MI

Mr. Chad Warner and Miss Kelly Meulenberg—Grandville, MI

Mr. Nate Bodbyl and Miss Lauren Kraker—Grandville, MI

Mr. Brian Feenstra and Miss Tabitha Meyer—Hope, MI

Mr. Phil Cnossen and Miss Holly Dykstra—Hudsonville, MI

Mr. Joel Nieuwenkamp and Miss Leah Wierenga—Immanuel, Lacombe, CAN

Mr. Troy Vanden Bosch and Miss Mandy Hanko—Lynden, WA

Mr. Joseph Dykshorn and Miss Erika Slendebroek—Peace, IL

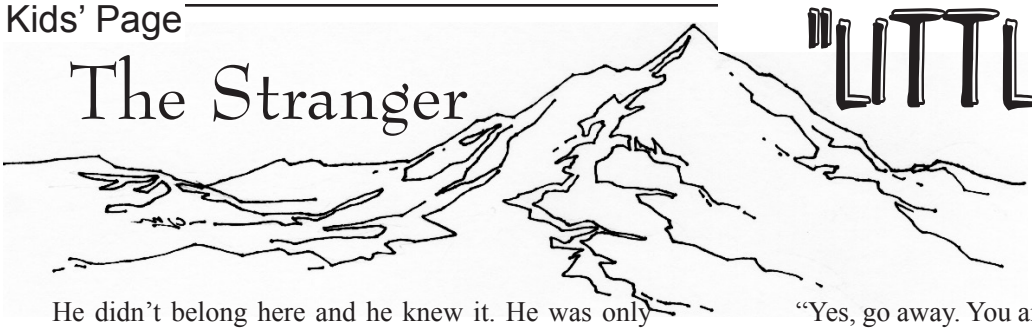
Mr. Joseph Holstege and Miss Lisa Gritters—Southeast, MI

Mr. Ron Schipper and Miss Gracia Kamps—Southwest, MI

Mr. John Fennell and Miss Julie Hernley—Southwest, MI/Pittsburgh, PA

Mr. Joel VanderKolk and Miss Tara Griess—Trinity, MI

The Stranger



"LITTLE LIGHTS" ... let it shine!

by Connie Meyer

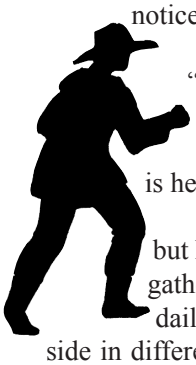
He didn't belong here and he knew it. He was only passing through.

He pulled his coat around himself and kept marching. The sun rose above a lone mountain in the distance, making an early frost glisten in the yellow rays of light. The man's breath left little puffs of moisture in the air while his boots made quick and even clicks on the road.

"Who is that?" One woman looked out her window as he passed by.

"I've never seen him before," said her husband. "He's not from around here."

The man walked up one street and down another. Others noticed him, too.



"Who is he? What an odd coat he wears."

"Yes, and a funny hat. Where did he come from?"

"Even the way he walks is different. Where is he going?"

The man knew people were watching him, but he kept walking. By now a small crowd had gathered on the edge of town, ready to start their daily tasks. Several trails led out to the countryside in different directions, and the stranger was headed toward one of them. The people asked one another who the man was.

Finally a young boy stopped the strange man as he neared. "Please, sir, tell us who you are and where you are going?"

The man stood still and looked at the boy. The crowd grew silent in order to listen to his answer.

"I am a citizen of another country, young man, the country called Heaven over there on the mountain. And that is where I am going. There is a grand and glorious city there. Did you want to come along?"

The crowd gasped. The boy shook his head. "N-no, sir, I like it here," he said.

"No, indeed!" another man shouted. "We're quite happy living in this town."

A woman sniffed and added, "I wouldn't mind going there, but the way is much too difficult." She pointed to the trail the man had already stepped onto. "I would never take that terrible road anywhere!"

The stranger smiled. "But this way leads to home."

"For you," another man muttered in disgust. "Go away from us."

"Yes, go away. You are a Heavenite. You don't belong here!" Someone threw a clod of dirt at the stranger.

The man turned around and continued down the trail. Before he had traveled out of their reach, he heard the thud of another mud ball hitting the ground beside him. He kept walking. Their sneers and mockery soon became distant sounds in his ears. He fixed his eyes on the mountain where he knew his own country lay. He also knew other dangers could lurk along the path, and there would be steep and rocky hills to climb as well. The woman in the town was right—this was a very difficult road.

