Beacon Lights

Magazine of the Protestant Reformed Young People

March 2013

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Volume LXXII Number 3

If I Were the Devil

Most of you young people will not know who is the author of the words that form the basis for this editorial, although some of you older young folks quite possibly are familiar with his identity. So a bit of background is in order.

Paul Harvey (1918–2009) was a well-known radio personality for many decades, and perhaps the most famous of all commentators. Beginning in 1951, he broadcast a show called *Paul Harvey News and Comment*, a fifteen minute mix of news and his opinions on a wide range of topics. At the height of his popularity, he was heard by 24 million people on 1,200 radio stations. His show was broadcast mornings and mid-days during the week, and Saturdays at noon. Almost everyone made it a point to tune in to the correct station long enough to hear what he had to say. No matter where you were, you heard his mellifluous tones emanating from multiple radios. Ask your parents or grandparents—they will remember. His popularity continued unabated through the years until his death in 2009 at the age of 90. A quick internet search will produce a great deal of information on him, as well as examples of his broadcasts.

Harvey was politically conservative. He was not in favor of big government, and he frequently and unabashedly criticized the foolishness and waste of the government, pointing out examples of waste and ineptness. His tongue was sharp when he spoke of a lack of common sense and a departure from traditional values, especially on the part of political leaders and other influential people.

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Beacon Lights is published monthly by the Federation of Protestant Reformed Young People's Societies. Subscription price is $15. Please send all business correspondence, address changes, and subscriptions to the business office.

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Harvey was also religious. By no stretch of the imagination was he Reformed, but he was generally evangelical, although late in life he converted to Seventh Day Adventism. It was apparent from his speech that he knew the Scriptures and the major doctrines of Christianity. As with politics, he was not afraid to speak out on religious topics, often lamenting the general deterioration of morals and opposing the compromising of biblical values. He had a knack for doing all of this in a pointed and pithy manner, leaving his listeners to draw their own conclusions from the implications that he often left unsaid. Often he was humorous, and always he was entertaining.

What follows is a transcript of a portion of Harvey's broadcast on April 3, 1965, 48 years ago. His words are uncannily prescient; they almost partake of the character of prophecy. Most, if not all of what he said has come to pass and is still happening today. In order to understand this, we need to remember that the world in 1965 was very different from what it is today. The Vietnam War, about which you read in the history books today, had not yet happened. One hot issue of the day was whether or not stores should be open on Sunday. Another was the dispute about banning pornography versus freedom of speech. Computers were unknown, and most televisions were black and white. Examples could be multiplied. Many more observations can be made about these words, and against this background I will make a few of them, interspersing them in italics for purposes of clarity.

If I were the Devil… I mean, if I were the Prince of Darkness, I would, of course, want to engulf the whole earth in darkness. I would have a third of its real estate and four-fifths of its population, but I would not be happy until I had seized the ripest apple on the tree, so I should set about however necessary to take over the United States. *Harvey is perhaps a little low in speaking of a third of earth's real estate, but his point is correct. The devil already had most of the world under his influence. Places such as China, India, and much of Africa were largely unknown to the rest of the civilized world, and therefore not under the influence of Christianity. But the United States was at least a nominally Christian country, more religious than it is today, and therefore not as much under Satan's control.* I would begin with a campaign of whispers. *The devil is so subtle!* With the wisdom of a serpent, I would whisper to you as I whispered to Eve: "Do as you please." "Do as you please." *Here we see the allegedly free will of man, his self-exaltation, and his rebellion against God, arising from a totally depraved nature. This must be understood against the background of the social upheaval that was already beginning to happen, and which would increase during the remainder of the 1960s. These were the days of the hippies, of protests, of violence and riots in the streets, of campus sit-ins, and of a generally independent and rebellious spirit.* To the young, I would whisper, "The Bible is a myth." *He did, and they listened. The result even today is that few believe that the Bible is the infallibly inspired word of God.* I would convince them that man created God instead of the other way around. *Satan got the job done. The result was that liberal theologians declared that "God is dead." The consequence today is the almost universal acceptance of the theory of evolution.* I would confide that what is bad is good, and what is good is "square." *"Square" in those days was an insult. It meant that you were conservative, probably a Christian, but with the implication that you were hopelessly out of touch with present reality. It was the opposite of "cool."* In the ears of the young marrieds, I would whisper that work is debasing, that cocktail parties are good for you. *Alcohol was the drug of choice in those days, not only for young couples, but also for young people, who could illegally obtain it with the same ease as young folks can today.* I would caution them not to be extreme in religion, in patriotism, in moral conduct. *For "extreme," read "conservative" or "upright."* And the old, I would teach to pray. I would teach them to say after me: "Our Father, which art in Washington…" *People were becoming increasingly dependent on the government, especially in the context of the creation of Medicare in 1965, which is the reference here.*

