Beacon Lights

Magazine of the Protestant Reformed Young People

December 2013

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Volume LXXII Number 12

Behold the Glory of His Nativity

Simply nauseating, isn't it?

Already seven weeks before the holy day of Christmas, we may hear the children of Zion singing:

"You better watch out, you better not cry,
You better not pout, I'm telling you why,
Santa Claus is coming to town.
He is making a list and checking it twice,
He's going to find out who is naughty and nice.
Santa Claus is coming to town."

And sad it is that the familiar chords of "O Little Town of Bethlehem" are scarcely heard until the last few days preceding the event of Christmas. Santa Claus is heralded into the cities and homes with great honor and festivity. He is lauded into the cities and homes with great honor and festivity. He is lauded with songs and praise and frequently superstitiously even worshipped, and Jesus is given less place than the abject stable of Bethlehem.

Simply nauseating, isn't it?

For weeks and weeks the excited mobs of men, women and children crowd the world's metropolises, driving to insanity many a neurotic clerk, and appeasing the carnal greed of the insidious merchantmen. Thousands of dollars are wasted on trivial matters, and the various causes of the Messiah's glorious kingdom often suffer want. Surely the blessed example of the Wise Men, who brought their gold, myrrh and frankincense to the crib of the Christ-child, is greatly disregarded in our modern celebrations.

Simply nauseating, isn't it?

On the eve of the Christmas day, which is an

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excellent occasion for the families of Jerusalem to unite at the family altar with father leading the children to the remembrance of the holy narrative and unitedly to join in the beautiful anthem, "O Come Let Us Adore Him," but Hiram, the eldest, must see Helen to surprise and please her with that precious ring. And Eleanor must be engaged at the neighbors, "taking care of the kids," while the elders go out to celebrate. After all, it is Christmas Eve. Then, too, little Nancy and Bernard, who don't know any better, are not satisfied until they have received and opened all their presents, and it is naturally almost an impossibility to begin anything with them after that.

Simply nauseating, isn't it?

On Christmas Day, the services in God's house are not considered to be of equal importance as those held on the Lord's day, and so mother and an older daughter are permitted to remain home to prepare that "very special dinner." And seeing that someone is home anyway, the smaller children might as well be home too, because they do have many new toys in which they are predominantly interested. Thus the house of God is meagerly attended on the special day.

We ask, "Isn't this all very nauseating?" And yet it constitutes such a great part of the annual Christmas celebrations, not only and exclusively among the world that has no other Christmas, but also among the children of the church. How much richer, more enduring and spiritually gratifying our Christmas becomes when we spend all our energy, which otherwise we exert to wedge our way through the mad mob of shoppers, and all our wealth, which otherwise goes predominantly toward natural luxuries TO BEHOLD THE GLORY OF HIS NATIVITY.

And that is the accomplishment of a mighty faith.

For to behold his glory in such a way that it is obscured by nothing of the flesh and this world demands that all the celebrations of this joyous season are governed by that dominant principle that overcomes the world.

Victorious Christmas!

Moreover, the faith that incites us to behold the glory of Jesus is the very evidence of unseen things. When you and I go presently to Bethlehem to look upon him and to handle him who is the Word of Life, you must, upon failure to see his glory, not become disappointed in him but remember that faith declares of him:

"He hath no form nor comeliness; and when we shall see him, there is no beauty that we should desire him. He is despised and rejected of men; a man of sorrows and acquainted with grief: and we hid as it were our faces from him."

And yet, strange as it may seem, and even paradoxical as it may be, HE IS ALSO THE ALL-GLORIOUS ONE, GOD AND MAN, LORD AND KING, OF WHOM AND THROUGH WHOM AND UNTO WHOM ALL THINGS SUBSIST. Shall we not sing of him," Lord, our Lord, Thy glorious Name…"?

For his glory is the revelation of all his good and perfect virtues. That glory he will not give to another, nor can you see or find it in any other, because his name is The Lord. All the festivities and merry wishes of Christmas are not glorious, and there is in them no goodness or virtue, except that they begin and end in the glorious Jesus.

Would we therefore be really happy in this season of mirth, we must not only be told the Christmas story and perhaps add a bit of religious piety to our hilarity of the day, but we ought to dispose of all our external foolishness and live by faith and trust in God alone. We ought to go to Bethlehem and realize that

"In this the day the Lord hath made
To Him be joyful honors paid,
Let us Thy full salvation see
O Lord, send now prosperity."

Then, though we are cast out of the world for his name's sake, and have no more than a place in the stable with a few bands to cover our naked body, we are rich and prosperous, having more abundance than the ungodly, who without Jesus Christ live in untold wealth. For he was made poor for us, that we might be rich. He who did not consider it robbery to be God's equal—for he is God—emptied himself and took upon himself the form of a servant, so that being deeply humiliated, he might obtain through obedience to the divine will the crown of glory for himself and all that the Father hath given him. There in the manger is the commencement of that glory. Behold it, believe it, trust and obey it: he is more precious than rubies or gold.

And the longer you and I stand at the side of his manger and look upon him in faith, the greater glory we behold. It surely would not hurt us to rise on Christmas morn with the breaking of dawn and spend the WHOLE day contemplating his glory. We may be sure that we would never exhaust the subject of our meditation, nor would we see more than our faith would desire. On the contrary, we would

cultivate a love to know "More about Jesus." Think of the revelation of glory in his birth. Born without the will of man, of a virgin through conception by the HOLY SPIRIT of God. Consider the PEACE which he came to establish, which not only surpasseth human understanding, but is the very power of God that keeps us—heart and mind—unto the salvation which is to be revealed in the last time through Jesus. Be mindful of the disturbance his coming created in the heavenly world, causing angels in great chorus to sing of his glory and majesty.

Oh, blessed Christmas with Jesus.

"My hope is built on nothing less
Than Jesus' blood and righteousness,
I dare not trust the sweetest frame
But wholly lean on Jesus' Name;
On Christ, the Solid Rock, I stand,
All other ground is sinking sand."

Editor's Notes

Mark H. Hoeksema

The editorial in this issue was written by Rev. Gerald Vanden Berg, whose name is probably not familiar to you. This is partially due to the fact that he is long deceased, and partly because he wrote the article for the December 1948 issue of *Beacon Lights*, a few decades before most of our readers were born.

Beacon Lights is not big on reprints, preferring to stay as up-to-date as possible. So why are we republishing a 65-year-old article? Two reasons.

First, the curious staff wanted to know how different the times were back then. Young people, dig out your history books. World War II had ended only three years earlier, and the country was beginning to return to normal and to prosper once again. Harry S. Truman was president of the United States—he who once said, "If you can't convince them, confuse them." In this December issue there was a discussion about holding the 1949 young people's convention in Manhattan, Montana. This would involve a 30-hour train ride at a cost of $42.64 per person, including tax. It was also reported that the circulation of the magazine was 877, and that it was being sent to twelve states, the Netherlands, and India. Rev. Vanden Berg was pastor of a small PR congregation in Grand Haven, Michigan, which has not existed for decades, although the church building still stands along US 31 on the south side of Grand Haven. But what about the celebration of Christmas? Were the issues different in 1948 from those of today?

Second, the answer will be immediately obvious when you read the article. The issues connected with Christmas are not different from those we encounter today. The same alternatives of a secular versus a religious observance existed then as they do now. The writing style was a bit different then, and I have edited with a light hand to preserve the flavor of the article. But as far as content is concerned, the article could have been written today. The central issues remain unchanged.

So read, enjoy, and learn.

Also in this issue, in accordance with his request, we publish a letter by Robert Koll exactly as we received it. Jesus viewed all children as special, for "of such is the kingdom of heaven." Robert is truly special.

Ask Schuyler

Bruce Koole

Letter to Schuyler

Dear Schuyler,

I must disagree with the September 2013 answer that hell is eternal. God's decrees are an eternal word. God's decree of reprobation is eternal. God's decree of election is eternal. God's counsel, the collection of his decrees and words, is eternal. However, just as Satan is, and likewise just as I am not eternal, so also is hell not eternal.

Hell is a created reality, created by God, just as in contrast heaven is another of God's wondrous acts of created reality. Things tangible, whether spiritual or physical, are not eternal in and of themselves. They all had a starting date within creation week. They were designed as a means to glorify God and to help develop the faith of his created beings, angels as well as men.

According to Genesis 1:1, not only was our sky created in some form or fashion on day one of the creation week, but so also was heaven as the home for God's angels. This means that I do not believe that heaven was eternal. Heaven will be re-created at the end of earthly time (Isa. 65:17; 66:22; 2 Peter 3:13). If heaven will be re-created, then it also was created.

The question that naturally arises is, where did God live in eternity? In eternity God simply was, or is. God does not need an environment in which to live as humans or as fish do. We are so limited by our senses we cannot fully comprehend a being, Jehovah God, who does not need a place. This is the definition of invisibility and spirituality. The triune God had himself with whom to fellowship covenantally. A place was/is not needed.

I would tell my own biological and school children that God created hell and heaven so as to leave the angels and man without excuse in their sin. Satan knew of hell before his fall. This is why Genesis 1 and 2 repeat the phrase "And God saw everything that he had made, and it was very good." The verses do not say "There was no death." The plants in creation died in some form or fashion so as to feed Adam, Eve, and the animals. Creation was good because it worked exactly as God had formed it. Hell, as a logical development of this idea, was a place of death, present during creation week and present before the fall. No sin was present in hell, since hell was the perfect expression of God's anger. Hell is the bower for the second death. Hell is bad enough now, and it will only get worse after the final judgment for those who are its citizens. Hell is a reality where the reprobate will experience a second death everlastingly.

In contrast, heaven is a reality, where we will be given spiritual bodies so as to live everlastingly. To give us something to anticipate in hope, with a view to strengthening our weak faith, God created heaven—an act of mercy, grace, love, etc. Also, to stop our stubborn pride of sin, God warns us about the consequences of sin by creating hell—the result of "for in the day that thou eatest thereof, thou shalt surely die" (Genesis 2:17). God could not talk of death outside of Christ unless hell was present. I have no firm idea of when hell was created, though I would tend toward the first day, the same time as when you rightly point out (Job 38:6–7) that angels and heaven were created.

To say that heaven and hell as places are eternal not only detracts from God's powers during the creation week, but also unintentionally lessens him. The Father, Son (Word), and Holy Spirit are no longer the only eternal persons. God is no longer the only eternal essence. God alone must remain sovereign. All places started during creation week.

The usual New Testament word for eternal is literally in English *eons*, and can mean eternal, everlasting, or ages. This is the meaning of John 6:54: "Whoso eateth my flesh, and drinketh my blood, hath *eternal* life; and I will raise him up at the last day." In this passage and in over 150 others with this word, the word *eons* is more representative of the quality of life rather than the time aspect. It emphasizes timelessness. This word is used as a contrast to time-limited man, who always knows how old he is and in the back of his mind always has thought of how many years he has left of his four score years, if strength be great. The KJV translates the word *eons* half the time as "eternal" and the other half as "everlasting." For God's elect to live unto everlasting in heaven is the same as eternity in our minds. We will live unto forever, but we are not divinely eternal.

