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The Antithesis: Its Meaning

When was the last time you heard the word *antithesis*? How often do you hear it? If someone were to challenge you to write a brief definition of it, could you do it? Do you know its basic concepts?

These questions are directed toward all readers of *Beacon Lights*, but especially toward our young people, since this is a youth magazine. Besides, you young people often face the antithesis in ways that older folks do not, and that makes this subject even more important for you.

When I was a teenager in the 1960s, we heard the word frequently in the preaching. The word or its equivalent, *world and life view*, was part of our education, was stressed in catechism, and was an integral part of our thinking and conversation. It was a kind of "code word" that when used, instantly conjured up an entire concept in our minds. When someone used the word, everyone immediately understood the meaning. Perhaps this was because in those days we were much closer historically to the origin of our churches, which was directly related to a controversy concerning the antithesis, and more indirectly to the conditions controversy that came to a head in 1953. Perhaps there were other reasons as well.

In my experience, today the word is not heard nearly as frequently in any of the venues mentioned above. It is not my intention to attack anyone or to cause trouble by pointing the finger of blame at anyone; this would be unprofitable and unnecessary. Yet I do not apologize for being mildly critical

EDITOR
Mark Hoeksema
Email: editor@beaconlights.org

CONTENTS COMMITTEE
Ryan Kregel (Associate Editor)
Email: ryankregel@gmail.com
Joe Holstege (Contributing Editor Correspondent)
Email: joeholstege@gmail.com
Matt Kortus (Contributing Editor Correspondent)
Email: mgkortus@umich.edu
Laura Kaptein (Business Manager)
Alex Thompson (Promotions)
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BUSINESS OFFICE
Beacon Lights
Laura Kaptein
3074 Hudson Street
Hudsonville, MI 49426
Phone: (616) 292-8029
Email: subscriptions@beaconlights.org

SUBSCRIPTIONS AND BOOK SALES
Laura Kaptein
3074 Hudson Street
Hudsonville, MI 49426
Phone: (616) 292-8029
Email: subscriptions@beaconlights.org

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regarding the diminishing use of the word and its meaning. I don't really know why the situation has changed, but I think that it has. And I am sure that this lack of use is not a compliment to any of us. It is not beneficial to allow such a definitive and descriptive idea to fall into disuse.

This is true from two viewpoints. The first is that the antithesis is one of the cardinal doctrines of Scripture. It appears on virtually every page of the Bible. It has great practical application to our lives. In fact, it governs every aspect of our lives as Christians. For these reasons alone it behooves us to know and understand this truth. The second is that the antithesis is almost universally overlooked, compromised, or denied on an unprecedented scale. We as Protestant Reformed churches are among the few who still hold to this teaching. And since you, the youth of the church, are the next mature generation of the covenant, it falls to you to understand, maintain, and teach this truth to those who follow you.

To aid you in fulfilling this important responsibility, it is my intention to write a series of editorials on the antithesis. I will base my articles on some of the clearest expressions of Scripture regarding this subject, answering questions such as, What is the antithesis? Between whom is the antithesis? Where does it come from? Where will you find it? I will attempt to do this with specific application to you. What I write will surely not be the last word on the subject, but it should provide a basic understanding of this concept. As we move along, your comments and questions are welcome.

Foundational is an understanding of the meaning of the antithesis, and first must be a working definition. **The antithesis is the sharp and absolute spiritual distinction between sin and grace, light and darkness, truth and lie, elect and reprobate, God and Satan, Christ and antichrist, believers and unbelievers**.

The term *antithesis* is not a biblical term; nowhere will you find the word in Scripture. Rather, it is a theological term, a word used to describe concisely a biblical truth. It is like the word *providence*, which also does not appear in Scripture, but wonderfully describes the truth that God sovereignly upholds and governs all things for the salvation of his people and the glory of his name. The antithesis was a word used by our Reformed fathers to define an idea, and the concept was already well-developed by the time of the synod of Dordrecht in 1618–19.

The term has two parts. Positively, it is composed of the word *thesis*, which means something that stands or that is placed or set forth; it has the idea of taking a position. In this context, the thesis is God, his truth, his grace, his Christ, his kingdom, and his people. The other part of the word is the preposition *anti*, borrowed from the Greek, which in turn has a double meaning. Primarily it means "against," but with the connotation of "instead of." An *anti-thesis* is something that opposes the thesis by seeking to destroy it and take its place. This negation of the thesis is Satan, his lie, his sin, his antichrist, his kingdom, and his people. The antithesis says "no" to God's "yes."

It almost goes without saying that the thesis and the antithesis are oppositionally related. They cannot and do not coexist peacefully. They do not exist side by side, so that they do not touch or affect each other. Rather, there is constant and unrelenting warfare between them. Yet the two are not dualistically related as equal but opposing forces. We must not think of their relation as if the outcome of the battle is in doubt.

Instead, the antithesis is subserviently related to the thesis. The antithesis, regardless of its motives and intentions, must despite itself serve the thesis. Sin must serve grace; antichrist must serve Christ; the lie must serve the truth; reprobation must serve election; unbelief must serve faith; and unbelievers must serve believers. Whether or not this relationship is always apparent is not the point. It is a fact that can easily be proven from Scripture.

The question may perhaps arise, Why do we not speak positively of the thesis rather than negatively of the antithesis? The answer is that the antithesis is a negative term with positive implications. When we speak of the antithesis, we mean exactly that we stand for the thesis and against the antithesis. This truth is called by its negative name for two reasons. First, because we live in the sin-cursed and wicked world, the antithesis is our predominant experience. On every side and in all aspects of life, to say nothing of our own sinful natures, we face sin and evil relentlessly and incessantly. Thus we think and speak in terms of black, not of white. Second, we speak of the antithesis because we are always inclined to say "no" to the thesis and "yes" to the antithesis due to our sinful natures. A comparison with the form of the Ten Commandments will clarify the point. Why are all but one of the commandments negatively

expressed as "Thou shalt not…"? Exactly because it is our inclination to break them by doing precisely what we are forbidden to do.

The scope of the antithesis is twofold, encompassing the whole of our lives as Christians.

First, the antithesis concerns matters of doctrine, which govern matters of practical life. Doctrine (literally, "teaching"), is first and essential. It matters not what the subject of the teaching is; principles are always basic and fundamental. The Christian life flows from teachings. If our doctrine is biblically correct, our lives will reflect the antithesis; if we maintain the distinctives of the Reformed faith, our lives will be consistent with our faith. Conversely, if we ignore, compromise, or deny any aspect of the teachings, this will be evident in our lives.

Second, the antithesis concerns how we live in the world. It concerns how we show that we are children of the thesis and how we reject the antithesis. The principle of the antithesis governs who our friends are; it determines whom we marry (and do not divorce); it dictates our choice of employment; it tells us how we are to raise our covenant children; it rules our relationship with the brother and the neighbor; and it controls our attitude toward the world's sports, entertainment, TV, online material, and much more (2 Cor. 6:14–18).

Considered against this background, the heart of the antithesis is that above all else, it is a spiritual principle. This can be seen from James 4:4, one of the clearest expressions of the antithesis: "Ye adulteresses [*adulterers* does not appear in the original], know ye not that the friendship of the world is enmity with God? whosoever therefore will be a friend of the world is the enemy of God." This is blunt language, and the meaning is not difficult to understand. The world refers to the wicked, the evil who inhabit the earth as they are children of the devil; as well this includes all that characterizes the world—its sinful attitudes and actions, expressed in 1 John 2:16 as the lust of the eyes, the lust of the flesh, and the pride of life. **Friendship** means communion, having something in common, being united with the world in heart, in thoughts, in will, in desires, in actions, in goals and purposes. Friendship is a covenantal idea; here it means to be in a relation of friendship with Satan and all that he represents—to enter into covenant with all that is evil. **Enmity** is the opposite of friendship. It means that you have nothing in common, no unity of any kind, no covenantal relation of friendship, but only hatred, which is the desire to destroy someone.

When we put these ideas together, there can be no mistaking the meaning of James. Not once but twice he says that the friendship of the world **is** enmity with God. He draws a sharp and absolute line. There are only two alternatives: black and white, with no gray area. The one equals the other. The friendship of the world—the antithesis—is enmity with God—the thesis. By implication, the opposite is also true: Friendship with God is enmity with the world.

Notice that the antithesis is not first a matter of actions or deeds. The antithesis does not mean that like the monks of the Middle Ages (and even still today) we go hide in a monastery to get away from the sinful world. It does not mean that like the Anabaptists—the Mennonites, Amish, and Hutterites—we retreat into isolated colonies and shun the world. And the antithesis is certainly not legalism—a list of dos and don'ts that if obeyed will merit salvation. Surely the antithesis comes to manifestation in deeds and actions, but that is not its primary idea.

James does not speak in terms of doing anything, but in terms of **being** something. The antithesis asks, "Who are you? What are you? What is the basic and fundamental principle of your life? Are you a friend of God and the enemy of the world? Or are you friends with the world, so that God is your enemy? Who are you as to your heart, your will, your mind, your attitude? From what spiritual viewpoint do you see and judge all things?"

This spiritual character of the antithesis places added emphasis on its importance. It is not just a matter of occasionally doing something right, or even doing what is right somewhat consistently. It is instead a matter of our essential character. It is from this spiritual viewpoint that James calls his readers adulteresses and then asks his question, "Don't you know…?" His calling them adulteresses (in the spiritual sense) indicates that there was a problem either with their knowledge of the antithesis or with their living of it. This is the reason that he wonders if they know that they cannot be friends with the world and with God at the same time.

What the apostle says fits us also. We live in a world that is more developed in wickedness than that of his time; it is characterized even more by the coveting, lust, and envy of which he speaks in the context. The world with all that it represents is not some sort of theoretical abstraction that has little or no effect

on us. It is all around us, touching every aspect of our daily lives. It is even present in the church, as is clear from the fact that James here addresses God's people. And it is within us, for although we confess that we are redeemed Christians, because of our sinful natures we also are inclined to spiritual adultery. We are reluctant to teach and to live the spiritual principle of the absolute distinction between light and darkness. James makes this a universal truth when he says, "Whosoever wants to be a friend of the world is the enemy of God."