If I were the devil, I'd educate authors in how to make lurid literature exciting so that anything else would appear dull and uninteresting. I'd threaten T.V. with dirtier movies and vice versa. And then, if I were the devil, I'd get organized. I'd infiltrate unions and urge more loafing and less work, because idle hands usually work for me. I'd peddle narcotics to whom I could. *Drugs such as meth, heroin, and cocaine were popular only among a few, and marijuana was just becoming generally known. Apparently Harvey saw the drug problem coming. He certainly recognized the devastating consequences of drug use.* I'd sell alcohol to ladies and gentlemen of distinction. And

I'd tranquilize the rest with pills. *How true! America is a nation of pill-takers for every ailment, real or imagined.* If I were the devil, I would encourage schools to refine young intellects but neglect to discipline emotions…let those run wild. *The result is the massacres that are taking place today.* I would designate an atheist to front for me before the highest courts in the land and I would get preachers to say, "She's right." *The reference is to Madalyn Murray O'Hair, a leading atheist activist who was largely responsible for removing Bible reading from the public schools. From our viewpoint, it did not belong there to begin with, but for completely different reasons.* With flattery and promises of power, I could get the courts to rule what I construe as against God and in favor of pornography, and thus, I would evict God from the courthouse, and then from the school house, and then from the houses of Congress and then, in his own churches I would substitute psychology for religion, and I would deify science because that way men would become smart enough to create super weapons but not wise enough to control them.

If I were Satan, I'd make the symbol of Easter an egg, and the symbol of Christmas, a bottle. If I were the devil, I would take from those who have and I would give to those who wanted, until I had killed the incentive of the ambitious. *Is this not precisely what is taking place today?* And then, my police state would force everybody back to work. Then, I could separate families, putting children in uniform, women in coal mines, and objectors in slave camps. *This is what will happen when the kingdom of antichrist shows itself in all its power. For one who has eyes to see, that kingdom is not far off.* In other words, if I were Satan, I'd just keep on doing what he's doing.

What should we take away from Paul Harvey's comments?

We should see the signs of the times. Scripture mentions various signs, but two stand out in this context. One is a great increase in wickedness as the end approaches. This includes abounding and accelerating apostasy in the sphere of the church, as well as increasing wickedness in general. It is especially this general increase of which we are here reminded. When by such a monologue as this I am reminded what the general situation was in 1965, and compare then with now, the change is astounding. There are so many more ways to sin today than there were nearly 50 years ago. This trend will continue unabated until the end of time, and the speed of its development will do nothing but increase. The other sign that stands out is that of the social upheaval among the nations. Scripture teaches that there will be such a general unrest, both within the nations and between the various nations. It is the former that stands on the foreground here. This is necessary to pave the way for the antichrist because there must be a justification or a reason that he arises. He does not arise in a vacuum, but comes as a savior to fulfill a need for peace and stability within and between the nations. Now more than ever the way is being made ready for his arrival.

Further, I am struck by the increase in the difficulty of life today versus five decades ago. Today life is so much more complex and sophisticated than it was then. Consider only one example: the seemingly omnipresent computers in various forms and their universal use. There is more computing power in our fancy phones than there was on the Apollo mission to the moon. All of this can be properly used as a significant force for good. But it also can be (and is) used as a huge power for evil. This implies that there are correspondingly great temptations; we have a wide array from which to choose. This is true to one degree or another for all of us, but especially of you young people. You have many choices to make, most of which will affect you for the rest of your lives. The sheer number is daunting, to say nothing of the many spiritual and ethical matters that arise.

Do not misunderstand. As young people, we had our problems too (I was in high school in 1965). We too had choices to make, and it was often bewildering to face them at a time of great change and unrest. Life for us was not a bed of roses. Nevertheless, I believe that it is harder to be a young person today than it was back then. If given a choice, I would prefer 1965 over 2013.