A different Greek word for eternal shows up in Romans 1:20 "For the invisible things of him from the creation of the world are clearly seen, being understood by the things that are made, even his *eternal* power and Godhead; so that they are without excuse." God alone is truly eternal.

With fondest appreciation for this feature, the editors, and the magazine,

Bruce J. Koole
Loveland, CO

Response

I appreciate the brother's "fondest appreciation" for the *Beacon Lights*. I also appreciate his willingness to submit his query and, indeed, his readiness to correct a perceived error. All of us should have the humility of mind to consider the corrections of our fellow saints. Nevertheless, I am puzzled by the brother's response. The brother writes to express

disagreement, but I do not perceive that any disagreement exists.

The main reason for his supposed disagreement is the question of the eternality of hell. Twice the brother accuses me of teaching that hell is eternal ("I must disagree with the September 2013 answer that hell is eternal." "To say that heaven and hell as places are eternal not only detracts from God's powers during the creation week, but also unintentionally lessens him").

However, I did *not* write that "hell is eternal." What I wrote was this: "Therefore God *created hell* as a place of eternal punishment *before* he created the angels and men who would later fall in his eternal decree" (italics added for emphasis).

Therefore, I agree entirely with what the brother writes concerning the eternal being and decrees of God. I also agree that neither the place heaven nor the place hell are eternal in the sense that both have a beginning, although as the brother rightly points out, both are without (future) ending. In that sense, we might call both heaven and hell "everlasting" (Matt. 25:46). We agree on the orthodox doctrine of the everlasting punishment of the wicked.

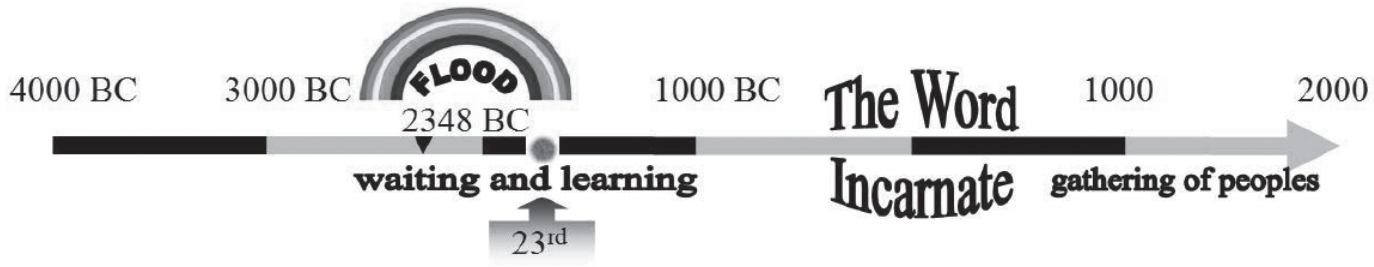
I pinpointed the date of hell's creation as "before God created the angels and men," that is, before the sixth day of creation. Brother Koole suggests that hell existed "during the creation week and before the fall" and adds, "I have no firm idea of when hell was created, though I would tend toward the first day." I did not opt for any particular day in the creation week in my contribution, because the Bible does not tell us, but I do not disagree that the first day is a possibility. About that none of us can be sure.

Cordially,

Schuyler

Church History — John Huizenga

The Twenty-third Century of His-Story:
Jacob the Weary Pilgrim



The twenty-third century of history begins with a rather lonely and depressing scene. Jacob is on a journey. He is alone, leaving his home and family. He is fleeing the wrath of his brother, Esau, and heading toward the land and the family of his uncle Laban, where his mother grew up. Outwardly, it would appear that his life and future did not improve very much. One hundred years later the scene is strikingly similar. The century will come to a close with Jacob again on the move and rather uncertain about the future. At that time he will no longer be alone, but will be leaving the promised land of Canaan with wagon loads of belongings and seventy souls to live in Egypt. From an outward and earthly point of view, Jacob's life was a series of disappointments and a failure to thrive.

When he gets to Egypt, Joseph introduces him to Pharaoh, and in this meeting we see a striking display of the antithesis between the church and the world. The tired patriarch Jacob and the enthusiastic young Pharaoh stand face to face; the life of the church and the life of the world stand face to face.

They try to communicate, but it really is not possible. The difference between the two goes far deeper than language or culture—it's as if they are from two different worlds. Pharaoh comes in the flush of an astounding victory over famine, having averted national disaster, now as an exceedingly powerful man. He comes filled with positive ambition and a zest for life. We read that Jacob blessed the king, but this can be nothing more than him giving honor to the king with a greeting and farewell. He finds no reason or direction from God to pronounce a true spiritual blessing of God's favor upon him. Pharaoh is apparently impressed with the great age of Jacob, and asks about it. Jacob answers with a brief but very revealing commentary on his life: "The days of the years of my pilgrimage are an hundred and thirty years: few and evil have the days of the years of my life been, and have not attained unto the days of the years of the life of my fathers in the days of their pilgrimage" (Gen. 47:9) The pomp, zest for earthly life, and ambitions for power hold no interest for Jacob, and the king doesn't really know what to say in response to Jacob's seemingly gloomy words. Pilgrimage? Perhaps this old man can at last settle down in the pasture lands of Egypt. Pharoah does what he can as far as providing earthly comforts and offers him good pasture land for his cattle.

These words of Jacob are not words of bitter resentment for the difficult life that he has lived, but rather those of a pilgrim speaking to a prosperous citizen of this earth who really can never understand or appreciate what he is hearing. What else would we expect from a man who has grown in faith and understands clearly what the life of a spiritual pilgrim entails? God says of Jacob and the rest of the patriarchs, "These all died in faith, not having received the promises, but having seen them afar off, and were persuaded of them, and embraced them, and confessed that they were strangers and pilgrims on the earth. For they that say such things declare plainly that they seek a country. And truly, if they had been mindful of that country from whence they came out, they might have had opportunity to have returned. But now they desire a better country, that is, an heavenly: wherefore God is not ashamed to be called their God: for he hath prepared for them a city" (Heb. 11:13–16). God's people are pilgrims. Though Satan at times can distract and dazzle us with the wonderful things in this life, the child of God comes to realize he is a pilgrim in this earthly life. God is pleased to give us life for awhile in a place that is not home, so that we grow and are prepared for eternal life with God. God often has a very busy schedule of hardships for the short life of his saints as he reveals to them through these trials the depth of their sins and miseries and also the wonder of his love and grace in Christ. Jacob was no exception, and serves as a pattern and example for our lives.

The word that Jacob uses to describe his life and that of his fathers is "pilgrimage." In contrast to Pharaoh and the people within his kingdom, who were applying all their resources to the building up of a mighty nation able to satisfy earthly needs and desires, Jacob had spent his life wrestling with family problems, and finally after wrestling with the angel of Jehovah (Hosea 12:3–4), coming to see the foolishness of trusting physical strength and earthly wisdom. Through the trials and struggles of life in this earth, God brought Jacob into covenant fellowship with himself. Having tasted life as a citizen of heaven in fellowship with God, the glories and ambitions of Pharaoh hold not the least bit of attraction. Jacob is interested in Pharaoh only insofar as to see how God has used him to bring Joseph into a position of bringing his family into Egypt.

Leaving the promised land and moving to Egypt did not seem to fit with the promise of God, but God did tell Abraham earlier that this would happen. Over two hundred years earlier, when Abram had fallen into a deep sleep and "an horror of great darkness came over him," God spoke of his covenant to Abram with the words, "Know of a surety that thy seed shall be a stranger in a land that is not theirs, and shall serve them; and they shall afflict them four hundred years; And also that nation, whom they shall serve, will I judge: and afterward shall they come out with great substance. And thou shalt go to thy fathers in peace; thou shalt be buried in a good old age. But in the fourth generation they shall come hither again: for the iniquity of the Amorites is not yet full" (Genesis 15:13–16). The Amorites were descendents of Ham's son Canaan. Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob had been living among them and could see the growth and development in their iniquity while waiting for God to give them this promised land. The land itself was only a picture of heaven, and the life of Jacob in Canaan and now in Egypt were pictures of the church as she waits for the reality of heavenly life. Pharaoh was completely blind to the spiritual reality of Jacob's life, and spoke to him as a

mere curiosity. The two of them standing there face to face were of entirely different kingdoms. Jacob was only passing through and looking more and more forward the closer he got to his destination: perfect covenant life with God in heaven.

The land that Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob were traveling toward was heaven, and not simply a settled life in the land of Canaan. It is true that God spoke to them all of the promise of obtaining the land of Canaan, and eventually the children of Israel obtained the land and even established a mighty kingdom there. But even for the people of God who lived in peace under their own vine at the peak of Solomon's glory, it was obvious that Canaan was only a picture of the heavenly kingdom. Sin had not been conquered. The picture quickly disintegrated as God again directed his people to the reality. The word of God in Hebrews 11 makes clear that Jacob understood that his destination was not merely an earthly kingdom in Canaan. In the same way we need to understand that the church on this earth and the gathering of the church into the kingdom of God is not the ultimate goal and destination. We do not yet live in the new heavens and the new earth, as many today seem to imagine. We are still pilgrims just like Jacob, and the way we life our life must show it.

Jacob's life was difficult and full of trials. Homer Hoeksema gives this summary of his life's events:

> He had been born at a disadvantage regarding that which he cherished most: the promise. He had been struggling long years with his wicked brother Esau, who despised the birthright. He had been compelled to become an exile, without possessions except for his staff. He had been in servitude to his crafty uncle for a score of years. He had been cheated out of the wife he loved and was compelled to marry the woman he did not love. His beloved Rachel had died in childbirth. He had been constantly harassed with family troubles of the worst nature. He had seen the wickedness of his sons: of Judah, of Reuben, of Simeon and Levi. He had bemoaned for years the loss of his most beloved son. Now he was compelled to leave the land of promise and to move to a strange land once more. Indeed, to the flesh the way had been evil. … But now bring in the pilgrim's viewpoint. Then not the way, but the goal is the main thing. With respect to the way, the sole question is not, "Was the way smooth or rough?" Rather, in evaluating the way, the sole question is this: "What was its direction and whither did it lead me?" All of life must be judged in the light of this question (*Unfolding Covenant History* 3:186–7).

Jacob's direction in life was toward closer fellowship with God, trusting in God's sovereign control, and the honor and glory of his name. From an outward perspective, even we in the church might be inclined to judge his life as a disaster. Suppose Jacob and his family attended your church. He sits there, an old man with a family history of gross sins among his children, and never really settled and established. But we may not be respecters of persons. Jacob is very aware of his weakness and the power of sin, and he has grown very close to God in his covenant fellowship as he waits to enter his heavenly home.