This confronts us with a very serious question: What do we want? Do we want to be friends with the world? It is so tempting to be exactly that, is it not? To live in covenant with the world would make our lives easy, because we like to conform; no one wants to be different from the majority by insisting on believing in and living from the governing principle of the antithesis. But if we are friends with the world, then we are the enemies of God. This is the only alternative; there is no neutral possibility. Can you think of anything more awful than to be the enemy of the living God, the object of his implacable anger and wrath both in this life and in the life to come?

The question is, What then will you be spiritually, in doctrine and in life? Will you stand for the thesis with all that you are and in all that you do? The answer must be affirmative, because otherwise we are not the covenant friends of God. And by grace the answer is affirmative. Never in our own strength can we answer rightly or stand in covenant with the Lord, and if we try, we only fail and fall.

Stand, therefore, by the power of grace through faith, as children of the antithesis.

Choosing a Vocation — Dr. Julian Kennedy

Medicine as a Vocation

The field of medicine, one of the so-called "caring professions," covers a vast number of specialties and generalities, e.g., general practice (GP or family doctor), emergency medicine (EM), surgery, cardiology, pediatrics, obstetrics and gynecology, etc. The provision is usually government provided, paid for by taxes (UK) or may be privately owned and paid for by health insurance (USA).

In GP/EM you care for the patients who present by appointment or as an emergency to your surgery or emergency department. This is the "front line" of medicine. From there referrals are made to specialties in hospital if the problem cannot be dealt with by yourself.

In hospital medicine you are referred patients whom you see as an outpatient or care for on a ward. Generally treatments will be medical (drugs) or surgical.

In every specialty you will work with other professions—nurses, radiographers, physiotherapists, pharmacists and secretaries, to name but a few. Good organization is vital.

There are many positives about being a health care professional, be it doctor or nurse, but I will concentrate on medicine and my own experiences. There is job satisfaction in caring for people and treating them to their satisfaction, always discussing options with them. Many words of appreciation and shaking of hands or thank you letters are encouraging. It is a profession requiring long preparation and study—for me, six years at medical school. The pay is good and hours are much fewer than they used to be (usually 40–48 per week). There is intellectual stimulation: you must continue to study and attend conferences and courses to keep up to date with research and best practice. There is teamwork. For example when an ill or injured patient comes into the resuscitation room, you will be accompanied by another doctor (perhaps a senior), at least one nurse, and perhaps a healthcare assistant (auxiliary). Then the radiographer will do x-rays and a porter will transport the patient to the ward or theatre.

There are negatives, which can be very frustrating and test your grace and patience. First, you will

encounter many who are not even sick and are wasting time. Jesus said "They that be whole need not a physician, but they that are sick." Second, we live in a careless society; we have infertile couples seeking to have a child and next door an unmarried women seeking an abortion. Many couples you encounter are living in sin, but it is not your place to tell them. There are many obnoxious people to whom you can do nothing acceptable, myriads of men and women are on paths of self destruction through smoking, drugs, and alcohol addiction and you have very little to offer them except compassion and pity. "Verily, verily I say unto you, whosoever committeth sin is the servant of sin" (John 8:34). As in any job, you may have a bad boss who humiliates or abuses you. I had one in my job, though I hasten to add my knowledge base was probably deficient. "Be subject to your masters with all fear; not only to the good and gentle, but also to the forward" (1 Peter 2:18).

How was I led into medicine? Although I was a clever student—head boy and sports champion—I was very naive and knew little about the world of work and especially medicine. The requirements were high academic certificates. Nowadays interviews and aptitude tests may be required, but I would say that mature students (who have worked in other fields) have an advantage, and people who genuinely want to serve others are best. As a nominal teenage Christian I remember tearfully praying to the Lord Jesus to guide me as I filled in my university application form and applied for Medicine at Edinburgh in Scotland. One major reason for choosing was that it was one of the most taxing courses and would use my abilities to the full.

How does medicine fulfill God's mandate to subdue the earth and care for it? You are aware that disease and death resulted from the fall, and so many jobs today are trying to pick up the pieces or ameliorate the effects of the fall upon men's bodies. We are our brother's keeper, and we are to love our neighbor. But because of sin and society we have to be paid to care!

Many great advances in medicine and healthcare have been simple measures of hygiene (epidemiology), but vaccination, antibiotics, surgery, and a host of other discoveries have meant that many diseases can be cured and life prolonged.

An esteemed professor taught us that we were able to "cure seldom, alleviate often, and care always."

As a believer in medicine, your good works should glorify God. The standard of your care should make people wonder: they will notice you are different! Occasionally you will get an opportunity to witness, but generally relationships with colleagues will lead to bridges being built for the gospel. You may be asked why you are always joyful. The antithesis will be obvious every day as you see slipshod work, laziness, foul language, etc., all around you.

You may enter the field of healthcare in world crisis situations such as Médecins Sans Frontières; you may enter the military and be involved in casualties of war. The field of prevention is underfunded and underrated worldwide. The dangers of smoking were only publicized in the 1960s.

What are the benefits in the service of the kingdom? You may be an encouragement to believing patients; you may casually advise people in your fellowship; you are a witness to unbelievers among your patients and colleagues. Your leadership, teamworking, and intellectual ability will be transferable into service in the church so long as you maintain your walk with God, pray without ceasing, and grow in grace under the preaching and from personal study.

My advice to potential doctors is to do well at the basic sciences and some humanities at school. Do some first aid courses, get some work experience with a doctor in the community and in hospital. Speak to doctors, paramedics and nurses. Pray (Psalm 32:8) and get advice from parents, teachers and pastor/elders. "In the multitude of counselors there is safety" (Prov. 11:14). With all that input and a realistic knowledge of yourself (Rom. 12:3) you should be able to discern if this is your calling (1 Cor. 7:20). By the way—and I struggled with this—a "secular" calling such as medicine is as holy and important as full-time Christian ministry. Luke, who wrote his gospel and the book of Acts was the beloved physician and companion of Paul on at least one of his missionary journeys. And what a legacy he left in his writings!

Dr. Kennedy works in emergency medicine and is a member of Covenant Protestant Reformed Church in Northern Ireland.

Jordan Newhoff

Eugenics

When you hear the word "eugenics," what comes to mind? Some of you might not have a clue, or some of you may have heard the word used in connection with what the Nazis did during the reign of Hitler. I only had a vague idea about what eugenics was before I took an interim class this past January on this subject. It seemed like a very interesting thing to study, so I signed up for it, but I never would have imagined what I was going to learn.

A quick definition of eugenics is: a pseudo-science created in order to rid the gene pool of "undesirable" traits.[1] In other words, those who supported eugenics wanted to get rid of things such as inheritable diseases, body features (such as obesity), criminality, and pauperism (poverty) by removing these traits from the population. Eugenicists believed that almost everything about a person was determined by his DNA rather than the environment in which he was raised. For example, they believed that a person who was born into poverty would likely grow up and remain in poverty because his or her parents passed on traits for lack of intelligence. Children of criminals would also likely become criminals because of the "bad-behavior" gene they passed on.

According to Edwin Black, the author of *War Against the Weak* (the textbook for my class), eugenic thought began during the 1800s in England. It started because of the problem of the poor. They were everywhere; the economy was down the tubes because very few had money to spend. This started in the mid 1500s when King Henry VIII broke ties with the Roman Catholic Church because of its refusal to annul his marriage to Catherine of Aragon. Before this, the church had provided for the poor because most of the people belonged to the church. This meant that the poor became the government's responsibility, and as we know, the government always seems to mess up its responsibilities. When the government took over the church, a distinct pauper class emerged. The poor became a burden upon those who had money, and they became sick of it. As this feeling emerged, so did knowledge of inheritable traits because of the work of Charles Darwin and Gregor Mendel. As knowledge about genetics was becoming more well-known, people started drawing conclusions about the ties of poverty to one's genetic code. Rather than doing more research about genetics, scientists began to propose marriage laws to keep the poor from marrying each other and producing another generation of impoverished. As these eugenic ideas were circulated more and more, America caught wind of them, but the level to which they took these ideas is staggering.

Unlike England, America's classes were mainly divided by racial and ethnic differences. Severe race hatred was abundant. This made America a prime place for eugenics to take root. As American scientists began to contemplate these ideas, they came to realize that matrimonial laws would not be able to prevent "unfit" children from being born to the extent that they wanted. They decided that more drastic measures should be taken to make sure that those who they deemed unfit would not be able to have children. Their solution to this problem was to enact marriage laws, like those in England, but in addition to create huge institutions in which to store information about millions of Americans. The information that was gathered included things such as family heritage, family history of disabilities, mental illness, physical features, and financial situation. People thought nothing of it, but it was a clever way by eugenicists to identify unfit families. I wish I could tell you what "unfit" meant in the context of American eugenics, but that is not possible because there is no scientific definition for determining whether or not someone is unfit. It varied from scientist to scientist. One such institution that gathered personal information was the Eugenics Record Office in Cold Springs Harbor, New York. Here Charles Davenport and Henry Laughlin, two of the foremost eugenicists in America, worked to identify unfit families. Once a

1 Black, Edwin. *War Against the Weak*. New York: Four Walls Eight Windows, 2003.

family or person had been deemed unfit by doctors, they were sterilized, to keep them from procreating. In all 65,000 or even more were sterilized in America until 1979, when sterilizations were finally outlawed in all fifty states.[2] This mostly included blacks and "white trash," most of whom were recent immigrants who lived in poverty because they could not speak English. The shocking thing is that at some point forced sterilizations were legal in about half of our nation's states.[3] These states included Michigan, Indiana, Iowa, South Dakota, and Wisconsin.

The eugenic ideas fostered in America traveled to Germany and caught the attention of Adolf Hitler. He began to study the works of some American eugenicists. Ideas of a perfect race infected Hitler's brain and took over his thoughts and speech. His outspokenness about his ideas was one of the contributing factors that led to his imprisonment in 1924. While he was in prison, he wrote *Mein Kampf*, in which he explained his ideas about race, eugenics and politics. When he became the Fuehrer on August 2, 1934,[4] he worked quickly to establish a eugenic program in Germany. He believed that ridding the country of so called "poor bred" would enable the country to get out of its extremely bad economic situation and also would create a superior race that was free from disability and illness. Through 1937, the Nazi eugenics program sterilized 400,000 men and women who were considered mentally and physically unfit. After 1937, Hitler began another stage in his eugenics program: euthanasia. Euthanasia is the intentional ending of a life, especially of the old and very ill. Hitler allowed tens of thousands of institutionalized men and women to be killed.[5] Besides those whom he killed from his own Aryan race, he killed hundreds of thousands of Jews, gypsies, and blacks in death camps all over Europe as a part of his "ethnic cleansing." Not until the Third Reich was taken down in 1945 by the Allies did the Nazi eugenics program come to a stop.