Yet in light of Harvey's comments, it is striking that when you get right down to it, life is fundamentally the same today as it was then, as he implies in his last sentence. Surely there are outward and formal differences, but essentially the principles of life have not changed. The battle of the antithesis is still the same, the antagonists are still the same, and the outcome will be the same, for God is in his heaven. The more things change, the more they stay the same.

Thus, a word of warning to you, young people. Beware, for the devil goes about as a roaring lion,

seeking whom he may devour. And he is after you more than anyone else. Keep up your guard against the multiplicity of temptations that you must face. In prayer ask God for his sustaining and strengthening grace, that you may be able to stand.

And a word of encouragement to fight the good fight of faith. The war is difficult, and sometimes winning looks like a lost cause. But in Christ we are already assured of victory. In the power of that assurance, go forth and live your lives for him.

Editor's Notes

Mark H. Hoeksema

In this issue find an article by Craig Ferguson on the antithesis, or perhaps more accurately, on the practical application of this truth to our lives. Mr. Ferguson submitted his unsolicited article just as I finished planning my series on the antithesis, but before the first article appeared, so he had no idea that we were both writing on the same subject. To avoid duplication, I withheld his article from print for the past eight months. Now with thanks for his patience we present it.

We are also pleased to welcome Prof. David J. Engelsma to *Beacon Lights*. In this issue is his first in a series of articles on "Christianizing the World." Five additional articles in this series will run in consecutive months.

Christian Living

Craig Ferguson

Antithetical Reassurance

"If ye were of the world, the world would love his own: but because ye are not of the world, but I have chosen you out of the world, therefore the world hateth you" (John 15:19).

Is it worth it? When we stick out, when we show by our actions that we are so obviously different from the world around us, we are often tempted to ask this question. When the world ridicules us for believing in our God and his word and finding all our joy in him, we might ask ourselves, is it worth it? We might look at our lonely state in this life and ask, is being a faithful servant of God worth being alone in this world? Am I really missing out on life, like they say? When a brother walks stubbornly in sin and appears to have all that heart could wish, it can be tempting to say, "Holiness is not worth it. Look at my brother; look at his happiness. He is not alone; he has many friends, and together with the world he is happy." We might even begin to think that we are not really so different from the reprobate wicked. Our lives do not always look so dissimilar. Perhaps there is very little difference between us after all, and my antithetical fight is a vain one. Is it really worth it?

The temptation to forsake the antithetical calling that our Lord has given us is present to varying degrees in the lives of the members of the church. It can be tiring to fight against the world constantly. It can be disheartening for us to see over and over again that we have no real place in this world. In our present age, when formerly strong nations and churches tirelessly advocate the tolerance of sin, it can be difficult for our hearts, minds, and bodies to continue to fight. And so we, especially the younger soldiers in this battle of faith who have not the confidence of experience, might be tempted to ask, is it worth it? Can I go on, always fighting, never resting?

To such disheartened souls comes the comforting

word of God in John 15.

First, Christ emphasizes that we as believers are not and indeed cannot truly be "of the world." It is not a capacity that we have within our new persons as redeemed children of God. This is not to say that we do not sometimes fall into sin, but here Christ declares to us that he has chosen us "out of the world," removing us from it, and that no one can pluck us from his hand.

He then reminds us of the antithetical relationship established between the world and the church after the fall: "And I will put enmity between thee and the woman, between thy seed and her seed" (Gen 3:15). Enmity stands between the church, which is the body of Christ, and the world, which is the corrupt, stinking body of sin and death. In John 15:19, God calls this enmity hatred. There can exist nothing else. "What communion hath light with darkness?" we read in 2 Corinthians 6:14. Our response to the temptation to unite with the world in any way ought to be that of David in Psalm 139:21: "Do not I hate them, O LORD, that hate thee?" We must hate the wicked world, we must hate Satan, and we must hate the old man within us, for they all hate the Lord and his chosen people.

However, being the weak creatures that we are, we often falter when we see the mighty and unyielding hatred the world has for us. Fighting against the world and its subtle attacks on the church's members, ourselves included, requires us to be diligent, always on the alert, trusting only God's word. The temptation to be able to rest and put down our arms is a powerful one. From time to time, we even convince ourselves that there is no need to be on our guard. Sometimes we take for granted the great gift of a Protestant Reformed school and assume that there will be no temptations when we are at school, or with our Protestant Reformed friends. But when we are tempted to relax our spiritual guard, we ought to ask ourselves: does Satan ever lessen his attack on my soul? Do the wicked ever stop desiring the destruction of the people of God? Will my own sinful flesh ever rest in its efforts to pull me away from God?