The pilgrim never really feels at home in life as long as he is a pilgrim here on this earth. It's not that he doesn't appreciate the wonders and beauty of this world or that he is dissatisfied with what God has created, but he recognizes that this world has been corrupted by sin and that God has established it as preparation for covenant life with him in the new heavens and the new earth. Our young people who attend Christian colleges are bombarded with the message that this present earth is our home, and that it is our business actively to engage and transform the world in preparation for Christ's return to rule. This world has too much to offer and the colleges don't like pessimistic pilgrim talk. If God has infused this world with a grace common to all, how dare we disparage it with the tunnel vision of a pilgrim? God's word makes it clear that Jacob was a pilgrim even as he walked the land of Canaan, and not only while in Egypt. God makes it clear that the saints all view this present earth as a preparation for the new heavens and the new earth. Who are we to reply to God with our own vision and wisdom? On the other hand, if our young people go to secular universities, they are temped with the glories and power of man, as Jacob saw in Egypt. Either way, we must remember that we are pilgrims and desire a better country, that is, an heavenly.

Let's keep in mind that one characteristic of this period of history for the church is that of learning and waiting. She has already learned that God will choose by his sovereign good pleasure who will be saved. She has learned that man will not need to earn salvation in any way by his own works. She is aware that salvation will be deliverance from the bondage of sin, and that God will send one, born

of a woman, to do the work of saving the church. She is also aware that the nations of the earth have disappeared off into the horizon to fill and populate the earth, but that the church will one day be gathered from each of these nations. Today we live in the last day, but we are not in heaven yet. We still live as pilgrims and have the same attitude toward this world as Jacob did.

John is a member of Calvary Protestant Reformed Church in Hull, Iowa and the former editor of Beacon Lights.

Choosing a Vocation

Monica Koole

Secretary

God leads all of his children in special ways throughout their lives to fully prepare them for their particular place in heaven. Each way he leads is different and unique. For some, college awaits them, for others, full time jobs. The problem we so often have is in discerning that special way God is pleased to lead us in our lives here below. We must remember first and foremost that we are set here below to serve our king in heaven. Each of us is called personally in 1 Thessalonians 2:12 to "walk worthy of God, who hath called you unto his kingdom and glory". We must therefore choose vocations that are in accordance to God's word. God doesn't ever specifically call us to a certain vocation in Scripture, but he does give us guidelines, and those we must seek and follow in the choosing of a vocation here below.

For many young people, college is the way that they are led, but that isn't the way God leads every one of us. Yes, we should all consider the possibility of furthering our education, and prayerfully consider it, but for some of us, that isn't God's way of leading. For me, I had no desire to attend college, and had no idea what course of study I would pursue if I went college. I spent my first two years out of high school working two part-time jobs. After awhile, I seriously considered going to college because I didn't want part time jobs for the rest of my life. I even signed up for general classes and went to orientation, but that was not the way God chose to lead me. Right after I had signed up for classes I was informed of a secretary job that would be opening soon. I would start training almost right away and then after a few months would take over full time.

At this point in my life I was confused, because I had never really wanted to be a secretary, but I also didn't really want to go to college either. The only thing I knew for certain was that I didn't want to work two part-time jobs any longer. So, with much prayer I decided to start training for the secretary job, although I didn't totally throw out going to college. I stayed signed up for college as I also started to learn what was involved in becoming a secretary. Notice, young people, God doesn't always give answers right away, as we so often expect. Notice another thing too: we must pray! Prayer is an essential part of our lives, and in choosing a vocation we must prayerfully consider God's will for our lives. This was not an easy decision for me, and for awhile I went back and forth between the two, knowing that the two pathways were totally different. It wasn't until after a month as a part time secretary that I started to become more and more convinced that I should take the secretary job. It wasn't through any major thing that happened, but through prayer and God's guidance that I became a secretary.

Let me give you a few facts concerning what is involved in a secretary job. For those of you who love math, my job would be prime. Much of my job consists of numbers in amounts of money. On a day to day basis I receive, enter, pay, and send out bills. I figure out bank statements for the company, take care of paying our employees, do taxes for the company, and the list goes on. I have always enjoyed math, and so I immensely enjoy working with numbers every day.

There is much more involved in being a secretary than just math. Each day I answer, direct, and make

phone calls. There is mail to go through every day, and on Fridays I have a stack of paperwork to file for the week. Besides this, I often have plans to print for different jobs we are doing, and sometimes also have to run little errands for these jobs. Each company runs a little bit differently, and so each secretary job will vary, depending on what kind of company you work for, how big the company is, how many other secretaries are in one company, etc. For me, I am an only secretary at my office, and so although I have routine jobs to do, each day is quite a bit different too. I love that each day is a little bit diverse from the others, but yet also has consistence. It keeps things interesting while not making you feel overwhelmed by a completely different schedule from one day to the next.

My job as a secretary has been wonderful for me. A college education isn't needed, it provides me with full time work, and I love the work that I do. I never thought I would love being a secretary, because I always pictured secretary jobs as stuffy jobs, always stuck in an office, and rarely ever seeing sunlight. I was very wrong, though. For me, each day I get to admire God's handiwork through my office window. When it is springtime, often the door to my office is propped open and I enjoy the birds chirping and the beautiful breeze as it blows through. Also, since my job, like most secretary jobs, has good business hours generally ranging between 8am to 5pm, there is still much time after that to enjoy God's beautiful creation. More than that, God has blessed me with an atmosphere where I get to work with those of like faith. It is a rare and beautiful thing, working with those to whom you relate both in the work area and in your spiritual walk here below. There is a shared bond of unity even while at work, knowing that you all strive for that same goal, to serve your king in heaven.

Focusing specifically now on young women, many will tell you that you need to go to college. Yes, I agree that college is very good and educates you further, but if you have prayerfully considered it, and still have no desire to go to college, this is a good job for you to seek. It may pay a little bit less than a job attained through a college education, but it does not require more years of schooling and money to obtain it. A secretary job has reasonable hours and is also a vocation that is easily given up when God does provide you with a new vocation of caring for a husband and children. Do not be ashamed of wanting a husband and children. This is God's will for most women. God through Timothy says "I will therefore that the younger women marry, bear children, guide the house, give none occasion to the adversary to speak reproachfully" (1 Tim 5:14). A secretary job is a very nice job to have for those of you who are viewing marriage soon after high school and want to start saving up money right away.

For those of you interested in a secretary position, often this occupation is obtained through contacts you know. Many businesses want to hire people they can trust, and who is better to choose than people that they directly know, or those who are referred to them by a friend as being hard workers? So, keep an ear attentive and an eye open, and I'd suggest first looking for opportunities within your own circle of acquaintances. You will find that God provides in his own timing, so don't become impatient either when something isn't provided right away.

Let me now tell you a few things God has brought to my attention through my job as a secretary. First and foremost, God has taught me that contentment is key, no matter the vocation to which God calls you. Often we expect this perfect job to fall into our laps, and that the riding will be smooth. No, there are ups and downs to every job, but contentment in the calling God has given you leads to great joy in even the simplest, most mundane tasks of the day. View your work with the attitude that God has provided labor for my hands and food for my body, and in this I am greatly blessed. For this I praise the Lord.

Through my job as a secretary, my perspective of money has changed greatly. I became more aware of how much I had put my trust in something that perishes. Up until this job, I thought I had done a pretty good job of keeping things in perspective, but I see now how often I forget that all that we have (including money) is given us by God and is to be used in his service. I see more fully that money is not to be trusted. It is not something that you can keep forever, nor rely on to keep you safe. I see money come and go every day. It is gained, only to be lost again by paying the bills that are owed to others. I have come more clearly to understand Hebrews 13:8, comprehending more fully the truth that only our Lord Jesus Christ is the same yesterday, today, and forever. He alone is unchangeable, and remains the same. He alone is to be trusted.

In conclusion, God gives his children unique paths to follow, with many different vocations here

below. The most important thing we all must remember is that we are to use whatever vocation God leads us in, to serve him and his kingdom. We must also learn contentment with the vocation God gives us, whether it is as a college student for a number of years, as a full time worker, or as a mother in the home. God has placed us here below, and he will most definitely guide us in the way he has prepared. Remember the words of 1 Timothy 6:6–8 "But godliness with contentment is great gain. For we brought nothing into this world, and it is certain we can carry nothing out. And having food and raiment let us be therewith content." Depend on God, praying for his guidance in the vocation he has set before us. Be content with the position he has given each one of us, and, young people, trust! Trust that he who has ordained all things from the beginning of time will lead us in the right path and provide for us. God will guide each one of us in the vocation he has chosen for us here below, until we are prepared for our eternal vocation in heaven, where all God's saints shall gather one day to serve him eternally.

Monica is a member of Hope Protestant Reformed Church in Walker, Michigan and Contributing Editor Correspondent for Beacon Lights.

Letters — Robert Koll

[Christian Frends] by Robert James Koll
I Robert James Koll Am Living
At a group Home Sence Jan-21-2013.
And I HAD No frends. I pray At
Night Be fore I went to Bed.
I said This – OUR Heavenly father
Can You Help me to find a cristian
frend if it is in Your plan for me
Amean. Then I met a guy Named
JoeL my Next Door Namber. I ASK
JoeL if Hes A Christan JoEL said
Yes. we Now talk A Lot.
And He is now my Friend.
GoD Anwered my prayer.
And Hes my Number 1 Frend
I Love GoD.

Page 1 of 2

So The Next Day I prayed
to GoD And thank Him.
GoD Is The First thing in my Life.
Thanks

Page 2 of 2

FRIENDSHIP

Friendship with God is our greatest gift of joy.
That friendship shown us in the death of his Son
Is the greatest friendship there ever shall be.
In Christ Jesus, God's friends we ever remain.

No one can pluck us from this amazing bond,
For God who is sovereign has made us his friends
God in this friendship shows to us who he is:
The only God whose name receives all glory.

With this in mind we make our friendships on earth,
With those who have also been made friends of God,
Who were made such through the blood of Christ Jesus,
Who purchased for us the right to be His friends

The friends we choose must picture our Savior, Christ,
The greatest of friends who died for all our sins.
God sends friends to us to share with us his love,
To reflect the friendship he has made with us.

Choose the friends of God to also be your friends,
Who serve Christ alone who is our greatest friend.
True Friends will with you give all glory to God,
Who alone deserves all our praise forever.

Treasure always God's gift of friendship with us.
Reflect that friendship in your relationships
Do so with those who through Christ are God's close friends
May your friends reflect God's friendship made with us.

Watching Daily At My Gates

December 10 ***Read Ezekiel 12***

Judah did not seem to learn from Ezekiel's earlier prophecies and words, so God sent the rebellious captives another sign. Ezekiel had to move all of his belongings out of his house through a hole that he made in the wall. This would be a picture of how Zedekiah would attempt to flee Jerusalem. Second, Ezekiel had to eat as if someone was near him to snatch it away from his plate. The rebels tried to ignore these signs as something that would be coming in the distant future. Do we see the signs God is sending us about the end of this present world? If we see them, do we heed them? Sing Psalter 191.

December 11 ***Read Ezekiel 13***

False prophets have been a plague on God's church from its inception until now, and they will continue until Christ returns. The greatest of evils that these false prophets commit is to make the church comfortable in their sins. In Israel's day they promoted idol worship and strange worship practices in the temple. In our day they seek to assure God's people that all kinds of sins are not so bad. Not only must we not heed those false prophets, but we must also root them out of the church when they appear. This is not easy work, but it will be blessed by God. Sing Psalter 184.