So what should be the Christian's response to eugenics? It seems quite obvious that eugenics is wrong, but it can be difficult to understand why from a Reformed perspective.

Eugenics is wrong because of the tactics and processes that the eugenicists used to accomplish their ideas of what was desirable and good. They used sterilizations and genocide in order to rid the gene pool of undesirable traits. With regard to sterilizations, God has given humans the gift of life, which includes the gift of children. Eugenicists were taking this opportunity away from people just because they did not think those people were good enough to have children or to make "good ones." This infringes upon one's choice to have children. I am not saying that it is a right to have children, but it is a choice you can make if you have been so blessed by God.

As for genocide, that is completely wrong. It clearly violates the sixth commandment, which states that you may not kill. This applies also to those who were not directly involved with Hitler, but still followed eugenic thought. They knew that people were unjustly being killed and did nothing about it. They were at fault as well.

At the heart of the problem was that people were putting their thoughts ahead of God's plan. They thought that they knew about what was right for mankind. They had lost sight of God, and included in that, God's will. God makes each person different, with different traits and abilities (or lack thereof). He chooses each person to be a certain way. But supporters of eugenics said that that was not good enough. They wanted to change the human race to reflect their idea of attractiveness and intelligence. They were taking their ideas about what was good or right and applying that to their interactions of everyday life instead of basing what is good and right upon God and his commands.

Eugenics was a sad part of our history as well as the world's, and it might very well re-emerge as scientific knowledge continues to increase. We must therefore remember that God's plans are perfect and just, and ours are always flawed.

2 CFIF. "The Sterilization of America: A Cautionary History." *CFIF.org*. May 17, 2002. http://www.cfif.org/htdocs/freedomline/current/in_our_opinion/un_sterile_past.html.

3 "Compulsory Sterilization." *Wikipedia*. N.p., n.d. Web. Mar 11, 2012. <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Compulsory_sterilization#United_States>.

4 Hornberger, Jacob. "How Hitler Became a Dictator." *Freedom Daily*. The Future of Freedom Foundation, n.d. Web. Mar 13, 2012. <http://www.fff.org/freedom/fd0403a.asp>.

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Jordan is an engineering student at Calvin College and a member of First Protestant Reformed Church in Grand Rapids, Michigan.

A Closer Look at the Olympics

The world has its full attention turned toward London this summer. The Olympic Games are one of the few events in the modern world that can bring the people and nations of the world together for a couple of weeks every four years. As feuding nations set aside their differences and march together in the name of the "Olympic spirit," there is a strong sense of unity and cooperation promoted by the games. Over the last century, the Olympics have developed into one of the most recognizable and popular events in the world. While the competition is the focus, the origin and symbolism of the games has its own story. Understanding how the Olympic games became what they are today will hopefully better equip the child of God to recognize those things that are of the world and those that are of God.

During the games, we see symbols of the Olympics everywhere. The famous rings are on Coke cans, Big Macs, and Visa advertisements that will no doubt be "everywhere you want to be." In fact, it is unlikely that any of us, no matter where we might be located, (especially our friends in the United Kingdom), will be able to escape the deluge of media coverage of the Olympic games. Internet and TV advertisements will be saturated by promotions from sponsors. In addition, news coverage on the internet and TV is also focused on the Olympics. News reporters from around the world flock to London to provide up to the minute updates at a moment's notice.

The immense coverage of the Olympics is a response to their worldwide popularity. Over 10,000 athletes from roughly 200 nations journey to compete at the one of the world's premier athletic competitions, and the people of the world want to follow their hometown heroes closely. As the athletes compete, even people who have not watched a single sporting event throughout the year are drawn to watch the competition. There is undoubtedly something unique about the Olympics that can capture people's attention like few other events in the world.

The excitement of the competition is one aspect of the Olympics, but a closer look at the history of the Games adds some important perspective to the events that we are presently seeing in London. The modern Olympic Games were started by Pierre de Coubertin in 1896. Since then the Olympics have continued every four years with a few breaks for the two world wars, acts of terrorism, countless boycotts, and scandals of various forms.[1]

Coubertin had many reasons for reviving a modified version of the Games of the ancient Greeks. One of the reasons was quite simply that sports were falling apart in certain ways. As athletics spread around the world, different areas adapted the sports to their own cultures and traditions. North Americans played soccer differently from South Americans. The Scottish played differently from the English. The differences can lead to interesting confrontations. For example, in 1874 Harvard University traveled to McGill University in Montreal to a series of football games, but Harvard came ready to play a variation of what we (Americans) call soccer, while McGill played something closer to rugby. The two sides played half the games with each set of rules, but it is easy to see how different sets of rules can cause a big problem.[2] With the Olympics, Coubertin hoped that he could create a standard set of rules for athletics around the globe, which would help preserve athletics for generations to come.

According to Olympic historian Allen Guttmann, another thing that Coubertin had in mind for the Olympics was that the games would be able to transcend the many conflicts of the world, whether political or religious.[3] With this in mind, Coubertin wanted to use the games to encourage international cooperation among people of all nations. As his

1 David Miller, *Athens to Athens: The Official History of the Olympic Games and the IOC*, 1894-2004. (London: Mainstream Publishing Company, 2003); Pierre De Coubertin et al., The Olympic Games in 1896: Second Part, (London: H. Grevel and Co., 1897).

2 "THIS DATE IN HISTORY: First football game was May 14, 1874," McGill University, May 14, 2012 <http://www.mcgill.ca/athletics>.

3 Allen Guttmann, *The Olympics: A History of the Modern Games*, (Urbana, IL: University of Illinois Press, 1992).

own vision of the Olympics evolved, Coubertin was "increasingly drawn to the humanistic vision of a peaceful world."[4] For over a century, the modern Olympics have done much for peaceful cooperation among nations around the world, although for every success story there have been numerous conflicts. Despite the best efforts of men to live in a peaceful world, God uses many different means to keep the nations of the world in conflict until all things are accomplished. That day will not arrive because of any peacemaking efforts of the IOC (International Olympic Committee) or other groups, but only because God's time has arrived for the world to be judged.

Because Coubertin desired the Olympics to be free from religious and political involvement, the Olympics started to take the shape of a religion in itself—some have even called it a *civil religion*. One of the main ways in which this religious ambition can be observed is through the way in which the "Olympic spirit" is portrayed, especially in the opening and closing ceremonies. The ceremonies are the most visible showcases of the Olympic spirit and the religious symbolism in the Games. Dramatic shows such as the one in Beijing in 2008 have taken these ceremonies to an entirely new level. The Olympic flag, the marching of all the nations together, and the lighting of the torch all hold significance. Add the singing, dancing, chanting, and rituals, and the ceremonies have a distinctly religious (more cult-like) feel. Every Christian ought to take notice that the emphasis of the Olympic spirit contains nothing relating to God or Jesus Christ. As a result, all of the best efforts and admirable goals are made worthless by that ignorance of the Lord.

Coubertin and his successors have always viewed Olympics as being above all political and religious debate. The leaders of the Olympics have stubbornly held this high view, even though political feuds have always been a part of the Olympic Games through boycotts, protests, and terrorism. When eleven Israeli hostages were murdered at the 1972 Munich Games, IOC President Avery Brundage pushed the games ahead. His actions may have been seen as inconsiderate, but he was simply promoting his opinion that political and religious conflict could not affect the Olympics because they should remain above those conflicts.

Moreover, Coubertin and his successors have also tried to maintain some sort of connection to the ancient Olympic games of the Greeks (and consequently, the Greeks' pagan religion). When the Olympic torch begins its relay around the world, it is lit in Athens by actresses playing the role of pagan priestesses. Coubertin was so infatuated with the Greeks that in his will he requested that his heart be buried near the ruins of ancient Olympia in Greece. This is just one more characteristics of the Olympics that ought to catch the attention of the children of God and that ought to encourage us to discern the true merits of the Olympic Spirit.

So, as the Games carry on in London, what does all this mean for us today?

As you take in the Olympics—especially the opening and closing ceremonies, keep in mind 1 John 4:1–3, which commands the people of God to "believe not every spirit, but try the spirits whether they are of God… Every spirit that confesseth that Jesus Christ is come in the flesh is of God: And every spirit that confesseth not that Jesus Christ is come in the flesh is not of God: and this is that spirit of antichrist…even now already is it in the world." Because the Olympics have no confession of Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior, we know with certainty that the Olympic spirit contains the spirit of antichrist.

Take note that I am not suggesting that we avoid the Olympic Games altogether and shun them as a false religion. Nor am I suggesting that the IOC or anyone associated with the Olympics has an agenda to push the world toward a pagan, civil religion.

Enjoy the Olympics as a world-class athletic competition! Support your country. Admire the incredible athletic abilities on display. Feel the thrill of victory and the agony of defeat. Cheer for the underdog or the hometown favorite. Recognize the God-given talents of all those involved in the Olympics.

But, at the same time, beware of the subliminal messages sent out by those promoting the Olympic spirit or the Olympic movement. Those pursuits will not bear fruit because they are not of Jesus Christ. The problems of this world will not be solved by nations cooperating and interacting through a sporting event; this will happen only in God's time and in God's way. Knowing the background of the Olympics and the desires behind some of the symbols and rituals, the people of God should take care to discern the difference between those things that come from God and those that do not.

Dave is a member of Faith Protestant Reformed Church in Jenison, Michigan.

4 Guttmann, 11.

Watching Daily At My Gates

August 14 ***Read 1 Chronicles 17***

Sometimes when something seems so right it is not. While there was nothing sinful in building a temple for the ark of the covenant, it was not God's plan for David. David was a man of war. It would be his son who would build a place in which God would dwell. We too must see that God has a plan for us. This plan is not what we might wish. This plan is one in which God alone will be glorified. As we go through life, let us look only for ways in which we put ourselves into submission to him and his all-wise counsel. Sing Psalter 367.

August 15 ***Read 1 Chronicles 18***

After hearing that he was not to build the temple, David began to carry out the work for which God had ordained him. He went out as a man of war to destroy God's enemies. This chapter recounts his many victories as well as their purpose. That purpose was to lay up treasure that would be used in the building of God's house. Are we carrying out the purpose for which God has ordained us? Do we use the money that we make for his service? Let us seek the kingdom of God with all our hearts, knowing that he will give to us all that we need. Sing Psalter 359.