No. Not in this life. And so we must always fight, never stopping, never ceasing, never letting down our guard and fooling ourselves into believing that the attack on our souls has ceased. It is our duty to fight, and one fundamentally important to our being the body of Christ and the children of God. Our highest priority may never be to have rest from the battle of faith. You may have heard the saying, "You can sleep when you're dead;" it is the same with respect to our life here on earth. It is a life filled with war and with life-threatening conflict. We must always fight.

That sounds very difficult, doesn't it? "Actually, it sounds impossible," you might say. And you would be right, because it is impossible for us to fight throughout our entire lives. On our own, we are far too weak. But remember, we do not fight in our own strength. We fight with our feet firmly established on the rock that is the church's one foundation. We fight by grace through faith in Christ Jesus. And so God provides us with strength to endure.

We make a mistake, however, if we think that by commanding his people to walk antithetically, God achieves the preservation of his church through a joyless and comfortless battle. He does not. The antithesis is far, far more. When we fight against the world through the strength that we have in Christ Jesus, we become partakers by grace of a comfort and peace that surpasses understanding. We experience the Comforter, the Holy Spirit, testifying in our hearts that we belong to Christ. "The world hateth you," Christ says, "because I have chosen you."

Do you see that? We should not be disheartened by the hatred of the world. We should be reassured and comforted. If the world hated Christ and tortured him and crucified him, how can we expect it to feel anything but hatred towards those who call themselves Christians? We are his body, and he abides in us. How can the haters of God not hate those through whom the light of Christ shines? When we are hated by the world, it is because we show the light of Christ shining within us. What a comfort! We are saved. We are heirs with Christ of the kingdom of heaven. The hatred of the world assures us of this our salvation!

We should not ask, then, is it worth it? But we ought to ask instead, why would I ever give this up? Why would I ever choose to join with the world? In fighting the fight of the antithesis, I come to know the surety of my salvation. In fighting the fight of the antithesis, and enduring the hatred of the world, I experience in a marvelously real and living way the great love that God has for me, a lowly sinner. He preserves me, and he gives to me all the wondrous peace of Christ, my Lord and Savior, by whose blood I am made clean and in whose strength I stand.

"O righteous Father, the world hath not known

thee: but I have known thee, and these have known that thou hast sent me. And I have declared unto them thy name, and will declare it: that the love wherewith thou hast loved me may be in them, and I in them" (John 17:25–26).

Craig is a member of First Protestant Reformed Church in Edmonton, Alberta, Canada.

Where We Stand — Prof. David J. Engelsma

Christianizing the World? (1)

Is this the calling of the church?

Is this the calling of the Reformed young man or woman?

Is this the purpose of the Christian education of Reformed young people, especially of the higher education of Reformed young people?

If we are to believe the Christian Reformed Church, especially its high schools and colleges, including Calvin, Trinity, and Dordt, the answer is an emphatic yes.

Since many Protestant Reformed young people are in contact with young people of the Christian Reformed Church and since some Protestant Reformed young people attend the Christian Reformed colleges, the Christianizing of the world becomes an issue for Protestant Reformed young people.

Does the Lord Jesus command us to engage in this project of Christianizing the world? Does the Protestant Reformed refusal to take on this project constitute disobedience to the lordship of Jesus Christ? Do we by this refusal manifest the folly and wickedness of world-flight—the perversion of the Christian life of the old Anabaptists? Are Protestant Reformed young people to feel guilty because of their lack of involvement in all kinds of endeavors that claim to be aspects of the Christianizing of the world?

Or is the entire project nothing but a fanciful notion of men? In this case, the project is not only foolish—a delusion and fantasy—like the crusades of the Middle Ages. The crusaders were on a mission to conquer Jerusalem for Jesus. The cultural Calvinists of our day are on a mission to conquer the world for Jesus. But the project of Christianizing the world is also an instance of the very serious sin of "teaching for doctrines the commandments of men" (Matt. 15:1–9). For the proponents of Christianizing the world burden the consciences of people, especially Reformed young people, with the duty of Christianizing the world as though this were a commandment of God, when in fact it is merely a fond dream of humans.