December 12 ***Read Ezekiel 14***

Most of us have never bowed before a three-dimensional idol. But most of us, like the men who came to see Ezekiel, have idols in our hearts. We must realize that our idol worship is no better than and just as heinous in God's sight as the sin of bowing before some man-made object. We must rid ourselves of those idols in our lives. We must not, again like the men who came to see Ezekiel, hold on to a false hope of deliverance other than what God has ordained. Our sins, like their sins, cannot be atoned for by the holiest of men. For the true child of God, whether in Israel of old or in today's world, there is a grace given to him by God alone. Pray for that grace and be delivered from idolatry and false hopes. Sing Psalter 157.

December 13 ***Read Ezekiel 15***

Throughout Scripture Israel was compared to a vine. We see that again in this chapter, but in a different light. True Israel was compared to a grapevine that brought forth much fruit. Wicked Israel was compared to a useless vine that grew in the forest and had to be cut down so the good trees could grow unhindered. After it was cut down, it was burned. Apostate Israel of any age will be cut down by God and burned in the fire of his wrath. Are we learning anything from Israel of old? Sing Psalter 218.

December 14 ***Read Ezekiel 16***

Judah had the advantages of an orphan found drowning in its own afterbirth and blood, but preserved. God took her, showered his unmerited favor upon her, and exalted her among all the nations. Judah despised her inheritance and was punished for her despicable actions, which because of that inheritance, were far worse than Samaria and Sodom. Yet God in his mercy would preserve a remnant unto himself. We must learn from Judah's history to be the faithful bride of Christ. May he find us faithful at his return. Sing Psalter 125.

December 15 ***Read Ezekiel 17***

Four kings are portrayed in this parable. There is an apostate king, Zedekiah, who in seeking to escape the wicked Nebuchadnezzar, attempts to make an agreement with the wicked king of Israel. Ezekiel delivers this parable to the captives who are still holding on to a false hope that Zedekiah would throw off Babylon, and that they would return to Judah. The final king is the branch out of the root of Jesse. We have a prophecy of the coming Messiah, who would take a portion of that crushed vine and replant it in Zion. Out of that kingdom would come the present day church, of which we are members. Thanks be to God for his unspeakable gift. Sing Psalter 198.

December 16 ***Read Ezekiel 18***

Man does not like to hold to the truth of the sovereignty of God. He would like to blame anyone and everyone, including God, for his troubles and wretched state. Judah was no different. Instead of examining themselves for the faults that had caused their present troubles, Judah said that it was their fathers' faults. In this chapter God through Ezekiel sets forth the truth that everyone is responsible for his own actions. The righteous, in their righteousness as given to them by God, will be rewarded. The wicked in their own wickedness have their reward as well. Let

us walk in an acceptable way and receive the reward of grace. Sing Psalter 24.

December 17 *Read Ezekiel 19*

In this chapter we find Ezekiel's lament over the royal house of Judah. David's descendants were reaping the reward of their wickedness. Ezekiel is looking at their demise not only from the aspect of the promise to David, but also as these men had the responsibility of leadership in the church of Christ. Those of us who are leaders or aspire to be leaders: are we walking in these men's shoes? Because of these kings' wickedness the nation of Judah, the vine, is plucked up and destroyed. May leaders today be warned of the seriousness of their calling. Sing Psalter 223.

December 18 *Read Ezekiel 20*

The elders of Israel came to Ezekiel to ask him to seek God for them. God's answer was that he would not be sought of them because they would not follow him. He recounts several of their sins. Chief of those sins were idolatry and sabbath desecration. Both of those sins deal with the worship of Jehovah. How do we worship Jehovah? Do we do it as he has commanded? Do we keep the regulative principle of worship as it is found in God's word? Or do we seek to worship him in ways of our own inventions? Worship is a blessed part of the relationship we have with God. When we obey him in worship, the blessings of that worship flow down upon us. Sing Psalter 261.

December 19 *Read Ezekiel 21*

The last chapter closed with a parable of fire. That parable was a sign of the coming destruction upon Jerusalem. Ezekiel's sighing was a sign of the deep distress he felt for the people of God. This destruction would be so great that when Zedekiah was forcibly taken from the throne, there would be no king until God would put a new one there. That king would be Christ. Christ would fulfill the promise made to David; Christ would bring deliverance for true Israel from all their distress. May we, like the remnant of that day, look eagerly for his return to take us all to glory in the new Jerusalem. Sing Psalter 224.

December 20 *Read Ezekiel 22*

In this chapter we find a list of the sins of which Israel was guilty. It is a long list, and it is a list that contains many evils. For those sins God had judged them and was coming to destroy them. There is no escape for God's people, as his glory must be preserved to the nations around Judah. Those nations saw Judah's sins and used them to mock God. What do the people of our communities think about us? Do we bring glory or shame to God's name? God will not be mocked as he is jealous toward his most holy name. Sing Psalter 138.

December 21 *Read Ezekiel 23*

Israel and Judah are portrayed in this chapter as two harlots. Because they have left their husband, God, and have gone after other lovers, God has, is, and will continue to judge them for their iniquities. This is a long chapter spoken to those already taken captive so that they would understand their plight. The wicked among them would not hear the word of the Lord, but the righteous remnant, by grace, would hear and turn unto Jehovah. May we never leave our husband, whose coming we await on the clouds of glory. Sing Psalter 124.

December 22 *Read Ezekiel 24*

In this chapter Ezekiel is to prophesy of the beginning of the end of Jerusalem. As he is making this prophecy, Nebuchadnezzar is closing around Jerusalem to put them under siege. The picture of the boiling pot is a picture of the calamities that Jerusalem's inhabitants must endure. Ezekiel also must personally be a part of his prophecies. God ends the life of his wife, and he is forbidden to mourn her death. This is to show that Jerusalem's end is past all sorrows because of their sins. Through these judgments God will save a remnant, and out of that remnant Christ will come for our redemption. Sing Psalter 379.

December 23 *Read Ezekiel 25*

In the next several chapters Ezekiel prophesies of judgments to be brought upon the heathen. In this chapter four nations, Ammon, Moab, Edom, and Philistia are mentioned. The first three nations are relatives of Israel from Lot and Isaac. These perpetual tormentors of God's people will be destroyed for their heinous acts against the covenant people of God. Especially Edom is the nation that pictured the reprobate wicked throughout its history. These prophecies give hope to God's people, who see that God is just in punishing the wicked and merciful in his preserving the remnant. Sing Psalter 380.

December 24 *Read Ezekiel 26*

Notice the words "the word of the Lord." Jehovah's word is powerful and leads to action. In the next several chapters Tyre is singled out for its gloating over Jerusalem's fall. Tyre had quietly built itself into a world power by its gathering riches using its trading skill. Tyre had also given Baal worship to the northern kingdom through wicked Jezebel. Through Nebuchadnezzar God would bring judgment upon this wicked nation. Do we hear that powerful voice in our lives? Do we head it? Sing Psalter 76.

December 25 *Read Ezekiel 27*

In this chapter we find a detailed description of Tyre and her success in commerce. Tyre or Lebanon was known throughout the world for its trading acumen as well as its shipping ability. It plied all the known seas, stopping at every port to exchange its wares. Was this grace to her?

Is there any hint of common grace here? The answer is no. What did they do with their wealth? They put it into service of their god Baal. What was God's response to their excesses? They were destroyed for not glorifying him, and they had to endure the scorn of the nations around them. We must use the wealth God has given to us for his glory and his glory alone. Sing Psalter 308.

December 26 *Read Ezekiel 28*

In the destruction and judgment of Tyre we find redemption for the people of God. In the first part of the chapter, Tyre's king is singled out for his scorn of the people of God, especially as they were taken to captivity and their country ravished by Babylon. He would suffer the same fate as directed by almighty, sovereign God. There would be no help for him. In the final verses once again we see God's promise to gather his remnant from the four corners of the earth and restore them to glory. This is not an earthly glory, but this is the glory he has ordained for them, which will lead them to the new heavens and the new earth—the new Jerusalem. May we too wait for that glory, knowing that our home is not on this earth. Sing Psalter 224.

December 27 *Read Ezekiel 29*

The list of Babylon's conquests is not chronological but geographical, starting with the nations nearest to Jerusalem. From Tyre the prophet turns his attention to Egypt, the picture of the reprobate whose land was the picture of hell. The Nile River was so important to Egypt that Egypt is known as "the gift of the Nile." It provided them with one of their gods. Jehovah, who is God alone, will utterly destroy this wicked nation for their attitude toward the covenant people. They, along with other wicked nations, will know that Jehovah is God. The chapter closes with a word of grace to Judah, who will return from their captivity and bloom into fruitfulness once more. Sing Psalter 182.

December 28 *Read Ezekiel 30*

The prophecy of doom against Egypt is continued in this chapter. Not only Egypt is mentioned for its wickedness, but also those around her who were allied to her are destined to fall under the mighty hand of Nebuchadnezzar. Egypt's fall is a signal event for the church. The wicked who seem to prosper will receive judgment at the hand of God. These prophecies should not cause us to gloat, but they should make us turn to our God and turn from our sins. May God grant us the grace to do so. Sing Psalter 173.

December 29 *Read Ezekiel 31*

To those who thought Egypt would never fall, God reminded them of the great nation of Assyria with its capital of splendor, Nineveh. That great nation fell, and Ezekiel pointed to its destruction as a portent of the destruction of an equally great but equally wicked nation. God's people in Babylon had to see in the historical realities of the day that God's word would come to pass. They would remain in Babylon for seventy years. May this serve as a warning to us to watch the signs of the times given to us by Christ and know that he is coming again. Sing Psalter 160.

December 30 *Read Ezekiel 32*

We may wonder why there are so many prophecies about the destruction of Egypt. The answer seems to have two parts. For Israel of that day, Egypt was an old enemy. It was Egypt who held God's people in bondage for 400 years and made them work extremely hard. It was Pharoah who refused to obey the word of God as spoken by Moses to let his people go. Second, Egypt is a picture for the church of all ages of the wicked kingdom that seeks to oppress God's people. This is mentioned in Revelation. Egypt's destruction provides the people of God of all time with the assurance that their savior is coming and will redeem them from this world. Sing Psalter 158.

December 31 *Read Ezekiel 33*

This chapter is the beginning of the last section of Ezekiel. The prophet is set as a watchman to warn the people of God to turn from their wicked way or they will be destroyed, even as those wicked nations around them would be destroyed. Against the complaint that God was not fair, Ezekiel had to tell them that they were not being righteous in their lives and therefore God was just. In this chapter we have the announcement to Ezekiel and those in Babylon that Jerusalem had fallen, and the rest of the captives would be coming. God's prophet was vindicated. We too must not fail to see in what is happening around us that this world is not our home. Judgment is coming. Are we watching, waiting, and praying? Sing Psalter 105.