August 16 ***Read 1 Chronicles 19***

Do we show kindness to those to whom we have an opportunity? Do we seek out those opportunities? If we run into trouble in showing that kindness, what is our reaction? David had those circumstances in his life. His attempts at kindness were repaid by trouble for his messengers. David dealt kindly with them. Let us learn from David how we must show kindness to those around us. In that way we show thankfulness to God for the great kindness he showed to us by sending his Son to die on the cross for us. Sing Psalter 24.

August 17 ***Read 1 Chronicles 20***

"But David tarried at Jerusalem." With those words the story begins of David's sin that showed that he was only a type of Christ and not the Christ himself. Instead of doing his God-ordained work, he remained in Jerusalem living a life of ease. Are we guilty of this? Do we ignore our God-ordained work or tasks to live a life of ease? We need to consider what God would have us to do in this life and then do it. Sing Psalter 140.

August 18 ***Read 1 Chronicles 21***

From the summary of David's sin in chapter 20 we go to his transgression of numbering the people. If there is one sin to which all of God's people are susceptible, it is the sin of pride. David wanted to see how many people there were over whom he was king. For this sin not only was David chastised, but all of God's people also had to suffer. They, too, were corporately involved in the sin. Deliverance was given, and it was a picture of the great deliverance that would be given to all of God's people including us. May we be ever thankful for that deliverance. Sing Psalter 83.

August 18 ***Read 1 Chronicles 22***

After being chastised for his sin of pride, David got back to the work to which God had ordained him. He worked at gathering and preparing various building materials for the temple. Each of us has a task. We need to carry it out to the best of the abilities that God has given to us. We must be busy about it each and every day. We need to dedicate ourselves to that work; we must not let our desires take up our time and energies so that the work is not carried out. This is a way in which we show our thankfulness for our salvation. Sing Psalter 368.

August 19 ***Read 1 Chronicles 23***

We can tell from the opening verses that David's work on this earth was nearly finished. He now makes his son Solomon king. Solomon too would be a type of Christ. However, his kingdom would be one of peace, unlike that of his father David. David also prepares one last detail for the temple. He organizes those who would serve in that temple into groups to carry out the daily work of worship. God's church today also has office bearers whose task is to lead God's people in worship. May we rejoice in this fact, for in that way we are called to proper worship of Jehovah. Sing Psalter 200.

August 20 ***Read 1 Chronicles 24***

This chapter is a continuation of the recounting of the process of putting in order those who would lead God's people in worship. It is evident that it is God who con-

trols all things, as the process was done by lot. This was not a lot of luck or of good fortune, but it was a lot of providence. God in his providence guides and controls every aspect of our lives. May we ever be thankful for his providence and the comfort that it affords to us. May we seek his guidance in all that we do. Sing Psalter 190.

August 21 *Read 1 Chronicles 25*

The last chapter dealt with division of the family of Aaron into groups and their work as priests. There were also other Levites who served in the temple. In this chapter we read of the descendants of Asaph. Their work was not to offer sacrifices or burn incense or any other work of the priests. Their work was that of leading the worship of God by music. God has given to us the gift of music for several purposes. One of these purposes is to praise him and his wonderful works toward us. Another purpose of music is that it is one of the means that we can use to thank him for his grace towards us. May we ever be found making a "joyful noise unto the Lord." Sing Psalter 250.

August 22 *Read 1 Chronicles 26*

One truth that we can appreciate in these chapters is that of God's covenant faithfulness. As the nation journeyed across the wilderness, it probably kept most if not all of the Levites busy in caring for the tabernacle as well as in the worship of Jehovah. As the Israelites settled down, their numbers grew; therefore we see this wise organization of David of the various groups. We also see the variety of work that was necessary to carry out proper worship. This is true today as well. It takes men and women doing a variety of tasks in order for the church to function smoothly. Let us, in whatever station or calling God has placed us, work with vigor in his service and in the service of the church. Sing Psalter 241.

August 23 *Read 1 Chronicles 27*

Not only were the Levites divided into orderly groups, but also other Israelites were organized in their carrying out the work of the nation. There were soldiers who had to defend the country so that Israel could worship in peace. There were men who carried out the financial dealings of the country. And David had counselors to help him in government. With wisdom David prepared for an orderly transition of government to Solomon. We should pray for such orderliness in government so that we can worship God in peace. Sing Psalter 223.

August 24 *Read 1 Chronicles 28*

We must see several items in this chapter. First, David charges the chief men to give heed to Solomon as he goes about the work of building the temple. They might have not wanted to listen to the new young king. Second, he tells them and Solomon that this work is of God. God gave the plans and the organization. Their obedience to David and Solomon was in reality obedience to God. Do we see this as we dwell in God's church today? We are not heeding the word of mere men whom God has made leaders. We are heeding or not heeding God. May we remember this as we dwell in the church of the living God. Sing Psalter 348.

August 25 *Read 1 Chronicles 29*

This chapter describes the closing of David's reign. He reiterates his commands to the people to help Solomon in the great work of building the temple. He then charges Solomon himself with that great work. By example he shows to the people that they must liberally support the work of building the temple just as we must liberally support all the causes of God's kingdom. The chapter closes with a short account of David's death. Sing Psalter 222.

August 26 *Read 2 Chronicles 1*

After taking over the kingdom, Solomon made his first wise choice. That choice was to go to God in worship and in prayer. God then came to him and asked what he needed. Solomon now makes another wise choice. He realizes that he cannot rule this kingdom in his own strength. As we begin ventures in this life, do we go to our God and ask his help? Young couples, you need to do this as your marry. Parents, you need to do this as you bring up children. Each of us needs to go to our God in prayer and ask for his guidance. Sing Psalter 218.

August 27 *Read 2 Chronicles 2*

Solomon's first goal was to fulfill his father's desire. He wanted to build a temple for God. Solomon knew that God was not earthly. He knew that no matter how grand and luxurious a building he built, it would not compare to the glory of God. Do we understand this about our God? Do we try to bring him down to our level? Do we do this by our actions or by our prayers? We must always realize that God is spirit and must be treated in a spiritual sense alone. He is not our pal; he is our God! Sing Psalter 129.

August 28 *Read 2 Chronicles 3*

In this chapter we have some of the descriptions of the temple and its furnishings. First, we see that Solomon built it according to the plan that God gave to his father David. Solomon made no alterations to that plan because this was to be God's house. His plan was perfect. Second, if we move down to the final verse in the chapter, we see the names of the two pillars that greeted the worshippers and supported the building. Jachin means "He establishes," and Boaz means, "In him is strength." Do we confess that God establishes our lives? Do we live our lives in the strength of Jehovah? Sing Psalter 367.

August 29 *Read 2 Chronicles 4*

In this chapter we read of the various furnishings and items for worship found in the temple. Each of them is

very significant not only in the worship of God but also for the salvation of his people. Do we see the blood of Christ that covers our sins in the significance of these items? Do we see Jesus, the light of the world, in the candlesticks? Do we notice the various metals and other items of beauty that signified God's glory? Notice all the special numbers such as ten—the number of completeness, and twelve—the number of the church. Everything pointed to God. Does everything in our worship point to God? Sing Psalter 256.

August 30 *Read 2 Chronicles 5*

The temple was now finished and ready to be occupied by Jehovah. After the ark of the covenant was placed in the most holy place, and as the priest withdrew from the temple, the Shekinah cloud filled the temple as a symbol of God's dwelling with his people. Today, we do not need a temple filled with symbols. We do not need a special cloud, for God has sent his Spirit, the Spirit of Christ, upon us to dwell within us. That Spirit assures us of our salvation through Christ alone. Sing Psalter 260.

August 31 *Read 2 Chronicles 6*

After the glory of God filled the temple, Solomon turned to God in public prayer. It would do us all good to study this prayer and use it as a model for our public prayers. In this prayer everything points to God. In this prayer Solomon asked for God to be with his people in every situation that they may find themselves. There is nothing that we cannot bring to our covenant God in prayer. We, like Solomon, can base our prayers on the mercies of Christ that God showed to David and also shows to us. Sing Psalter 235.

September 1 *Read 2 Chronicles 7*

As Solomon finishes his prayer, God gives to him and all Israel an immediate answer to that prayer. Fire comes from heaven and consumes the sacrifice offered on the altar of burnt offering. The people then have two feasts. Both of them were feasts of thanksgiving. After the fourteen days of feasting were finished, Solomon sends them to their homes to take up their daily work once more. God then comes to Solomon once more in the night and reminds him of his early promises, but he also warns him that they must continue in service to him or he would afflict them. May we serve Jehovah with all of our hearts all the days of our lives. Sing Psalter 266.

September 2 *Read 2 Chronicles 8*

The book of 2 Chronicles continues with the activities of Solomon. In verse 11 we read of his marriage to the daughter of Egypt's king. We know that this became the beginning of Solomon's downfall as he gathered unto himself many wives. This was disobedient to one of the guidelines for Israel's kings as given in Deuteronomy 17. Solomon did not follow the apparent customs of some heathen lands; he did not install her in God's temple, as that place was holy unto God. But yet his sin would cause much trouble for him and for Israel. Let us be careful to keep all of God's laws, and in that way we will be pleasing unto him. Sing Psalter 360.

September 3 *Read 2 Chronicles 9*

Today we read an account of the visit of the queen of Sheba. We know nothing about her except what is recounted here and in the companion chapter in 1 Kings. Much speculation is made about her and her relationship to Solomon. We need to turn to the New Testament to see her place in history. There Christ mentions this woman who called upon God's name because of what he had done for Solomon. Christ then says to the nation of Israel that a greater than Solomon was with them, and they did not believe. We have the whole of God's word, and we have the outpouring of the Spirit. Do we believe? Sing Psalter 198.

September 4 *Read 2 Chronicles 10*

What a sad thing it was when Israel rebelled against God! While they may have thought it was against Rehoboam, it was truly against Jehovah that they rebelled. This should give us cause to consider our ways in his church. When we speak ill of a minister or a consistory, do we realize that we are speaking ill of the ministers of God whom he placed in authority over us? Do we realize they represent Christ among us? Let us never say, "To your tents O Israel!" Let us say, "Thy will be done." In this way we bow before Jehovah and his way for us. Sing Psalter 174.