The Source of the Project

The source in the Reformed tradition of the modern crusade that tries to Christianize the world is two Dutch Reformed theologians of the previous century, Abraham Kuyper and Herman Bavinck. They were colleagues in the Reformed Churches in the Netherlands in the second half of the 19th century and in the early part of the 20th century. They were men of great influence, both in their own large denomination and in many other Reformed churches over all the world.

Kuyper and Bavinck saw that the Reformed faith, or Calvinism, as the pure form of the Christian religion of the Bible, confesses God's sovereignty over all of human life, indeed over all of creation and all of history. They understood also that Calvinism claims all of the life of the Reformed believer, not only worship and devotions, but also family life, work and business, education, science, the arts, and involvement in politics—all.

From these axiomatic truths, they inferred that it is the calling of Calvinistic Christians to "Christianize the world."

It should be evident to all that the inference does not follow from the fundamental principles. That God is sovereign over all creation and over all of history does not imply that he wills the Christianizing of the world by his people in history, and that he calls the

church to engage in the project. He may rather, and indeed does purpose that his church shine as light in the midst of and in contrast to a dark, ungodly, and un-christianized world. It may be, and indeed is his purpose that the entire creation of the heaven and the earth be renewed and recreated (not: "Christianized") by Jesus Christ at his second coming (not: by the saints within history, see Rom. 8:19–22). God is also sovereign over hell, but this does not imply the church's calling to Christianize hell.

Likewise, the truth that Calvinism claims the entire life of the Reformed believer does not imply that Reformed believers must Christianize the world, or even their own society. What it does imply is that every Reformed Christian is called by grace to bring his or her own entire life under subjection to the lordship of Jesus Christ and to live his or her entire life to the glory of God (1 Cor. 10:31).

If I were compelled to use the barbarous term to describe the sound inference from the fundamental principles of Calvinism, I would say that the sound inference is that we are called to "Christianize" the whole of our life in the world, not only worship and devotions, but also our work and play, our studies, our work in science, our artistic efforts, our involvement in politics and civil government—all. Not the whole world, but our own life in the whole world.

Nevertheless, the two Dutchmen called their countrymen and all Reformed Christians to this grandiose task: "Christianize the world!" They issued the call in many speeches and writings.

Especially influential were and still are Kuyper's lectures on Calvinism at Princeton Theological Seminary in the United States in 1898. The lectures were soon published as a book, *Lectures on Calvinism*. Over the years, the book has been the bible of the Reformed advocates of the Christianizing of society and the world. My own copy (Eerdmans, 1953) was the textbook in more than one religion and theology course at Calvin College. It was appealed to in other courses, although not in support of Kuyper's banning of card-playing, theater, and dance as unchristian activities ("unhallowed influence of this world," 73).

What is Meant by "Christianizing"

What Kuyper and Bavinck meant by the odd, non-biblical, non-creedal term "Christianizing," was not that the world becomes Christian. That the world becomes Christian would mean that all the life of all the nations would be obedience to the law of God, in love for God from the hearts of the citizens, because they believed in Jesus Christ. And this could only be the case because a majority of the citizens of all nations had been converted to Jesus Christ and saved.

"Christianizing" in the program of Kuyper, Bavinck, and their contemporary disciples does not have this in mind whatsoever.

But it refers to a certain influence of Christianity upon people, affecting their outward conduct. The vast majority of the people of the world remain ungodly and unbelieving. They reject Jesus as the Messiah. They worship their idols, whether Allah, or Buddha, or some movie star, or some athlete, or their money. But Christianity changes their conduct, and perhaps even their thinking, for the better.

Kuyper himself described "Christianizing" this way:

> "Christian" [in the phrase, "Christianizing the nation"] says nothing about the spiritual state of the inhabitants of such a country but only witnesses to the fact that public opinion, the general mind-set, the ruling ideas, the moral norms, the laws and customs there clearly betoken the influence of the Christian faith ("Common Grace," in *Abraham Kuyper: A Centennial Reader*, ed. James D. Bratt, Eerdmans, 1998, 199).

Bavinck wrote of "Christianizing life," and then described this activity as "a methodic, organic reformation of the whole cosmos, of nation and country" ("The Catholicity of Christianity and the Church," *Calvin Theological Journal* 27 [1992]: 243, 246). He spoke in this connection of "the conquest of the entire world" ("Calvin and Common Grace," a booklet without publisher, place, or date, in my library, 127).