January 1 *Read Ezekiel 34*

Throughout the ages God has entrusted his church to undershepherds. For Israel of the old dispensation those leaders were the prophets, priests, and kings. The priests came from the house of Levi and out of Levi, from Aaron. The kings were drawn from Judah and out of the line of David. While these offices were still in effect after the captivity, there would never again be a king from David's line. The false prophets and other ineffective leaders were admonished for their sins. God, however, did not leave his people leaderless. He would gather them and care for them. In his mercy he would give them a new shepherd, the Messiah. Leaders in the church today must read this chapter and carry out their offices in the fear of Jehovah, as they must answer to God. Sing Psalter 223.

January 2 *Read Ezekiel 35*

In gathering his people from many lands, God would show all the enemies of the church that he was still with his people. He had not abandoned them. In his mercy he would restore them as a nation once more. Those enemies are portrayed in this chapter as Israel's enemy

of old, Edom. The Edomites, descended from Esau, were the clear picture of the reprobate. It was of them God had said, "Esau have I hated." Esau mocked God's people, but God would deliver his people through his judgment of Esau. Sing Psalter 379.

January 3 *Read Ezekiel 36*

When Ezekiel made this prophecy, the mountains of Judah and especially the mountains of Jerusalem lay desolate, waste, and bare. God promises those mountains, of which glorious things are spoken, that he would bring a people back to inhabit them. Not any people, mind you. He would bring back his chosen people whom he would baptize with water and his spirit to cleanse them from their sins and make them fit to live in the promised land, the picture of the new heavens and the new earth. It is all his work and it is all of grace. Israel would never be the nation that she was, but out of her would come the redeemed church of God. As the church of the new dispensation, we must look to our redeemer and thank him for buying us with the price of Christ's blood. Sing Psalter 354.

January 4 *Read Ezekiel 37*

The prophecies of Ezekiel now move from judgment to redemption. In a striking vision God shows to Ezekiel, who relates his experience to the captives, that he will redeem his people from the state in which they found themselves. God's people are pictured as dry bones. A skeleton has no life and has no possibility of life. God will take those lifeless, dry bones, and out of them build a living church. This church will consist of members from all tribes, as signified by the sticks being united together. That church will be headed by Christ. This prophecy is not just for the people of the old dispensation. This prophecy is for the church of all ages. This prophecy is for us. Sing Psalter 100.

January 5 *Read Ezekiel 38*

Judah would not go back to the promised land to live "happily ever after." Enemies, portrayed here by Gog and sent by Satan, would afflict them. But God would deliver them from such enemies, and they would not be taken captive again. This chapter, however, is prophetic beyond Judah's restoration. Gog pictures the enemy that will fight against God's church at the end of time. That enemy will be led by none other than antichrist. Do not dismay, people of God. Antichrist will not prevail: God will send judgment upon him and his host, and through that judgment redeem the church into a peaceful life in the new Jerusalem. Sing Psalter 133.

January 6 *Read Ezekiel 39*

This chapter is a continuation of the prophecy begun in the previous one. Jehovah pronounces his judgment upon Gog and Magog, countries who were known to afflict his people. After describing in detail the countries' ends, God reveals the reason for their destruction to Ezekiel. That reason was that Israel might know that God is God. And not only Israel would know that fact, but the whole world would know typically in the return from captivity, and finally when Christ comes for the final judgment of all men and the establishment of the church in the new heavens and new earth. Sing Psalter 237.

January 7 *Read Ezekiel 40*

Commentators have called the last section of Ezekiel the hardest part of scripture to understand. This is true if we seek to find a literal meaning for it. If we consider that the previous chapters describe the fall of Gog and Magog, who were symbolic of the antichristian kingdom, then these chapters must describe the restoration of God's church. This would not be completed on this earth. The dimensions described in this chapter indicate that. The final building of the church of God with each living stone will be realized when all of God's people can be gathered. This will only happen just before Christ returns, and then this glorious temple will be erected in the new Jerusalem. May we wait for that day in patience, and may we watch and pray for that day as God has commanded. Sing Psalter 348.

January 8 *Read Ezekiel 41*

Ezekiel continues to get the tour of a temple to be built. From the description of his tour guide in the previous chapter, it may be that that guide is none other than the Old Testament Christ. This angel of the Lord had appeared to various Old Testament saints to give to them messages and insights into what was to come. In this chapter one striking detail stands out: this is a complete temple. Ezekiel was not surprised by what he saw. The complete temple of God will be the whole church, with each saint in his place, carrying out the work to which he is called. May we be thankful for our place in the church of Christ. Sing Psalter 348.

January 9 *Read Ezekiel 42*

In the Old Testament manner of worship the priests were to be cared for out of the offerings of the people. As the people brought their thank offerings and other gifts, a portion of them was laid aside for those ministers of God. Our ministers today also are to be cared for out of the thank offerings that we lay before God as part of our worship. The offerings are not just an incidental part of the service. Those offerings show that our hearts are prepared for worship. May we remember Paul's injunction to the New Testament church, "God loveth a cheerful giver." Sing Psalter 109.

Called to the Ministry

For whosoever shall call upon the name of the Lord shall be saved. How then shall they call on him in whom they have not believed? and how shall they believe in him of whom they have not heard? and how shall they hear without a preacher? And how shall they preach, except they be sent? as it is written, How beautiful are the feet of them that preach the gospel of peace, and bring glad tidings of good things! (Rom. 10:13–15)

"How shall they preach, except they be sent" (Rom. 10:15)? That question teaches the need for the ministry of the gospel, the task of the minister of the gospel, and the necessity of the calling of the minister for his work.

This question concludes a series of questions following from the declaration that "whosoever shall call upon the name of the Lord shall be saved" (Rom. 10:13). To be saved one must call on the name of the Lord. One cannot call on the Lord if he has not heard the Lord speak. One cannot hear the Lord speak without a preacher. The necessity of the ministry of the gospel is that through the ordained minister Christ speaks.

What Christ speaks is the saving gospel of grace. In and through the gospel preaching the elect hear Christ speak, believe, call upon his name, and are saved. The gospel preached by a preacher is the means for the salvation of the elect church of God because in and through it the elect hear Christ speak. Christ powerfully calls the elect church out of darkness into God's marvelous light; through the hearing of the gospel the elect are saved.

Every man considering the ministry of the gospel must be impressed by this need for the ministry of the gospel. By means of the ministry of the gospel Christ pleases to gather his church. It is the highest calling to which a man can aspire. In the language of the apostle Paul, "If a man desire the office of a bishop, he desireth a good work" (1 Tim. 3:1).

That question teaches that the task of the preacher is to preach this saving gospel. That is the task from which his office derives its name—a preacher. The word *preacher* teaches us that he is an official herald sent by another and through whom the one who sends him actually speaks. The people of God must hear preaching in order to call upon the name of the Lord and be saved.

Every man considering the ministry of the gospel must be impressed that this is the task of the minister. The calling of Christ to him in the ministry is to preach the gospel as the means for the salvation of Christ's church.

That question also teaches the necessity of the calling of the preacher, or in the language of the text, that Christ *sends* the preacher. The word *send* teaches the calling of the minister of the gospel. The text states the importance of the sending by means of the rhetorical question: how shall they preach, except they be sent? The implied answer is that no man can preach unless he is sent. Apart from the call it is impossible for him to preach, and apart from the preaching the church is not saved.

For the man considering the ministry the sending of Christ must be vital. He must desire this call. For the man who desires to be a preacher, Christ's call drives him forward in his preparations for that work. For the ordained minister it is the ground of a vital assurance that he does the work of the Lord. It is somewhat like Luther's holding on to doctoral credentials. It was not because he was proud of his accomplishments in learning, but because this assured him that the Lord had called him to this work and that his ministry was not undertaken in self-will. The call also constantly reminds an ordained minister that he is a servant of Jesus Christ, whose work he does, whose praise he seeks, and to whom he will render an account of his labors in the judgment and trial of every man's work.

To this sending—call—by Christ there are two aspects: the subjective and the objective. The subjective aspect is the conviction of one's heart through the leading of God in the circumstances of one's life that he must prepare for the ministry of the gospel.

The objective aspect is the actual calling of a man to the ministry of the gospel by the church institute. The subjective is first and leads to the objective. The objective is second and confirms the subjective. Both are important, are mutually dependent upon one another, and are aspects of the single calling of Jesus Christ by which he sends preachers to his church.

With regard to the subjective calling, a young candidate for the ministry may sometimes wish for a call like John Calvin's, who desired to study quietly in some forgotten corner of the world but was goaded into the ministry by a thunderous curse upon all his work and study from the indefatigable Farel if Calvin refused to join the Reformation in Geneva. Or perhaps he wishes for a furious, life-threatening thunderstorm, as in the case of Martin Luther. Those events not only make the sometimes mysterious subjective call to the gospel ministry crystal clear, and a sometimes agonizing decision easier, but also make for more fascinating reading in articles like this.

Perhaps disappointingly for the reader there was nothing like that for me. Rather, there was only the quiet, irresistible movement of my life toward the ministry and the slow conviction that grew in my heart over time that I was called to the ministry.

This subjective calling comes through means; seeing the Lord's invisible hand means to see the instruments that he uses. My father repeatedly told his seven boys that the ministry was the highest calling to which a man could aspire, prayed for it, and instructed us that we must consider it. My parents modeled in the home a high regard for the office of the ministry and all the offices. Especially did my father frequently and whenever called give himself to the work of elder, and he was a busy man as a teacher and a father of nine children. My father and mother provided a godly home in which we were taught to know the Reformed faith. I came from a family in which church matters mattered and were discussed often. At Hope Protestant Reformed Christian School and Covenant Christian High School I learned to live in the church. If the schools would have taught me nothing else, this alone would have made them worthwhile.

At Hope Protestant Reformed Church, the church of my youth, after catechism class the minister pulled two of us boys aside at a young age and reminded us of the calling to the ministry.

I remember well talking to one of the seminary professors about the call to the ministry and one of the first questions he asked was what my girlfriend and soon to be fiancé thought about it. A married man cannot labor in the ministry without his wife. For this reason the Lord often chooses ministers with wives who are supportive of their husbands and will be helps meet for them in the ministry, who also can and do grow into that, as the man does into his call.

There was also my oldest brother's startling decision to quit his business career and to study for the gospel ministry when he was married and the father of three children. This made a deep impression.

There was a deep, relentless, inescapable urge to study for the ministry that these, and many other experiences, impressed upon me.

An inescapable urge because the servant is not always willing. The deep, relentless, inescapable urge may disquietingly coexist with a nearly equally strong and persistent desire to flee from the ministry of the gospel as far as it is possible to go. The subjective aspect of the calling is not without doubts. I was never able to say, as some have said, that I always knew I wanted to be a minister. That there are doubts should not trouble a man who is considering the ministry, and in the face of them he must pray for God to make his will known and quietly continue going about preparing himself for the ministry.

Through this preparation for the ministry the Lord also makes known his will. There are objective considerations. There must be an aptitude and desire for the work, a peace of mind in the studies themselves despite their rigor, and a will to continue. This includes the study of the various courses and subjects required by the seminary for entrance. It is of great benefit in preparation for the ministry that a thorough liberal arts education is required if for no other reason than that it tests a man's will and ability to study, an activity so vital for the ministry of the gospel. The seminary itself is also the means God uses to prepare and confirm the calling to the ministry, speaking loudly through the studies there.