September 5 *Read 2 Chronicles 11*

God's way for his church was the separation of Israel and Judah. In this way Christ would come for the salvation of his church of which we are a part. God was faithful to his promise to the patriarchs and to David. We see this when we read that Judah "set their hearts to seek the Lord." Do we do this? The old man of sin that resides within us would have us say, "To your tents." Is that the path we follow, or do we follow the path of seeking Jehovah and all of his goodness? May this be our desire and may this be our prayer. Sing Psalter 150

September 6 *Read 2 Chronicles 12*

After reading verses 1 and 2 of this chapter, we need to stop and examine our lives. Are we guilty of forsaking the law of God? If we are, we should see in our lives how God has chastised us to bring us back to his ways. Each time we read his word, we must see that this is like a prophet coming to us with the word of the Lord. Do we read God's word in this way? Do we want to listen to the word in this way? By nature the answer to the last two questions is no. By grace and through Christ we can and do. Let us cleave to his word and let us seek daily

to walk in Jehovah's law. Sing Psalter 336.

September 7 *Read 2 Chronicles 13*

The sins of the fathers are compounded in the children. We see this in Rehoboam, and we see this in his son Abijah. Solomon's folly became their folly. Because they were God's people, he brought his rod in the form of Israel and Jereboam against them. It looked hopeless even in spite of Abijah's speech that was true, though it was spoken in desperation. Out of that hopelessness God saved his people. Out of our hopeless, natural condition, he has saved us through Christ. Thanks be to God for that victory. Sing Psalter 253.

September 8 *Read 2 Chronicles 14*

In this short chapter we once again find the evident grace of God for his people. After the wicked kings Rehoboam and Abijah, we find righteous Asa. We notice that righteousness in the second verse of the chapter. Asa does that which is right in God's eyes. The chapter goes on to relate to us his righteous activities. Verse 6 gives to us the result of those activities. Judah had peace and rest in the land. They were not bothered by invaders or other problems. Do we notice this in our lives? When our lives are marked by righteous activities, do we experience the peace that passes all human understanding? Let us seek that kind of peace by walking in Jehovah's ways. Sing Psalter 238.

September 9 *Read 2 Chronicles 15*

We find in this chapter a continuation of the activities of the previous one. Asa knew that even in victory against an invader, his work was not finished. He had some dangerous enemies at home. There were still idols in the land; in fact, there were idols in his house—those of his mother. Asa worked hard at removing those idols. What is true about us? Do we work hard in removing those dangerous idols in our lives? Do we work hard in removing those idols in the lives of our families? Do we work hard in removing the idols in our churches? This we must do in walking antithetically in God's sight. In this way our hearts will be right with God. Sing Psalter 308.

September 10 *Read 2 Chronicles 16*

Even though many idols were destroyed out of the land, sin was not destroyed out of Asa's heart. This can never happen. Asa and Judah had to learn that their ultimate deliverance did not come from man. It would come from him of whom Asa was only a type. Judah had to look ahead to the coming of Christ. We have to live our lives in a way that we acknowledge Christ as the only way of salvation. In doing so, we will look ahead until the day that Christ returns to take us into himself. May this be our righteous activity all the days of our lives. Sing Psalter 195.

September 11 *Read 2 Chronicles 17*

One of the righteous activities of Asa was the instruction of his son Jehoshaphat in the ways of Jehovah. We see this because Jehoshaphat continued the reformation activities of his father. Jehoshaphat did not follow in the wicked ways of his father in the last days of his life. He followed in the good things of God; in fact, the chapter tells us that he surpassed his father in that he was like unto David. Jehoshaphat saw the importance of instruction. He made provisions for good teachers to go throughout Judah to teach God's way. This should be our calling in our homes and in our churches. We need to teach, and we need to teach the proper things of Jehovah. Sing Psalter 325.

September 12 *Read 2 Chronicles 18*

As the focus in 2 Chronicles is on Judah, we will not say much about Ahab and his folly. We do well to consider it and not walk in his apostasy. Jehoshaphat had a besetting sin. That sin was that he joined with Ahab in various foolish ventures. For that sin God chastised him often. We must walk antithetically before God. Jehoshaphat was a failure in this respect. We may not understand completely God's purpose in this, but this we must know; if we walk with the ungodly, God will touch us in some way. Let us be unsullied by the sins of the wicked. Let us walk in the right way of Jehovah. Sing Psalter 158.

September 13 *Read 2 Chronicles 19*

After his folly in joining with Ahab, Jehoshaphat returned to the ways that were good for him, and more importantly for God's church. He realized the need for more leadership in the church than he could provide. God moved him to appoint judges to go throughout the land and settle disputes in the church and instruct the people in the right way of Jehovah. God has provided for us elders who do the same work. Let us pay heed to them as the ministers of Christ doing his work among us. Sing Psalter 69.

September 14 *Read II Chronicles 20*

It would be good for us to read this chapter often. This is not so that we can see the victory that Judah had over its enemies, but rather so that we can see the manner in which that victory was achieved. When Jehoshaphat receives notice of an approaching enemy, he immediately turns to God in the way of prayer and fasting. The people received an immediate answer from God through a prophet. When they went to battle, they went with a company of singers leading the army. After a miraculous victory, they returned again praising God. Do we face our difficulties by first of all going to God in prayer? Do the songs of Zion play a role in our struggles with those difficulties? Do we praise God in thanksgiving for his help? This we should do daily and in every situation in our lives. Sing Psalter 154.

September 15 ***Read 2 Chronicles 21***

Jehoshaphat's folly in arranging a marriage between his son and Ahab's daughter brings trouble to Judah soon after Jehoshaphat's death. Jehoram immediately turns to evil, and the people willingly follow him. He murders his brothers so that they do not rise up against him, and he walks in the evils of Israel's kings. Even though God did not take the kingdom away from him because of the promise made to David, God brought chastisement to him both from without and within the kingdom. Even after being shown a letter from Elijah, Jehoram refused to repent, and he was struck with a fatal disease. Our actions have consequences, people of God. Let us think on those actions and walk in God's ways. Sing Psalter 146.

September 16 ***Read 2 Chronicles 22***

Things went from bad to worse for Judah. Jehoram's son, Ahaziah, was as evil as his father. While visiting his grandfather Ahab, he was killed along with Ahab in Jehu's destruction of Ahab's house. His mother Athaliah, Ahab's daughter, seizes the throne and thinks she has put to death all those who had a claim to the throne by birth. However, God cares for his people. In Ahaziah's line Christ will come, and even though Satan seeks to prevent Christ's coming by Athaliah's wickedness, God uses a faithful priest and his wife to preserve his people. God cares for us as well and will help us fight against Satan and all of his wiles. Let us seek to follow God and to be vigilant in the battle. Sing Psalter 145.

September 17 ***Read 2 Chronicles 23***

For six years Judah suffered under wicked Athaliah. They had to bear the consequences of the sins that they had committed. They had to learn that God is a righteous God and his people must be righteous. At the end of the six years, God gives to Jehoiada the courage to prepare the people to overthrow Athaliah and take the throne back for the line of David. Are there Jehoiadas among us when necessary? Are we willing to follow such men to preserve the gospel in these wicked days and in the wicked days that are sure to come? Let us prepare ourselves by reading, studying, and using God's word every day of our lives. Sing Psalter 148.

September 18 ***Read 2 Chronicles 24***

In this chapter we have a capsule history and lesson about what happens when a person follows the way of the Lord and when he does not. As long as Jehoiada was alive and Joash followed his righteous instruction, he and Judah prospered. Joash's care for God's house and the things of the Lord must be imitated by us. His decline after the death of Jehoiada should be a lesson for us. Christ recalls his shameful act of killing Zechariah in Matthew 23 as part of the woes he pronounced against the church of his day. How do we treat those whom God has sent to us? Let us learn from this history how we must walk in the church, and how we must glorify God. Sing Psalter 106.

September 19 ***Read 2 Chronicles 25***

Amaziah is a puzzle. He serves God at times, but at other times he falls into grievous sins. He lets money rule his decision-making, as shown by his remarks to the prophet when told not to use the soldiers of Israel against Edom. As we read this chapter we must learn the right way to walk in God's sight. Not money, not fame, and not power should influence our decision-making. God's word must rule in us and through us. We must know that word and use it all day and every day. There can be no "vacations" from God's word. If we take one, we will suffer dire consequences. Sing Psalter185.

September 20 ***Read 2 Chronicles 26***

Uzziah was a good king with a bad end. We cannot judge farther than that, as this is not our place in this life. We can and should model our lives on the early work of this king. He did much that can be counted for good in God's eyes, but the sin of pride destroyed him and all his good in the end. The sin of pride has destroyed many people and many institutions in history. We must fight against this sin in our lives. We must see that the sin of pride is an affront to our God. Uzziah lived the end of his life with the shameful disease of leprosy. What chastisement might we have for being proud in our dealings with those around us? Let us fight this sin and let us pray for deliverance from it. Sing Psalter 138.

September 21 ***Read 2 Chronicles 27***

Verse 6 is a key to Jotham's life. We do well to read it again. While we have much more information about the reign of the previous three kings, they all came to a sad end. This we do not read about Jotham. Jotham prepared his way before Jehovah and prospered. Do we need more instruction about the way that we are to live our lives? Do we need more instruction about the way that we care for our families and/or our churches? When we prepare our ways before God, we can be assured that he will bless us. Judah should have imitated their godly king. They did not, and they did not prosper. What about us? Sing Psalter 99.

September 22 ***Read 2 Chronicles 28***

What a contrast we find between the lives of Jotham and Ahaz. Ahaz did anything but prepare his way before Jehovah. Ahaz did all in his power not to walk in God's righteous ways. We find more about him in the book of the prophet Isaiah. He was the king who refused to ask a sign of deliverance from God. He was the king to whom the virgin birth was prophesied. It did not change him; he continued to walk in any and every idolatry. Where do we stand? Do we follow Jotham or Ahaz? Let us make

the choice of Joshua, "As for me and my house, we will serve the Lord." Sing Psalter 93.