A Christianized world is a world that still lies in the darkness of idolatry, unbelief, and unrighteousness, but that has become outwardly more decent, moral, and orderly. A veneer of Christianity has been applied to the world; the world has been "Christian*ized*."

The Power of the Project: Common Grace

Basic to this project of Christianizing the world for Kuyper, Bavinck, and their contemporary disciples, both in the sphere of the Reformed churches and in the broader sphere of evangelical Christianity, is a common grace of God working in all humans, godless as well as godly, pagans as well as Christians. This is a mighty, though not irresistible grace of God that does not save sinners. What common grace does, Kuyper advises us in his *Lectures*:

> There is…also a *common grace* by which God, maintaining the life of the world, relaxes the curse which rests upon it, arrests its process of corruption, and thus allows the untrammeled development of our life in which to glorify Himself as Creator (*Lectures on Calvinism*, 30).

It is the purpose of God with this common grace to "consummate the world's development," ultimately in the world's being Christianized (Kuyper, "Common Grace," in Bratt, *Abraham Kuyper*, 176).

Kuyper very much needed such a grace for his project. The comparatively few Christians can otherwise not be expected to influence their neighborhoods, much less the world. But now the ungodly themselves, delivered from their total depravity and freed somewhat from God's curse, can exert themselves to realize a truly good culture and society—a way of life that at least outwardly conforms to Christ.

By virtue of this grace of God, which is shared by Christians and non-Christians, Christians may and can cooperate with their ungodly neighbors and unbelieving countrymen in the important work of Christianizing their society, their nation, and finally, the world. In this work, Christians add the influence of the particular grace that is their peculiar possession.

So important is common grace to the project of Christianizing the world that without it the notion fades away like a hazy dream upon one's awakening, and the entire project collapses like a pierced balloon.

This is in part the reason that the Christian Reformed Church in 1924 took no prisoners in its defense of the doctrine of common grace against Herman Hoeksema. The Christian Reformed Church was committed, heart and soul, to Kuyper's crusade of Christianizing the world. The spirit of that denomination was then, and has increasingly become cultural Calvinism, rather than spiritual and doctrinal Calvinism.

Every student of Scripture cannot but notice how this theory turns the Bible on its head. It is not a prominent admonition in the Bible that Christians must influence the world for good. But it is a warning on almost every page of Holy Scripture that the true Church and the holy child of God must be vigilant in guarding against the world's influencing them (James 1:27; James 4:4; Rom. 12:2; Gal. 1:4).

The Kingdom of God without Jesus Christ

When the skeptic requests biblical proof for this quixotic campaign of Christianizing the world, the enthusiasts for cultural Christianity appeal to the biblical texts that speak of the coming of the kingdom of God. Thus, a Christianized world is identified with the kingdom of God.

The implication, which the proponents of Christianizing are happy to draw, is that those—chiefly the Protestant Reformed Churches—who reject the project are without a kingdom-vision, indeed fail to seek and promote the kingdom of God in the world. A slander!

I intend to subject the notion and project of Christianizing the world to criticism in my next installment. But let the readers observe carefully that the kingdom of common grace is not the kingdom of God revealed in the Bible in any shape or form. It is a kingdom, at best, of merely external conformity to some aspects of the Christian religion, without any love of and zeal for God in regenerated hearts. It is a kingdom of citizens most of whom hate God and his Christ—and therefore the true church and genuine believers—worshipping idols and living impenitently in unbelief.

What is most damning about this kingdom is that the crucified and risen Lord Jesus does not reign in it as king.

Common Grace Produces Antichrist

I for one am not a citizen of the kingdom of common grace, that is, of a Christianized world as conceived by Kuyper, Bavinck, and the modern cultural Calvinists. I renounce citizenship in this kingdom, as well as participation in the project of building it, on peril of my soul's salvation.

For adding to the peculiarity of the common grace kingdom is that in its final form and development, according to Kuyper himself, the architect of the kingdom of a world Christianized by common grace will prove to be *the kingdom of Antichrist*.

> The closing scene in the drama of common grace can be enacted only through the appearance on stage of the man of sin…Common grace… leads to the most powerful manifestation of sin in history…Babylon…will display the most refined forms, the most magnificent unfolding of wealth and splendor, the fullest brilliance of all that makes life dazzling and glorious. From this we know that "common grace" will continue to function to the end. Only when common grace has spurred the full emergence of all the powers inherent in human life will "the man of sin" find

the level terrain needed to expand this power ("Common Grace," in Bratt, *Abraham Kuyper: A Centennial Reader*, 180, 181).