The confirmation of the subjective aspect of the calling—the objective calling—comes in the call from the church. Then and only then can a man answer "Yes, truly, with all my heart" to the first question of the form for his ordination: "I ask you whether thou feelest in thy heart that thou art lawfully called of God's church, and therefore of God himself, to this holy ministry?" This question is not about a man's feelings, nor about the subjective calling, but whether he considers the lawful call of the church

the call of God himself. Does he believe that by the church God calls men—sends them—to preach the gospel? That objective calling by the church must be the strength of the subjective calling in his heart, too, of his conviction that God called him.

Then in faithfulness to the Lord who sends him and for the good of the flock in which Christ has made him a minister, let him give himself wholly to preaching. It is God's power to salvation and the reason the Lord has called and sent him, because the flock—Christ's people—cannot hear without a preacher.

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Honoring Our President

For those of us who live in the United States of America, our president is Barack Obama, the forty-fourth president of the United States. To say our president is a polarizing figure is an understatement. People have very strong opinions about their president. Significantly, therefore, children and young people will have very strong opinions about their president. Learning from adults, many children and young people idolize their president as the greatest man who has ever lived. Learning from adults, other children and young people think that our president is the scum of the whole earth, and they are not afraid to say so. It is vitally important therefore that our children and young people are not only influenced properly by their parents, but that they view their president according to the dictates of God's word. The Bible teaches us how to view our president, regardless if his name is George, Abraham, or Barack, regardless of which political party he represents, and even regardless of the particular view of our own parents. As the supreme authority for all of life, the Bible says, "Honor your President!"

The President holds an office. Just as your father or grandfather might hold the office of minister, elder, or deacon, the president holds an office. That means he has been given a position of authority by God and has the rule over us. We must honor that officebearer. We are not now considering a man as a husband or a father, as a black man, as a Chicago White Sox fan, or as a graduate of Harvard. We are considering a man as president, one who holds the highest office of authority in the civil state to which we belong. Mr. Obama must receive our honor as president. That we honor him means we show in our attitude (what we think), behavior (what we do), and words (what we say) that we respect him. We view him as above. We view ourselves as under.

Demonstrating this requirement from Scripture is not difficult. 1 Peter 2:13–14 states: "Submit yourselves to every ordinance of man for the Lord's sake, whether it be to the king as supreme; Or unto governors, as unto them that are sent by him for the punishment of evildoers, and for the praise of them that do well," and verse 17 adds, "Honor all men. Love the brotherhood. Fear God. Honor the king". The inspired apostle Peter exhorts, "Submit to and honor the president!" 1 Timothy 2:1–2 instructs, "I exhort therefore, that, first of all, supplications, prayers, intercessions, and giving of thanks, be made for all men; For kings, and for all that are in authority; that we may lead a quiet and peaceable life in all godliness and honesty." If we must pray for the president, certainly we must first honor him. The inspired apostle Paul exhorts, "Honor, even pray for the president!" Romans 13:1–2, part of a long explanation of our duties toward the civil state, states, "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." Verse 5 continues, "Wherefore ye must needs be subject, not only for wrath, but also for conscience sake." The inspired apostle Paul commands, "Be subject to! Every one of you, be subject to the president!" Finally, the fifth commandment of God's holy law

as explained in Lord's Day 39 of the Heidelberg Catechism requires "that I show all honor, love, and fidelity to my father and mother and all in authority over me, and submit myself…."

The clear commands of scripture are powerful, but we are really given pause when we consider the historical context in which they were written. When the Spirit inspired Peter to write, "Honor the king," and Paul to write, "Pray for the king," and "Submit to the king," the king was not a man like that small, Midwestern town mayor who still attends a church with his family, scoops ice cream at the county fair, twists the neighborhood rascal's ear when he swears, and weeds his own garden. The kings during the days in which the New Testament was written were the Caesars of Rome, most notably Nero. Few men were more evil than the Caesars. The Caesar said, "I am god, worship me." When Christians refused they were slaughtered. The Caesar not only indulged openly in every immorality, but would also slay his own blood relatives to protect his throne. Historical types of the antichrist were the Caesars of Rome. Son of Belial was Caesar if Belial ever had a son. The Bible says, "Honor him! Pray for him! Submit to him!" Surely Mr. Obama must be honored by us.

It is easy to honor the king when we have a president who thinks and acts somewhat like we do. We have had some presidents who were fairly conservative in their core values. Respecting them is easier. It is much more difficult to respect a president who is more openly unbiblical in his worldview. Mr. Barack Obama is a foolish man. I may say that. Respectfully I may say that. The whole book of Proverbs tells me so. Our president publically supports behaviors that God condemns as wicked. For example, our president supports the slaughter of unborn infants and sodomy, both of which God hates and condemns. The president, in executing his office, does many things that we Reformed Christians deem foolish. Nevertheless, God says, "Honor your president."

Some (even Christians) think the foolishness of a president gives them license to disrespect him. They mock him. They make disrespectful jokes about the president. They draw pictures and cartoons of the president, making him look like an imbecile, so that people will laugh and jeer. They use the internet to unleash verbal tirades against the president. Others would like to do even worse by leading a revolt to overthrow him or assassinate him. The president is dishonored and disrespected. Some of the things our president says and does as our leader are embarrassing. Some of the things our fellow (sometimes Christian) citizens say and do in response to the president's actions are even more embarrassing.

Certainly we may criticize the president and his policies and point out the folly of them, but there is a fine line between respectfully criticizing him and mocking him in disrespect. We may even disobey the president. If the president commands, "Bow down and worship me" though God says, "Worship me alone," then we have to disobey the president, for "we ought to obey God rather than men," (Acts 5:29). We may have to disobey the president, but we may not dishonor him. Though it may be difficult, the word of God says, "Honor your president."

Contemplating our calling—a sometimes difficult calling—we must remember three truths. First, we are to honor the president for God's sake. God gave Mr. Obama his authority. When you look up and see the president in a position of authority above you, see God beyond him. Even if the president says, "God did not make me president, the people did by voting for me," God did make him president, and 1 Peter 2:13 calls us to honor the president for the Lord's sake. We show our love for God, our obedience to God, and we glorify the name of God by honoring the president. The man who dishonors the president cares little about the Lord God. For the Lord's sake honor your president. How marvelously beautiful is the display of the almighty power of the Holy Spirit of Christ when the members of the church honor a president who may even be wicked and opposed to them! For the Lord's sake honor the president.

Second, we ought to be very thankful for the many freedoms we still have. 1 Timothy 2:2 instructs us to pray for the president so that through his rule we may be provided quietness and a peaceable life as churches. Thus far God has continued to give that peace to us in America. It will not last. Many in the world do not have this peace. We do. Let us not dishonor the president but pray for him and be thankful that God continues to rule through him in such a way that we are able to assemble freely for worship and work here as citizens of the kingdom of heaven.

Third, we must always remember that Jesus Christ reigns supreme. Mr. Obama is a ruler. Jesus is the ruler. Jesus died for our sins, arose from the grave and ascended into heaven. Now that Savior of us controls the whole world as he sits not in the

White House, but at God's right hand. We have no reason to fear. God "hath put all things under his feet and given him to be the head over all things to the church," (Eph. 1:22). Our president is under the feet of the one who died for us. Our president cannot open his mouth apart from the will of King Jesus. Are you scared of certain policies, the thought of war, or the advances of sodomy? All things are under the feet of Jesus for the church's sake. King Jesus is directing all things for his triumphant return. Until he returns we will honor our president for his sake.

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Christian Living — Rev. John Marcus

Living the Antithesis

1 Peter 2:11: "Dearly beloved, I beseech you as strangers and pilgrims, abstain from fleshly lusts, which war against the soul."

As God's people, we are all called to live the antithesis, that is, to live as strangers and pilgrims in the world. God would have us stand against the devil, the world, and our old sinful flesh.

The calling to live the antithesis is implied by the term "saints" used to describe believers in Scripture; literally, a saint is a "holy one." Holiness involves separation from sin and devotion to God. Therefore to live the antithesis is to live a life of holiness.

Although the calling to live the antithesis is found throughout the Scriptures, 1 Peter emphasizes that message when it calls us to live as strangers and pilgrims in the world. The inspired apostle introduces his letter with special reference to us as strangers in the world and chosen by God: literally the original Greek has, "Peter, an apostle of Jesus Christ, to the elect strangers…"

Before talking about living the antithesis, however, it is important to know the reason that the antithesis exists. 1 Peter stresses that the antithetical life is a result of God's will and God's work: "But ye are a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, an holy nation, a peculiar people; that ye should shew forth the praises of him who hath called you out of darkness into his marvelous light" (1 Peter 2:9). It is significant that before the inspired apostle gives the command to live the antithesis, he reminds the saints who we are. We are a chosen generation, literally, an "elect race" chosen out of the mass of this world. According to that sovereign election God acted in history, and by a powerful and irresistible work called us out of darkness and brought us into his marvelous light. The reality of the antithesis begins with God's will of electing us and his work of calling us.

Truth be told, we deserved to be left in the darkness. But God was gracious to us to show us mercy and to make us his people: "Which in time past were not a people, but are now the people of God: which had not obtained mercy, but now have obtained mercy" (1 Peter 2:10). Living the antithesis demands that we see that about ourselves: we are now God's people who have obtained mercy; we are now of God's party, friends of God rather than friends of the devil.

Why did God choose us in eternity and set us apart for himself as a holy nation? Did he choose us so that we could live for ourselves and continue to walk in darkness? Obviously not. The reason for God's mercy towards us is given in 1 Peter 2:9: "But ye are a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, an holy nation, a peculiar people; that ye should shew forth the praises of him who hath called you out of darkness into his marvelous light." God chose us so that we would "show forth" (literally "message out") his praises.

Knowing that God graciously chose us and called us out of darkness in order to bring honor to his name ought to motivate us to live the antithesis.

1 Peter 2 goes on to show us how the antithetical

life will manifest itself.

Does the antithesis mean we must separate ourselves physically from the world? The Anabaptists in the days of the Reformation did that: they withdrew from ordinary society in much the same way that monks separated themselves from the world by joining a monastery.

But that is not what living the antithesis is about. If it were, then it would be a relatively easy matter. All we would have to do is give up some modern inconveniences, change the way we dress, live in a commune, and practice certain other outward behaviors.

Rather, Scripture depicts believers as living in the presence of unbelievers. 1 Peter 2:11–12: "Dearly beloved, I beseech you as strangers and pilgrims, abstain from fleshly lusts, which war against the soul; Having your conversation honest among the Gentiles: that, whereas they speak against you as evildoers, they may by your good works, which they shall behold, glorify God in the day of visitation." Obviously if our conversation, that is, our conduct, is to be honest among the Gentiles, it stands to reason that our honorable life is lived in the presence of Gentiles, who are not followers of the true God.

Although living the antithesis is not primarily about physical separation from the world, the point must be made that there is still a physical component to the antithesis. Living the antithesis means we will steer clear of certain places. We will not go into the bar or the dance hall, the movie theater or the place where the wild party is going on. But the antithesis is primarily spiritual. It is about a spiritual battle that takes place first within our hearts and souls. If we are of God's party, we will want to serve him not just outwardly, but from the heart.