September 23 *Read 2 Chronicles 29*

From the lamentable reign of Ahaz we come to the noteworthy reign of Hezekiah. Judah had not yet filled its cup of iniquity. Even though Babylon was beginning to rise as a world power, it was not time for Judah to go into captivity. Therefore God gives to his people this righteous king, who by a righteous rule allows them a period of respite from the attacks of the nations around them. For the God-fearing people in Judah, it was a time in which they could bring up their families in the fear of the Lord and teach them his ways. Do we pray for such times in our churches and in the countries in which we live? We must take the opportunity of such times of peace to instruct those young in the faith the right way of Jehovah. May this ever be our desire. Sing Psalter 88.

September 24 *Read 2 Chronicles 30*

Under Hezekiah's wise rule Judah prepared to celebrate a Passover that was like no other since the time of peace under Solomon. They had kept up the celebration of Passovers, but some of them were probably done with a "lick and a promise." That would not be the case this time. Hezekiah would make sure that all the guidelines were followed. When we celebrate the sacraments of baptism and the Lord's supper, are our hearts well prepared to celebrate them in the way God has ordained? Do we celebrate them out of custom and habit, or do we celebrate them with hearts that are ready to seek the Lord? Let us use these means of grace in a way that we are edified by their signs and seals. Sing Psalter 152.

September 25 *Read 2 Chronicles 31*

Hezekiah did not stop with the celebration of the Passover. He continued to rule in an antithetical way in Judah. He and those who were with him worked at removing idolatry and all of its trappings from the land. They worked at teaching God's people the way that they should go in all things. They followed those laws that made provision for caring for those who were the ministers of God. They called the people to worship in the giving of the required offerings. What is our attitude as collection is taken? Do we give cheerfully, or do we give grudgingly? Do we think about our giving and manner in which we give? Giving is part of worship. This too must be done in a way that is pleasing to God. Sing Psalter 250.

September 26 *Read 2 Chronicles 32*

Here in this chapter we have a summary of the rest of the life of Hezekiah. If we wish to know more of the details, we will need to turn to the books of 2 Kings and Isaiah. There we will find more about this king who served God with his whole heart. Was he perfect? No, he was only a type of Christ. He fell into the sin of pride, but we read that he repented from that sin. After he dies, he is afforded a burial befitting one who has served God faithfully. To serve God faithfully in all things must be our goal in life; is it? Sing Psalter 258.

September 27 *Read 2 Chronicles 33*

Two kings, one with a long reign and one whose reign was very short, are the subjects of today's chapter. There is a bigger difference in the kings besides the lengths of their reigns. While Manasseh was wicked, we find that after being afflicted by God in a foreign prison, he repents and is restored to his kingdom. Amon lives his entire short life as king as a wicked man. Our God is a gracious God, as we find in this chapter. Sometimes, however, he must bring us to repentance through a hard way. Our Savior went the hard way of the cross to give to us remission from all of our sins. Let us live a thankful life for this evidence of God's grace. Sing Psalter 140.

September 28 *Read 2 Chronicles 34*

"I have found the book of the law." What a stunning announcement came to Josiah's ears. He had a wicked father, but by grace he had been preserved by God. Judah had fallen into great wickedness. The temple was cluttered with abominable things. The clutter was so bad that the book of the law was lost in the rubble. Would we be this joyful if a Bible was found amid the clutter of our lives? This does not have to be physical clutter; it can be spiritual clutter as well. If the Bible was found, what would we do with it? Would we have read it or have it read to us, or would we have shrugged our shoulders, and continued to live amid the clutter of our lives. May the Bible be precious in our lives, and may we use it often and always. Sing Psalter 333.

September 29 *Read 2 Chronicles 35*

After the cleansing of the temple, Josiah turns to the keeping of the Passover. He learned from Hezekiah that this must be done in the right way. In fact, Scripture tells us that he surpasses not only Hezekiah but also Solomon and David in the keeping of the Passover. But Josiah does not remain in the good way. He falls into the sin of pride and goes out to battle. Even after being warned, he persists and is mortally wounded. A great lamentation is held for him; Jeremiah calls him the breath of Judah's nostrils. But he was only a type of what was to come. God's way is not an earthly kingdom. God's way was through the captivity that would soon come. Our goal too must not be an earthly kingdom. We must look for the new Jerusalem that will be found in the new heavens and the new earth. Sing Psalter 275.

September 30 *Read 2 Chronicles 36*

Much history is covered in the final chapter of this book of the Bible. Not only do we read of the last four kings of Judah, but we also read of the captivity and the end

of that captivity. It is said in this chapter that Judah must live in captivity for seventy years or until "the land had enjoyed her Sabbaths." God's people had forsaken his law not only concerning the land's Sabbath, but in many other ways as well. How do we keep the Sabbath? Do we keep it according to the fourth commandment? How do we keep the other laws of God? Do we do it with a wink or with the whole of our hearts? God is faithful toward his covenant people, but he does not wink at sin. Sing Psalter 379.

October 1 *Read Ezra 1*

In Proverbs we read, "The king's heart is in the hand of the Lord, as the rivers of water: he turneth it whithersoever he will." This chapter shows that this statement is true. Our God is a sovereign God. He holds all things in his hand. Do we believe that? Do we live in a way that shows that we believe that truth? The faithful, kept captive in Babylon, might have been living in despair, but God had not forgotten them. He moved this king, as prophesied many years ago in Isaiah, to release his people and let them go back to the land of promise. All who are in authority in this earth are in God's hands. He will move them so that his purpose to bring us to a glory that undoubtedly will come to pass is realized. Let us lovingly embrace the doctrine of God's sovereignty, and let us live a life of obedience to that attribute of God. Sing Psalter 64.

October 2 *Read Ezra 2*

First, we have to read another list. It is a list of great significance. It is a list of those who were willing to leave their lives in Babylon and make the hard trek back to Zion. It is a list of those who were saved by grace; therefore it is a blessed list. Do we count it a privilege to be on such a list? Do we take our place in the church, wherever God has placed us, as a privilege and serve him with all our hearts? We do not need to be office bearers to serve him. All of God's people have the calling to serve our covenant God freely and willingly. May we pray for the grace to do so every day. Sing Psalter 239.

October 3 *Read Ezra 3*

After making the long trek back to Jerusalem, God's people began to put their lives back in order. Notice where they start. They start by building the altar of burnt offering. After the initial offerings, they reinstate other feasts as God's calendar dictates. Do we begin our weekly lives with a proper observance of the Sabbath Day? Do we follow God's calendar, or is it our own calendar that directs our lives? God's people had to have a seventy-year lesson in Babylon. As they began the building of the new temple, those who had made the round trip wept because they understood the ruins around them. Let us keep God's laws and let us start the week as he has ordained in his word. In that way we will find blessed peace on earth and in the life to come. Sing Psalter 251.

October 4 *Read Ezra 4*

Satan never gives up. We see this in this chapter. As soon as the various building projects commenced, Satan moved the Samaritans to cause trouble for the people of God. Even though Christ crushed his head at the cross, Satan has not yet given up. He brings trouble for God's people from within families and churches and from outside those families and churches. Even though he is bound now, Satan still will fight against Christ and his church. We are the church militant. We must fight the battle of faith with might and main. By this way we will again experience the blessing of the Lord. Sing Psalter 200.

October 5 *Read Ezra 5*

God not only permitted his people to return to Jerusalem, but he also cared for them by his word after the return. When the building of the temple slowed to a standstill, God sent Haggai and Zechariah to stir them up so that they would return to work. In reading those prophecies, we find that the people were caring more for themselves than for God. We too can be guilty of that sin. We give the excuse that our families need us, or we must work for our daily needs, but the causes of God's kingdom go wanting. God will continue to stir us up as well. He does this through faithful preaching similar to the work of the two prophets. He does this through circumstances in our lives that show us our errors. May we ever be listening to God's word, and may we ever care for his causes. Sing Psalter 78.

October 6 *Read Ezra 6*

Once again we see God's sovereignty extended to wicked kings. Through his providence Darius finds that God's people are entitled not only to build, but they are also entitled to receive help from Babylon. Judah began again to build the temple, spurred on by the faithful preaching of Haggai and Zechariah. The work was finished, the temple was completed, and the dedication was held. This is important for us in that as Judah once again kept up its religious life, the way was more and more prepared for Christ our Savior. Not only must we learn how we must live in service to God, we must also see that our salvation was wrought through these means. Sing Psalter 348.

October 7 *Read Ezra 7*

There were two main returns from Babylon to Jerusalem. The second one was led by a man by the name of Ezra. Ezra was a scribe. Those scribes were charged with keeping track of the history of God's people and especially the record of the lines of each family for each tribe. These scribes may have wished to give up this

practice in a foreign land, as they may have thought it was of no use anymore. But faithful men kept up this practice, which was a picture of the line of continued generations in the covenant. God did not forget that covenant made with the patriarchs just as he does not forget the promises that he has made with us. Let us cling to that covenant, walk in that covenant, and shape our lives based on the gracious covenant that God has fulfilled in Christ. Sing Psalter 241.

October 8 *Read Ezra 8*

We find in this chapter more of Ezra's character. It is a character that we must emulate. As they gather by the river, Ezra finds that they are missing a class of people. It is an important class; it was the class of people that would lead in worship. Second, Ezra did not run to man for protection, though it was his right. He goes to God in prayer and asks for his protection on the long, arduous journey. As we live our lives, no matter what age we are, do we seek God's help? Are we desirous to have around us men who will lead us in the right worship of Jehovah? May we be like Ezra in these ways, and in that way we will enjoy the blessings of the Lord. Sing Psalter 235.

October 9 *Read Ezra 9*

After a time of thanksgiving for a safe journey and the initial happiness of the new arrivals, Ezra had to face a serious problem in Jerusalem. The elders came to him and informed him of a sin that threatened the city. God's people were marrying the wicked. Ezra recognized not only the folly of this practice but also the danger that loomed over the church. It was these kinds of marriages that doomed Israel many years ago. It was these kinds of marriages that caused Judah to go into captivity. It is these kinds of marriages that we must avoid today. Young people, what kinds of marriages are you seeking? Parents, to what kinds of marriages are you giving your blessing? We must learn from this chapter the seriousness of this matter. Sing Psalter 360.