One would think that this would dampen the enthusiasm of the cultural Calvinists for the Christianizing of the world. They are, in reality, working at the *Anti*-christianizing of the world—a dubious project.

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Gem of the Month — Tom Cammenga

A Prayer for Sight

Great God of creation and father of mine,
I humbly beseech Thee to answer my cry.
Thou who ever hast holden all things in Thy hand,
And rules o'er all the workings of man.

Give seeing I pray to these eyes that are blind,
By Thy grace bring light from the darkness of night.
For Thou knowest my frame, my Creator and King,
From dust Thou didst shape me Thy glory to bring.

Made in Thy image Thy likeness displayed,
To show forth Thy greatness and marvelous grace.
A sinner redeemed by the blood of Thy son,
The apple of Thine eye, Thy dear precious one.

Yet bruised and afflicted and tossed to and fro,
The tempests and storms o'erwhelming my soul.
In weakness and sin I don't see beyond me,
To the God in whose arms I always shall be.

I fail to look past these troubles and trials,
To see Thy great faithfulness all of the while.
I see only now, with the hurt and the pain,
The storm clouds, the lightning, the thundering rain.

And yet of all those who walk through this shadowy vale,
It is I that have reason to rejoice midst the gale.
For Thou dost preserve me and hold me in grace,
To fight the good fight and run swift the race.

Help me, oh God, to look beyond all this sorrow,
To see Thy great goodness today and tomorrow.
To rejoice and be glad and to show forth Thy praise,
By the hope that is in me through all of my days.

Thy glory I seek, of Thy power I'll sing,
And sound forth Thy wisdom in all of these things.
In weakness made strong and in strength made to see,
That this strength is not mine but Thine within me.

Amen

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

Watching Daily At My Gates

March 11 ***Read Psalm 63***

Once again we have a Psalm of David written when he was forced to be away from Jerusalem and the ordinary public worship of Jehovah. Notice the many references to God and to his goodness. This psalm and the others like it should be our pattern in this life. While most of us are not forced to be absent from God's house, we all have times in which we cannot go up to worship with the congregation. As we lie on beds of illness, let us remember God's goodness. He never will forget us no matter in what circumstances we might be. Let us never forget him and he will sustain us in any time of need that we have. Sing Psalter 164.

March 12 ***Read Psalm 64***

Here we have a psalm that can be used by any oppressed people of God in whatever time of history they may find themselves. Daniel could have used it; Christ, of whom David is a type, could have used it, the Reformers could have used it, and in the last days the oppressed people of God who remain on this earth may well use it. David first draws attention to the devices the wicked use against God's people. Then he makes a confident statement that God will protect him and all those who are oppressed because of their trust in the name of God. Reread the last verse and make it yours as an expression of the trust you can have in God. Sing Psalter 165.

March 13 ***Read Psalm 65***

The first four verses of this psalm tell us to praise God. We can do this because he hears our prayers, he forgives our sins, and he can and is to be worshipped. All three of these ideas become routine for us. They ought not. We need to think about who God is as we pray. We need to think about what it means to be forgiven of our sins, and we need to consider the purpose of worship. When we do this, we understand God's providence as he cares for all things, as is recounted in the last part of this beautiful psalm. Sing Psalter 170.

March 14 ***Read Psalm 66***

This is a psalm of thanksgiving. We can divide it into three parts. In the first section we see God's greatness in the power of nature. God's people need to take time to observe God's great creation. It does not matter if it is the tiniest object or something as large as the universe—we see God's grandeur there. In the second part we see God's goodness towards the nation of Israel which pictures the church of all ages. God has been and will be good to the body of Christ. Finally the psalmist exults in the goodness of God to him personally. As another psalm commands us, "O taste and see that God is good." What a blessed experience this is! Sing Psalter 175.

March 15 ***Read Psalm 67***

It would seem that this psalm was written at a time of peace for Israel. The first verse reminds us of the priestly blessing found in Numbers. In the next verse we see an allusion to the saving of the Gentiles. The psalmist is looking ahead until the day that people from the four corners of the earth will be added to God's church. This is especially a comfort for us as we are assured of being numbered with the sons and daughters of Zion. Finally, we are called to praise God for all the blessings that he has afforded to us, especially the blessing of salvation. Sing Psalter 176.