This is why the Holy Spirit tells us to "abstain from fleshly lusts, which war against the soul" (1 Pet. 2:11). More than just abstaining from outward things, we are called to steer clear of evil desires in our hearts. The antithesis is therefore a matter that must engage the heart. If the heart is left out of the battle, living the antithesis becomes nothing more than hypocrisy—pretending to be something we are not.

If we pursue the antithesis in our hearts, battling day by day against the old man of sin, that will inevitably show itself in our conduct.

The inspired apostle shows some of the implications of living the antithesis beginning at 1 Peter 2:13. If we are of God's party, we will submit to his will for our lives. By extension, that means we will submit to every authority God has placed over us.

Living the antithesis therefore means submitting to government because God gave rulers that authority: "Submit yourselves to every ordinance of man for the Lord's sake" (1 Peter 2:13). Far from allowing us to rebel against evil and ungodly governments, God calls us to be good citizens of the state.

Second, the inspired apostle addresses the subjection of workers to their bosses when he says, "Servants, be subject to your masters" (1 Pet. 2:18). This is our calling not only when they are good and gentle, but also when they are harsh and demeaning towards their workers. If we have signed a contract to work for a particular boss, we ought to honor that contract and submit to him for God's sake, in order to bring honor to God.

Third, the apostle addresses how living as strangers and pilgrims affects our marriages (1 Pet. 3:1–7). Wives are to live in loving subjection to their husbands, and husbands are to love their wives, dwelling with them according to knowledge, giving honor to them. The antithesis involves not conforming ourselves to the selfish patterns of the world with regard to marriage.

Young people and young adults must not conform to the world's ideas regarding the pursuit of sexual pleasure outside of marriage. If even to look at a woman in lust is to commit adultery (Mat. 5:28), certainly physical interaction that involves lusting must also be adultery. Instead of conforming to the world's ideas of sex and marriage, God would have young people and young adults prepare themselves for godly marriages. Living the antithesis means we will stand against the selfish ideals of the world and seek rather to serve God also in our dating relationships. Living the antithesis means submitting ourselves to God's plan for marriage.

Living the antithesis involves submitting ourselves to God's will in other relationships too: living holy lives, we will have compassion toward others, love them as brethren, show pity to them, be courteous, not rendering evil for evil, but instead blessing. Instead of speaking evil, we will seek peace and unity in the church (1 Pet. 3:8–11). Indeed, the antithesis involves every square inch of our lives. There is no neutral ground.

Those who live the antithesis will suffer persecution and ridicule. But in that way, God will be

honored. Ultimately, that is what the antithesis is all about: bringing honor to God who chose us and called us out of darkness.

May God give us grace to live in spiritual separation from the world and devotion to him. He is worthy of all glory.

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Christian Living — Annica Bosveld

At the Foot of His Throne

Imagine a palace. A throne room. Guarded by marble pillars and lined with stern-looking courtiers. The walls are hung with tapestries and rich brocades of dark purple. The ceiling is covered with plated gold that glints and gleams in the sunlight streaming in through stained glass windows. And before you, seated on a great golden throne of red velvet, there he is. The king. And he is not surprised to see you. Boldly, you walk down that endless marble courtroom to the very foot of his throne, and kneel. And without restraint, without fear of his anger or concern for his busyness, you tell him all that is in your heart.

Can you imagine that? Having the liberty to approach a king whenever you wanted and tell him what you thought? Tell him what you were afraid of? And what you worried about? And what you needed? As the people of God, we do have that liberty. And our God is infinitely more understanding than any earthly king could be.

In our Young People's Society this year at Hope Church, we studied the book of Proverbs. But rather than going through the book chapter by chapter, we looked at specific topics that could be found throughout the book and applied to our lives as young people. One of the topics we discussed was prayer.

We defined prayer in its most basic form as the means by which we communicate with God through Christ. Professor Herman Hanko further defines prayer in his book *When You Pray* by saying, "Prayer is lovers' talk, for it is a holy conversation between the living and eternal God and the redeemed child of God in which both speak to each other in the most intimate relationship of love." With this beautiful definition in mind, we looked at some of the things Proverbs teaches us about prayer.

One important verse we looked at was Proverbs 16:3: "Commit thy works unto the Lord, and thy thoughts shall be established." The idea of prayer as commitment was an unfamiliar aspect to us, and we talked about what Solomon might mean by using such a word. To commit something can mean to do something, or perform an action. To commit something can also mean to put it under someone's care or entrust it to someone. The latter definition was obviously the meaning Solomon was intending, and it ties right in with the idea of prayer. When we pray, we commit our thoughts and needs and desires to God. We put them under his care. We entrust them to him. As young people, we recognized the importance of this word because here it has the connotation of safety and security. We pray in complete trust that God will hear us and answer our prayers.

Because the theme of the book of Proverbs is wisdom, we also discussed the importance of praying with wisdom and what this means for us as young people. We noticed that praying with wisdom covers two main areas of prayer: the manner in which we pray, and the content of our prayers. Praying with wisdom means that we approach the throne of God's grace in reverence. As Professor Hanko points out in *When You Pray*, "Prayer is not a conversation between equals…Prayer is a conversation between the God of heaven and earth, creator of all, and sinful man. This is a wonder of staggering proportions." We are allowed to enter the throne room of the King, but we must do so in the consciousness of his perfect holiness.

Praying with wisdom also means that our prayers are not simply self-centered soliloquys of personal preferences and desires. As part of the body of Christ, we pray not just for our own needs, but for

the needs of the church. It is only because God has chosen to bless the church that we receive any blessings for ourselves.

We concluded our discussion with talking about how we as young people can pray more wisely. First, we noted that we do not always pray in the proper attitude of reverence. We live in a world of casual communication and self-glorifying attitudes, where respect is optional. Because of these influences, we can easily slip into treating God as a friend, an equal, rather than the King of kings. Often our prayers are rushed or inappropriate, and we do not take the necessary time to humble ourselves before God. If we are to pray more wisely, we must first pray with reverence. We must remember what a great God we serve, and what a privilege it is to enter into his presence.

Second, we agreed that our prayers could be far less self-centered, and more focused on the needs of the body of Christ as a whole. It seems especially easy for us as young people to be self-centered when we pray, not because we do not care about the needs of others, but rather because there are so many things in our own lives that we wish to bring to God. However, one who prays with wisdom will pray unselfishly.

Finally, we acknowledged that we should pray more often, adhering to the well-known verse in 1 Thessalonians 5:17: "Pray without ceasing." Often our days are long and tiring, going to school all day, working at night, and then getting a little sleep before rising early in the morning to do it all again. At times it can be tempting to just skip praying for a night and just go to bed and go to sleep. But it does not take long before one omission becomes a habit, and soon we are not praying at all. Praying wisely as young people means that we pray *often*.

Do not let the throne room become an unfamiliar place. Seek fellowship with your King.

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From the Pastor's Study — Rev. Daniel Holstege

The Attack of Amelek on Young Israel

"Then came Amalek, and fought with Israel in Rephidim. And Moses said unto Joshua, Choose us out men, and go out, fight with Amalek: tomorrow I will stand on the top of the hill with the rod of God in mine hand. So Joshua did as Moses had said to him, and fought with Amalek: and Moses, Aaron, and Hur went up to the top of the hill. And it came to pass, when Moses held up his hand, that Israel prevailed: and when he let down his hand, Amalek prevailed. But Moses' hands were heavy; and they took a stone, and put it under him, and he sat thereon; and Aaron and Hur stayed up his hands, the one on the one side, and the other on the other side; and his hands were steady until the going down of the sun. And Joshua discomfited Amalek and his people with the edge of the sword. And the LORD said unto Moses, Write this for a memorial in a book, and rehearse it in the ears of Joshua: for I will utterly put out the remembrance of Amalek from under heaven. And Moses built an altar, and called the name of it Jehovahnissi: For he said, Because the LORD hath sworn that the LORD will have war with Amalek from generation to generation" (Exodus 17:8–16).

Young people, Amalek is coming to attack you and to destroy you utterly. Are you ready to fight? Is your sword in your hand? Are you following Jesus, your brave captain? Is Jehovah your banner?

According to the text Amalek came and fought with Israel at Rephidim. Amalek was a nation in southern Canaan made up of the descendants of Amalek, the grandson of Esau (see Gen. 14:7; Num. 13:29; Gen. 36:12). Thus Amalek was not just another heathen nation, but a people tracing their ancestry back to Esau, Isaac, and Abraham, and thus to the line of the covenant. Amalek himself did not grow up in the sphere of the covenant as did his grandfather Esau, but Amalek and the Ama-

lekites were the apostate descendants of Esau, that reprobate man who forsook the covenant. Amalekites today are members of apostate churches who say they are Christians, but practice the religion of the world: the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life. Amalek hates the true Christ and his church. Amalek attacked Israel with one purpose: to destroy her utterly and keep her out of the promised land.

Amalek attacked Israel when she was *young*. Young people, this word is for you! Israel was not an old, well-established, battle-ready nation at this time. No, Israel was still young, unorganized, and inexperienced as a nation. Israel had been delivered from Egypt through the Red Sea only a few months earlier, and had just begun her long, difficult journey through the wilderness to the promised land. Amalek attacked her precisely when she was still young and vulnerable (see Deut. 25:17–18). Likewise the Amalek of today attacks you, young people, precisely now when you are still young, still near the outset of the Christian life, still inexperienced in many of the trials of life, still spiritually vulnerable. Amalek attacks you in the workplace, neighborhood, college classroom, sports field, and elsewhere. Pay attention, young people. This word is for you!

Amalek attacks you through powerful temptations. A young Amalekite man may tempt a young Israelite woman to go out with him. He says to her, "Has anyone ever told you how beautiful you are? We could have a lot of fun together. I would love to take you out sometime. We could go dancing together or catch a flick." He tries to draw her by his flattery, charm, and good looks. Amalek attacks. Or a young Amalekite may tempt a young Israelite to leave his Christian friends and enjoy worldly pleasures with him. He says, "Come! Let's go to Egypt. You don't want to wander in this wilderness. You don't want to live such a strict lifestyle. You don't have to deny yourself. You don't have to avoid a good time. Come! Let's go to Egypt. Let's have some fun! Let's go to the bar and get drunk. Let's go to the theater. Let's go to the dance club. Let's go to the casino. Let's go to Egypt." Amalek attacks. Or a young Amalekite may tempt a young Israelite by saying, "You should come to my church. You don't want to go to your church. Your church is so strict and intolerant. Your church is too harsh and old-fashioned. You have to sit through two long, boring sermons every Sunday? Come to my church. We are open-minded and tolerant. We know how to have fun. Our worship services are contemporary with a band, dramas, and skits. You will enjoy it." Amalek attacks.

Young people, are you ready to fight back?