October 10 *Read Ezra 10*

When faced with the sin of the previous chapter, Ezra stays in character and goes to God in prayer. He prays a prayer of confession of sin and seeks God's forgiveness in the matter. Ezra does not say, "It is not my problem." Ezra sees the corporate responsibility of the whole church and especially its leaders. He knows that they cannot get out of this dilemma in man's strength. They must solve this problem with God's help and by proper adherence to God's law. We too must walk in this way when faced with problems caused by sin. Sing Psalter 233

October 11 *Read Nehemiah 1*

While we have reached a new book in the Bible, we remain with the people of God after the return. The scene changes to Babylon where we find another faithful man of God. Nehemiah eagerly looked for news of what was happening in Jerusalem. When his brother and others bring him sad news, he quickly goes to God in prayer. He does not shrug his shoulders and say that the problem is not his business; he prays that God would make it possible for him to help. Do we seek to help the church of Christ in this manner? Do we bring its troubles to God in prayer, and then ask God to make it possible for us to help? Here is another lesson for the members of the church of this day. May we learn it well. Sing Psalter 184.

October 12 *Read Nehemiah 2*

God by his providence gives to Nehemiah the opportunity to ask permission to go to Jerusalem to help and encourage the people to build the walls. Nehemiah knew that he did not just have a physical building problem on his hands; he also had a spiritual problem. Those walls were not being built because the people were ignoring the spiritual walls that they must build. When he reaches the city, he tours the city and makes an assessment of the work. He then goes to the rulers and tells them of his mission. Was this an easy task? By no means: he had to convince the rulers to ignore the wicked who did not want these walls rebuilt. How could he do it? He could only do it with God's help that we also have as we build walls in our families and in our churches. These walls are important as they protect us from all spiritual difficulties that may assail us. Sing Psalter 237.

October 13 *Read Nehemiah 3*

As we read through the chapter we may become weary by the details concerning who built which gate. First, we must remember that the weariness was also the people's weariness as they did the work. This weariness is one of Satan's tools in his fight against Christ's church. Second, we must remember that these details are important. All kinds of people did the work of building. All kinds of work had to be carried out; some of it was less desirable than other kinds of work. This is the way it is in the church of God. There is work to be done, and God's people must do it even when it seems less than desirable. Sing Psalter 214.

October 14 *Read Nehemiah 4*

Not only was the work arduous and sometimes not very pleasant, but also there were enemies who caused trouble for Nehemiah and his builders. How did he react? He did not throw up his hands in despair; he threw up his hands in prayer. This is the only way that problems must be faced. Nehemiah was a man of prayer, as we have seen in this book. Are we men and women of prayer? Do we throw our hands up in prayer when faced with problems in this life? We need to do this now and in the days to come as we await Christ to return on the clouds of heaven. Sing Psalter 209.

The Hunger Games

by Suzanne Collins

The Hunger Games. There is no doubt that many of us have read this book or have at least heard enough about it through peers and in the news. Those who have read it may have an understanding of why there has been such a buzz surrounding its content, while others remain curious about what they might find within the pages of this book. The plot is gripping to say the very least. Author Suzanne Collins can be given credit for engaging her readers right off the bat and holding their attention from chapter to chapter.

The story takes place in a futuristic setting portraying the life of a young girl named Katniss Everdeen. Katniss is a sixteen year old who lives in a place called Panem. Keeping in mind that this takes place in the future, Panem is the new name of what we would call North America. Instead of the individual states we have now, Panem is separated into twelve districts ruled by a government referred to as the Capital. Katniss lives in district twelve.

Life for Katniss and her family is a daily struggle. The Capital has taken complete control over the lives of the people living in each district and in the most severe of means. There is starvation, death due to sickness, and people struggling to live off anything they can scrounge up. This seems nothing like the future we would predict to see for ourselves, is it? Why, you may ask yourself, is life like this for Katniss?

I believe a big part of what author Suzanne Collins is really trying to portray in her book is the amount of power the government of Panem has and its relation to today's society. In the beginning chapters Katniss refers to the "Dark Days." This was a time when the people of Panem rebelled against the Capital because they saw that it was becoming too powerful and was beginning to take complete control. There was a great uprising and war that resulted in the government's completely destroying district thirteen. This, of course, frightened the remaining twelve districts and brought the rebellion to a halt. It is from this uprising that the Hunger Games were developed.

One boy tribute and one girl tribute from each district would be chosen at random and forced to battle against each other to the death. There may only be one winner. This is the Capital's way of punishing and reminding the people never to rebel again. Having tributes from each district battle against each other is also a way the Capital makes sure it is impossible for them to join forces to rebel again. What happens to the winner of the Hunger Games? The government provides for the winner and their family a life they could only dream about—an endless amount of food, a home, medical supplies—and that is only the beginning. This is all part of the Capital's conniving way of giving the tributes something worth fighting for.

It is in this kind of setting that readers will follow Katniss and the choices she decides to make or not to make throughout the course of the games. Obviously I have only just begun to touch on what can be found within the pages of this book. Included are many more characters, a roller coaster ride of twists, and even a bit of a love story. Suzanne Collins may definitely be commended for her ability to make it difficult for readers to put the book down.

Although this book may not have necessarily been written by a Christian author intending to specifically portray Reformed morals and values, it can cause a Christian reader to pause and think. One of the main focuses of this story is the governmental power that develops over the years and the forms of persecution that take place because of it. This is not something unfamiliar to us in our lives. We are warned in 2 Timothy 3:1, "This know also, that in the last days perilous times shall come." *The Hunger Games* does not specifically at any point refer to the fact that the government is doing this in spite of the

word of God or for the hatred of believers, but it is, no doubt, portraying the reality of man's sinful pride and selfishness that drives his appetite for power.

Matthew 24:7: "For nation shall rise against nation, and kingdom against kingdom…" Our future is unknown to us. We do not know when these "perilous" times will come. The first part of 2 Peter 3:10 says, "But the day of the Lord will come as a thief in the night:" God does not reveal to us the time and the hour of his returning. We do, however, see the signs he has set before us as a constant reminder of his coming. "And there shall be signs in the sun, and in the moon, and in the stars; and upon the earth distress of nations, with perplexity; the sea and the waves roaring" (Luke 21:25).

The Hunger Games is one woman's way of producing entertainment for others by giving her worldly perspective of what she thinks the future could possibly be like for us and our children. She makes a point of incorporating the use of technology in her story as a vital aspect of the way of life in the future. As Christians we can definitely see how big a role technology is playing in today's society.

One other aspect of this book worth noting is the character of Katniss Everdeen (and all other characters, for that matter). Throughout the book you will home in on what motivates Katniss to do the things that she does. She is stubborn, rebellious, and bitter towards the Capital, and with good reason. However, as Christians we must remember what the Bible teaches us in Romans 13:1, 2: "Let every soul be subject unto the higher powers. For there is no power but of God: the powers that be are ordained of God. Whosoever therefore resisteth the power, resisteth the ordinance of God: and they that resist shall receive to themselves damnation." Again, *The Hunger Games* does not relate the motivation of the Capital's actions against the people because of hatred of their beliefs. However, as Christians we must be reminded to honor the authorities God has placed above us even when we don't agree with what they are doing. A day will come that God's people are persecuted and killed for their love of Christ. How will we respond? Will we join them for fear of persecution or death? "And be not conformed to this world: but be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind, that ye may prove what is that good, and acceptable, and perfect, will of God" (Rom. 12:2).

God will give us the strength that we will need for those perilous times and even now as we await his coming. What the future might hold for us may be resting all the more heavily on our minds now as we see the signs of the times and the amount of power our government is gaining, but we must rest assured on the basis of the word that God has placed before us as our guide in this life. Isaiah 41:10: "Fear thou not; for I am with thee: be not dismayed; for I am thy God: I will strengthen thee; yea, I will help thee; yea I will uphold thee with the right hand of my righteousness."

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

From the Pastor's Study — Rev. Rodney Miersma

Holding Fast Our Profession

"Seeing then that we have a great high priest, that is passed into the heavens, Jesus the Son of God, let us hold fast our profession" (Hebrews 4:14).

Young people today, more than ever before, are being tempted to leave what they profess. Quite often it is in the way of marrying someone from another denomination. The passion of love blinds one to the reality of the sin and danger of leaving the church in which the truth is preached and taught. In hard economic times a job in another part of the country is offered to us. We are tempted and so inclined to accept this offer. After all, jobs are hard to come by. One has to make a living and support a family. The things of the world appear to outweigh the things of the kingdom of heaven.

The writer to the Hebrew was aware of these temptations. Under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit

he gives us exhortations based on the truths of Holy Scripture. He says, "Let us hold fast our profession."

It is good to be reminded just what that profession is. In the fellowship of the saints it is given you to know of the marvelous works of God, of the glory of his grace in the beloved, and the blessedness of salvation. This is redemption, the forgiveness of sins, and covenant fellowship with the triune God. It consists of what through the word, the Spirit of Christ dwelling in the church has revealed to you things that eye has not seen, neither the ear heard, nor has ever arisen in the heart of man. In the fellowship with the church in the world you embrace that truth by a true and living faith. It is the truth that controls and dominates your whole existence and very life in the midst of the world.

We look to the glorious truth that we have a great High Priest who sacrificed himself for your and my sins and obtained for us forgiveness of sins and righteousness. As High Priest he is also our advocate who intercedes with the Father for us. He knows and is acquainted by deepest experience with all our infirmities, sins, and weaknesses, trials, and temptations. He constantly prays for us with a prayer that is never denied. Indeed, he is great. All the Old Testament priests could only point to him, for they were but shadows. Christ is the reality who brought not the blood of animals, which could never atone for our sins; but he brought himself, the perfect sacrifice.

He is Jesus, the Son of God, the revelation of the God of our salvation. We had made ourselves incapable of doing any good and were inclined to all evil. God came in the person of his Son and joined himself so perfectly to our nature in the womb of the virgin that he assumed that nature in its entirety, though without sin. He came to do God's will, to fulfill the law that we had transgressed and could not keep. Burned by the wrath of God, he satisfied the justice of God completely. What a Savior! Indeed, a great High Priest!

Having erased our debt and guilt completely he arose from the dead and ascended into heaven and came to sit at the right hand of God the Father. To this profession we hold fast.

Our holding fast means to take hold of and hold fast, never to let go. One cleaves with a firm faith, a lively hope, and an ardent love. It is to love the word of the gospel, and to cling to our High Priest with all the power of faith and child-like trust. That implies that you are zealous concerning the truth as it is in Jesus Christ, revealed in the Scriptures. You strive for the purity of the faith once delivered to the saints. Standing firm, you refuse to be tossed about by any wind of doctrine. It further implies that you appropriate this pure revelation of the living Lord by a true and living faith. You cling to it so that your mind is constantly enlightened by it as a certain knowledge, and so that your will is wholly controlled and determined by it, clinging to Christ in complete confidence. Living such a life, you will let your light shine, never hiding it under a bushel. Forsaking your old nature and walking in the new, you reveal yourself as being of the party of God, revealed in Jesus Christ our Lord.