None of this stopped the stranger, though. Heaven's blood coursed through his veins. He was a born citizen of that land on the mountain and he had the papers to prove it. He knew it was a wonderful place, a place where he would never be a stranger again. And that's all that mattered. He was going home to heaven…home where he belonged.

"Let us go forth therefore unto him without [outside] the camp, bearing his reproach. For here have we no continuing city, but we seek one to come" (Hebrews 13:13, 14).

"These all died in faith, not having received the promises, but having seen them afar off, and were persuaded of them, and embraced them, and confessed that they were strangers and pilgrims on the earth. For they that say such things declare plainly that they seek a country. And truly, if they had been mindful of that country from whence they came out, they might have had opportunity to have returned. But now they desire a better country, that is, an heavenly: wherefore God is not ashamed to be called their God: for he hath prepared for them a city" (Hebrews 11: 13-16).

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

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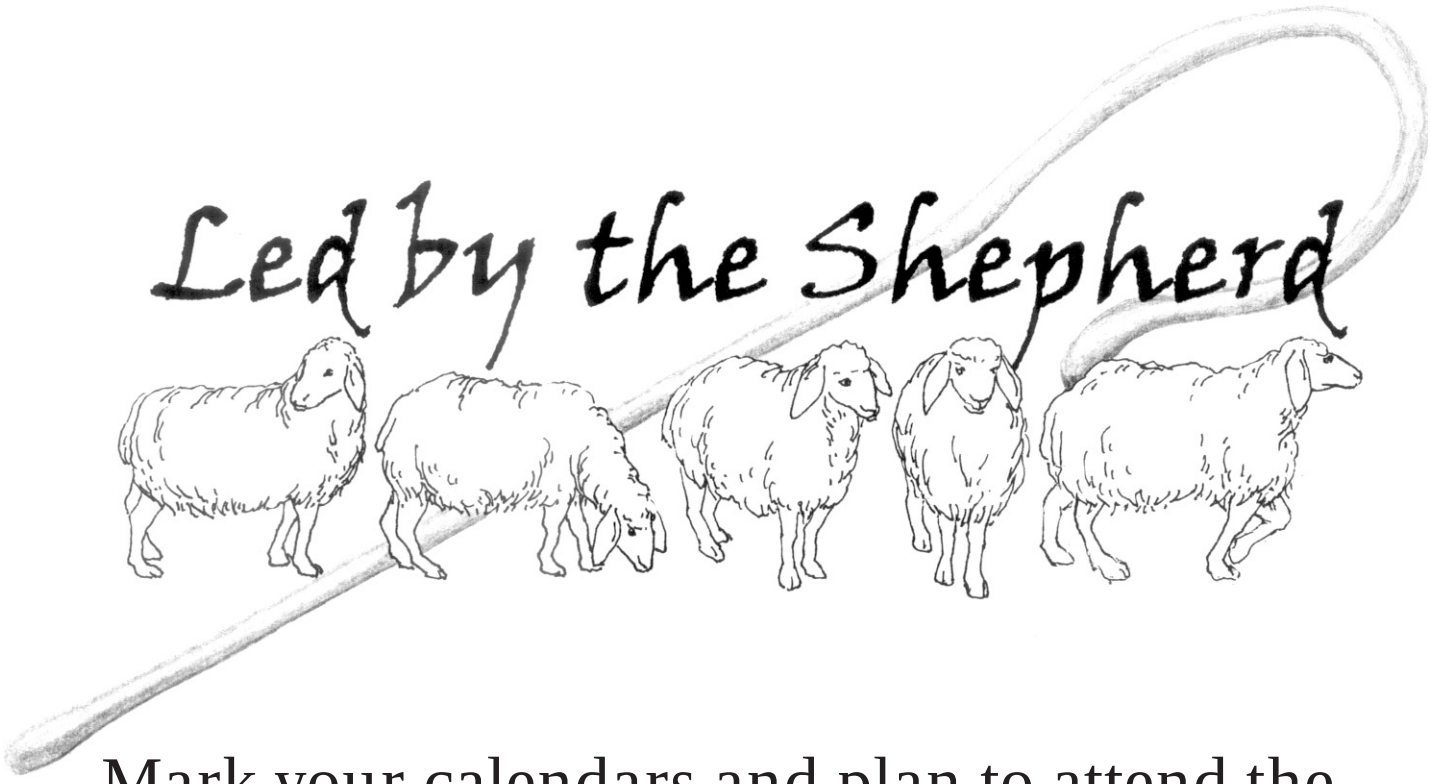

Mark your calendars and plan to attend the 2012 PRYP Convention!

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August 13-17, 2012

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