Israel fought back. Moses appointed Joshua to lead Israel into battle (v. 9). Joshua chose men and led them into battle against Amalek. Moses, Aaron, and Hur went up to the top of a hill where they watched the battle down below (v. 10). Moses carried the rod of God in his hand. Whenever Moses held up that rod toward heaven, Israel prevailed against Amalek. But whenever Moses let down the rod, Amalek prevailed against Israel (v. 11). Therefore Aaron and Hur took a stone and set Moses on it. Then they each took hold of one of Moses' hands and held them up toward heaven until the setting of the sun (v. 12). Then Joshua discomfited Amalek with the edge of the sword, scattering them and forcing them to flee (v. 13). Israel won the victory by an amazing wonder of the power and grace of Jehovah.

Young people, note first that God gave Israel the victory, and God gives us the victory too. The Israelites could not win the victory of their own strength, and neither can we. But God fought for Israel, and he fights for us. Jehovah was on their side. He gave them power. He caused their swords to find their marks. He turned the tide of the battle. He made Israel to prevail. He gave the victory, moreover, through Moses and Joshua, that is, through Christ. Moses and Joshua were types of Christ—Moses up on the hill and Joshua down in the valley. Christ fought for us up on the hill of Calvary with his arms stretched out on the cross. He fought against Amalek and against the devil who works through them. He fought by shedding his blood. He fought until he won the victory. He is greater than Moses because he never grew weary, never let down his arms from the cross, and never needed help from any other. He kept both arms stretched out until the battle was won. He fought in the darkness and finally uttered the victory cry, "It is finished!" Christ also fights for us down in the valley of our lives in our battles against strong temptations. He fights by his Spirit whom he pours into our hearts. He fights by his Word that he preaches through faithful ministers. He fights by giving us the will and strength to fight against the Amalekites when they attack us.

Second, note that God gave Israel the victory through her own fighting and by faith. *Israel* fought against Amalek. God did not give Israel the victory

apart from her fighting. Israel fought. They took up the sword and fought. Moses' hands held up to heaven were a sign of their faith in Jehovah for the victory. You too must fight. You must take up the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God (Eph. 6:17), and fight against Amalek, as Jesus fought against the devil. You must fight by saying to the young Amalekite who tempts you to date him, "It is written, Thou shalt not make marriages with unbelievers because they will turn you away from serving the LORD (Deut. 7:3-4)." It is written, "Can two walk together except they be agreed (Amos 3:3)?" It is written, "Be not unequally yoked together with unbelievers (2 Cor. 6:14)." You must fight against the young Amalekite who tempts you to go into the world by saying, "It is written, have no fellowship with the unfruitful works of darkness, but reprove them (Eph. 5:11)." You must fight against the young Amalekite who tempts you to abandon the true church and go to his apostate church by saying, "It is written, stand fast and hold the traditions you have been taught (2 Thess. 2:15)." It is written, "Be faithful unto death, and Christ will give you a crown of life (Rev. 2:10)." You, young people, must fight against Amalek. Are you ready to do so? Is your sword in your hand? Are your hands lifted up toward heaven in faith toward God?

Are you also helping to hold up the hands of your fellow young people? Remember Aaron and Hur. Hold up the hands of your fellow young people when you see them struggling in this battle of faith! When your friend is sorely tempted to date a young man of the world, hold up her hands! Don't pull down her hands by telling her to go for it, but hold up her hands by urging her to say No to that young man. When your fellow young person is grievously tempted to follow Amalek into Egypt and indulge in worldly pleasures, hold up his hands! *Don't* pull down his hands by indulging in those pleasures yourself, but hold up his hands by urging him to say no and to avoid those unfruitful works of darkness. When your fellow young person is powerfully tempted to leave the true church and to join a false or apostatizing church, hold up her hands! *Don't* tell her that it does not matter what church she attends, but hold up her hands by urging her to be faithful to the truth of Jesus Christ and warning her against the evil of apostasy. Hold up the hands of your friends toward heaven where Christ sits at God's right hand. Hold up their hands toward Christ who died for us and saved us from sin and hell. Hold up their hands that they might look to him in faith in all their temptations.

The victory is sure, for Jehovah is our banner. After God gave Israel the victory over Amalek, Moses erected an altar and named it "Jehovah-nissi," that is, "Jehovah is my Banner" (v. 15). Jehovah is our banner. We fight under the banner of Jehovah himself. We fight in his cause, by the power of his Spirit, and as soldiers of the cross of his Son. Therefore the victory is sure. Amalek will not prevent us from reaching the heavenly Canaan. We are more than conquerors through Christ who loved us. Fight this battle, young people, in that confidence.

Rev. Holstege is pastor of First Protestant Reformed Church in Holland, Michigan.

Poem Brenda Pipe

A Wedding Prayer

I thank Thee Lord that Thou didst send,
This one with whom my life I'll spend.
Wilt Thou be praised in our new life,
As we are now husband and wife.

Wilt Thou Father from above,
Teach us how we ought to love.
May we do so selflessly,
with patience and humility.
In all our laughter and our tears,
Trust in Thee through all our years.
As we do obey Thee Lord,
We will be as a three-fold cord.
Draw us nearer unto Thee,
Wilt Thou our strong foundation be.
To us Thy grace and mercy show,
On us Thy blessing now bestow.
May we each and every day,
Read Thy Word and to Thee pray.
And as we live life side by side,
Father be our Strength and Guide.

Brenda Pipe is a member of Loveland Protestant Reformed Church in Loveland, Colorado. Brenda wrote this poem for use at her wedding.

Connie Meyer

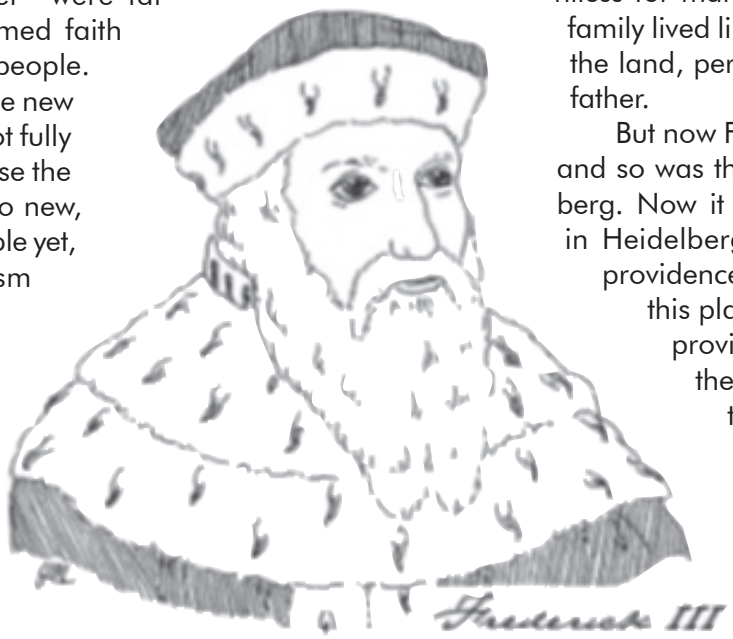
"LITTLE LIGHTS"

... let it shine !

A Turn of Events: From Chaos to Comfort

A History of the Heidelberg Catechism (Part 2)

More chaos was in the land in 1560. Two leading men had been cast out of the Protestant town of Heidelberg, Germany: the Lutheran Dr. Hesshuss and the Calvinist Klebitz. Their wrestling match during a church service was the last straw. But the views they had been fighting over—views about the Lord's supper—were far from settled. The Reformed faith was still new to many people. People saw the truth of the new doctrines, but they did not fully understand them. Because the printing process was also new, not everyone owned a Bible yet, and not many catechism books had been written. The few catechisms they had were either too short or too long to be useful for teaching children. The result of all of this was much confusion over the Lord's supper and many doctrines—confusion for those who were trying to teach, and confusion for those who were trying to learn.



Elector Frederick III saw the need. As ruler of the land, he had only recently come on the throne. He was a very educated man and had been brought up in the best of Roman Catholic schools because his father had been a strict Roman Catholic. So how was it that Frederick now saw the need for teaching clear and consistent Reformed doctrine to the church and its children?

As a young man he began to see the corruption and hypocrisy that was in the church of Rome. As a young prince it was proper that he marry a young princess—even if she was a Lutheran one. Under her influence, it was not long until he was converted to Protestantism. Frederick's father was not happy about his conversion. He kept Frederick, his wife, and the children they would have nearly penniless for many years. At times this royal family lived like the poorest of paupers in the land, persecuted by their own ruling father.

But now Frederick's father was dead, and so was the former elector of Heidelberg. Now it was Frederick's lot to rule in Heidelberg, Germany. It was in the providence of God that he was here in this place at this time. It was in the providence of God that he saw the need for teaching doctrine to the youth of the church. It was in the providence of God that he would have the desire and the means to do something about it.

Frederick knew that Heidelberg was an important city for the work of the Reformation, and with Hesshuss gone, Heidelberg needed a new professor and a new preacher who would help to correct this state of confusion. But who?

God was preparing two young men for the work. They would boldly and faithfully preach and teach the doctrines of Scripture in truth. They would work to teach those doctrines to the church and its children. They would work to change the chaos and confusion in the land to comfort and order. Such would be the turn of events…

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

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Church News

Melinda Bleyenberg

BAPTISMS

"But the mercy of the LORD is from everlasting to everlasting upon them that fear him, and his righteousness unto children's children."
Psalm 103:17

The sacrament of holy baptism was administered to:

Jacob Edward, son of Mr. & Mrs. Justin & Tanya Huizing—Edmonton, Alberta, CAN
Carter Alan, son of Mr. & Mrs. Brad & Ericka Pastoor—First, MI
Elijah Almond, son of Mr. & Mrs. Tom & Kelly Barnhill—First, MI
Olivia Grace, daughter of Mr. & Mrs. Ryan J. & Stephanie Regnerus—Crete, IL
Danielle Clazine, daughter of Mr. & Mrs. Pieter & Cindy van Iperen—Immanuel, Lacombe, CAN
Charles Aiden, son of Mr. & Mrs. Chuck & Catherine Cammenga—Loveland, CO
Jolee Renae, daughter of Mr. & Mrs. Joe & Jennifer Schimmel—Providence, MI
Elsie Jo, daughter of Mr. & Mrs. Dan & Colleen Barnhill—Trinity, MI
Adult baptism was administered to Rene' Kuhs—Ballymena, N Ireland/Limerick, Ireland

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:

Anna VanEgdom—Doon, IA
Nick Cammenga—Holland, MI
Brija DeMeester—Southeast, MI
Kyle Buiter—Southwest, MI
David Kuiper—Southwest, MI

MARRIAGES

"Except the LORD build the house, they labour in vain that build it…."
Psalm 127:1

United in the bond of holy matrimony were:

Mr. Rob Westhuis and Miss Jessica Ophoff—Southwest, MI

Kids' Page (continued)

IN THE PUZZLE FIND ALL THE WORDS FROM VERSE 6 OF PSALTER #73 AS QUOTED BELOW. THERE MIGHT BE MORE THAN ONE POSSIBILITY FOR SOME TWO-LETTER WORDS.

Fear not, though succor be delayed,
Still wait for God, and He will hear;
Be strong, nor be thy heart dismayed,
Wait, and the Lord shall bring thee aid,
Yea, trust and never fear.

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