This must be taken seriously, for it is a matter of life and death. You must be prepared fully, without wavering or compromise, to accept the word of the Lord: he who will save his life shall lose it, and he who will lose his life for my sake will save it unto life eternal. The world calls you to be tolerant of its ungodly ways and beliefs. They, of course, are most intolerant of any of your Christian beliefs. Do not be deceived by their pious talk, for that is all that it is. They have no intention of tolerating what you believe.

You must reject the other lordship in this world. It is of the man of sin, of the son of perdition, of the beast and of the false prophet. It too strives for your all and is wholly intolerant. It stands radically opposed to your profession and will not rest until all the world worships him. He will seduce you by false philosophy, even under the cloak of righteousness. He will tempt you to become unfaithful to your profession by offering you privileges of the kingdom of this world. He will threaten you with his furious wrath, cast you out so that you can neither buy nor sell, and put the sword power to your throat.

Your and my calling is to hold fast, looking unto Jesus, our ascended High Priest. Without that look of faith, that constant look upon him, you will be swallowed up by the waves of temptation and tribulation. But seeing him, you will be safe, without fear of wavering.

The encouragement that we are given here is that we have a High Priest who is favorably disposed to us (v. 15). Here we see that we do not have a high priest who is not able to be affected with respect to our infirmities, but he was tried according to all things in like manner as we are, though without sin. He knows exactly what we go through when our faith is tried, when we are surrounded with manifold

temptations. He, the strong and sinless one, was tempted in all points as we are, but did not succumb. He knows that we are weak and sinful. He knows that we would not be able to stand for a moment without his sustaining and redeeming grace. Such a sympathetic High Priest we need. We still dwell in the body of sin and death that never delights to do the will of God, is still inclined to all evil, and still constitutes our greatest enemy. We constantly need this High Priest who sits at the right hand of God to pray for us to the Father.

We are called to come boldly to the throne of grace (v. 16). The Father's grace is his attitude of favor that shines upon us through the face of Jesus Christ.

What you, as young people, and all of God's children, must do is come to this throne of grace. We must acknowledge our own emptiness, our sin and death, and our need for grace and mercy. We must have a spiritual apprehension of his fullness as it is revealed in all its beauty in the face of Jesus Christ. There must be a deep longing for his fellowship. With the confidence of faith we must appropriate all the spiritual blessings revealed unto us and promised to us by the symbol of that throne of grace, in order that we may receive mercy and find grace.

Mercy is God's will to bless, for God is filled with a holy, eternal longing to lead his children into the glory of his everlasting tabernacle. Grace is the power by which all this is accomplished, the marvelous power by which he redeems us.

This we can do boldly, for our reception is assured. Christ is ascended as our High Priest who knows all our needs and fills them. This he does only as our ascended Lord. Hold fast to that profession!

Rev. Miersma is minister emeritus in the Protestant Reformed Churches.

Gem of the Month

Regina Wierenga

Lead Me Lord

Sometimes I feel so small; I'm lost and all alone
Then I feel Thy guiding arms around me, leading me Home.
When I turn the wrong way, Thou wilt gently call me back,
Saying, "Come, my child, we're going Home."

Lead me Lord, through the stormy night.
Lead me Lord, hold me very tight.
Mighty Shepherd, Gracious King, Holy God of everything;
Lead me Lord, Lead me Lord,
Through the night.

O Lord, the Good Shepherd, guide Thy lambs so small.
When I feel that I can go no further, don't let me fall.
The staff in Thy Hands, guides me o're the path,
And Thy ever gentle voice leads me home.

Lead me Lord, through the stormy night.
Lead me Lord, hold me very tight.
Mighty Shepherd, Gracious King, Holy God of everything;
Lead me Lord, Lead me Lord,
Through the night.

Lord God I feel thy presence reaching in my dark.
Give me faith that can move a mountain, speak to my heart.
I know that Thou art near me. God, teach me how to pray.
And Lead me through Thy word, every day.

Lead me Lord, through the stormy night.
Lead me Lord, hold me very tight.
Mighty Shepherd, Gracious King, Holy God of everything;
Lead me Lord, Lead me Lord,
Through the night.

Regina is a member of Immanuel Protestant Reformed Church in Lacombe, Alberta, Canada.

A Royal House (7)

Jeanne d'Albret finally returned to her royal house, the castle at Pau in the kingdom of Navarre. The queen was home!

The people of Navarre were glad. Not only did they have their queen safely back from the perils of the battle at La Rochelle, she brought back with her a gift—an amazing gift that would not have been possible to possess before. Jeanne had been busy for the many months she had stayed in La Rochelle. She had paid for the work to translate the New Testament into the Basque language, one of the languages spoken in Navarre. She took copies along with her now. She also saw to the translation and publication of the Genevan Catechism, written by John Calvin as he was in Geneva. Jeanne understood the Reformed principles that made reading the Scriptures in one's own tongue of utmost importance. She wanted that for all the people in her realm, no matter what language they spoke. She also saw the importance of growing in the knowledge of Reformed doctrine and truth. The Catechism was written in the form of questions and answers so that the doctrines taught in it could be more easily learned. Yes, the kingdom of Navarre was glad. With the return of their queen, the walls of the royal house at Pau rang once more with the truths of the Reformed faith, and they echoed that joy and gladness.

Castle of Pau

FIND THE UNDERLINED WORDS IN THE PUZZLE ON THE BACK PAGE:

"Beloved, think it not strange concerning the fiery trial which is to try you, as though some strange thing happened unto you: but rejoice, in as much as ye are partakers of Christ's sufferings; that, when his glory shall be revealed, ye may be glad also with exceeding joy. If ye be reproached for the name of Christ, happy are ye; for the spirit of glory and of God resteth upon you: on their part he is evil spoken of, but on your part he is glorified" (I Peter 4:12–14).

"LITTLE LIGHTS"

... let it shine!

God used the life of Jeanne d'Albret in a remarkable way, as he did the life of her mother, and as he would the life of her son. Her mother, Marguerite of Navarre, had helped many a Protestant prisoner and exile. Jeanne took up that work, and continued in it with all her heart and means. Her son would go on to reign in France as King Henry IV, and though his rule was not always favorable to the Reformed faith, he later signed the Edict of Nantes that would finally allow the Huguenots some measure of freedom to worship in France. The generations of the royal house were in God's providence and control.

But dangerous days still lay ahead for the queen, for Navarre…and for France. After the queen's return to Pau, the walls of the royal house there would not hear her voice for long. As soon as she returned, she was urged to go to Paris. She saw the danger and refused to go, but, finally, the reasons to go would become too overwhelming. She would leave for Paris, and she would suddenly and suspiciously die there in June of 1572. This would be only weeks before the most terrible event yet to afflict the Huguenots in France—the Saint Bartholomew's Day Massacre of 1572.

But all these persecutions were in God's sovereign control. That was the faith of the French Huguenots. They embraced the truths that God so graciously revealed to them, and that Calvin so ably set forth to them. Always, always, God uses kings, or queens, or peace, or war, or persecutions, or fiery trials—or anything—for the good of his people and the coming of his kingdom. They knew that, for he is God. He is sovereign. He alone saves his people. That was what they believed.

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

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Church News

Melinda Bleyenberg

BAPTISMS

"For the promise is unto you and to your children…." Acts 2:39

The sacrament of holy baptism was administered to:

Tyler Michael, son of Mr. & Mrs. Joel VanEgdom—Doon, IA
Sadie Grace, daughter of Mr. & Mrs. Josh Meulenberg—Grace, MI
Harper Renae, daughter of Mr. & Mrs. Phil Kalsbeek—Faith, MI
Anthony Gerard, son of Mr. & Mrs. Dwight Quenga—First, MI
Glenn Arnold, son of Mr. & Mrs. Aaron Lehrman—First, MI
Maci Nicole, daughter of Mr. & Mrs. Jeff VanOverloop—Grandville, MI
Deklan James, son of Mr. & Mrs. Nate Dykstra—Grandville, MI
Lucas Jonathan, son of Mr. & Mrs. Jonathan Huizing—Edmonton, CAN
Isabella Victoria, daughter of Mr. & Mrs. Jordan VanBaren—Hudsonville, MI
Charlie Owen, son of Mr. & Mrs. Pieter van Iperen—Immanuel, Lacombe, CAN
Alana Christine, daughter of Mr. & Mrs. David Brands—Loveland, CO
Levi Matthew, son of Mr. & Mrs. Nathan Dykstra—Peace, IL
Aleta Laine, daughter of Mr. & Mrs. Ted Brummel—Providence, MI
Cenya, son of Mr. & Mrs. Dustin Hoffman—Redlands, CA
Judah David, son of Mr. & Mrs. Joseph Ophoff—Southeast, MI
Pippa Leigh, daughter of Mr. & Mrs. David Dijkstra—Southeast, MI
Sadie Carolyn, daughter of Mr. & Mrs. Kirk Karsemeyer—Trinity, MI
Mya Leanne, daughter of Mr. & Mrs. Clint Vander Kolk—Trinity, MI

CONFESSIONS OF FAITH

"Fight the good fight of faith, lay hold on eternal life, whereunto thou art also called, and hast professed a good profession before many witnesses." I Timothy 6:13

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

Caitlin Regnery—Georgetown, MI
Stefan Bodbyl—Grandville, MI
Abby DeVries—Grandville, MI

MARRIAGES

"For this God is our God forever and ever: he will be our guide even unto death." Psalm 48:14

United in the bond of holy matrimony were:

Mr. Michael Terpstra and Miss Amy Poortinga—Crete, IL
Mr. Jim Westing and Miss Caitlin Regnery—Georgetown, MI
Mr. Gerard terAvest and Miss Erin Lautenschleger—Grace, MI
Mr. Ethan Mingerink and Miss Alyssa Klamer—Hope, MI
Mr. Joel Vanden Toorn and Miss Leah Koole—Hope, MI
Mr. & Mrs. Daniel and Rachelle Wierenga—Immanuel, Lacombe, CAN
Mr. Zach Poortinga and Miss Jodie Looyenga—Southwest, MI

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