March 16 ***Read Psalm 68***

Because of the length of this psalm we will let it speak for itself to us. Each of us can find a verse or section that causes us to draw near to God. I like verses 32–34. Here we are called to sing unto our God, whose marvelous acts can be seen not only in creation, but also in his church. After considering the psalm, we must all conclude with the last phrase, "Blessed be God." Sing Psalter 183.

March 17 ***Read Psalm 69***

This psalm is both imprecatory and messianic in character. In it David laments his sad condition due to repeated attacks by an enemy or enemies around him. He pleads with God to deliver him from them. In it he also confesses his sin, which may have been

part of the reason for his distress. Throughout the psalm we find references that are prophetic of Christ and his sufferings. Christ too was under attack from enemies within the church of that day. He was under attack because that was the way of deliverance for God's people. We must also remember that we will suffer and must suffer for Christ's name's sake. Let us go to God in prayer on the basis of the sacrifice Christ made for us. Sing Psalter 186.

March 18 ***Read Psalm 70***

This short psalm is very similar to the last words of Psalm 40. In it the psalmist prays not only for deliverance from his enemies, but he also prays for joy for his friends. We can use this psalm as we meditate upon God's way for us in this world of turmoil. We should use this psalm to direct us in prayer as we bring our needs before God's throne of grace. We must pray daily and often every day. May we use the words of this psalm to teach us how and for what to pray. Sing Psalter 189.

March 19 ***Read Psalm 71***

Whoever the writer of this psalm may be, he has penned beautiful words of encouragement for those who have fought the battles of faith. The first part of the psalm contains prayers to God who helps his saints in those battles of faith. Both young and old can and should read these prayers for instruction as they pass through life here on earth. The second part of the psalm contains praises for what God has done for his people. Each of us needs to stop to thank God for his abundant mercies. In those mercies he has lifted us out of the mire of sin and set us upon Christ, the rock of our salvation. Sing Psalter 190.

March 20 ***Read Psalm 72***

While David was a man of war, his son Solomon, God's chosen successor to the throne, was to be a man of peace. Here in this psalm we have a letter to a son who will be taking over an arduous work. David recognizes in his son the talents and abilities that God has given to him. While David's kingdom is the kingdom of war and a picture of the church militant, Solomon's kingdom will be that of peace, a picture of the church triumphant. Christ leads us into war, but by his victory gives to us life in the peaceful kingdom of heaven. May this be our goal and desire throughout our lives on this earth. Sing Psalter 194.

March 21 ***Read Psalm 73***

This psalm recounts an experience that many children of God have had. They look at the world around them and are convinced that wicked people who have no care for the things of God have it much better than they do. The child of God wonders, "Is it worth it to serve God in all aspects of life?" In the latter part of the psalm we see the cure for such wrong thinking. We must go to God's house and listen to him as he speaks to us in the preaching. Only in this way will we be brought to the truth that God is truly good to his people. Sing Psalter 203.

March 22 ***Read Psalm 74***

The psalmist looks at troubles in Jerusalem and cries out for help from God. Some enemy has ravaged the city even to destroying the place of worship. This enemy has made it hard to worship. In the midst of all that destruction, the psalmist cries out "God is my King of old, working salvation in the midst of the earth." Is this our cry? Do we seek the sovereign God whose ways are good? Do we recognize him as the God of our salvation? In the way of turmoil and troubles we find help only in one source. Let us go to our God, who is our refuge in times of trouble. Sing Psalter 205.

March 23 ***Read Psalm 75***

The battle of faith must be fought by Christians of all ages and in all walks of life. Our young people must fight that battle. Satan wars against them as well as the most aged saint in church. It does not matter if we are male or female, parent or child, single or married, the battle is there. Our first responsibility is to pray to God for deliverance. He is the judge who will render to the wicked according to his work. When we see the victory given to us by faith, then we need to sing the songs of Zion in thanksgiving to our covenant God who gave us that victory. Sing Psalter 206.

March 24 ***Read Psalm 76***

This psalm is a psalm of thanksgiving for victory over some enemy. We cannot tell for sure which victory this is, but it is obviously a psalm of praise to the deliverer, God Almighty. We can use this psalm as a psalm of thanksgiving for what God has done in our lives. He is known among us, his people, for the works that he has accomplished in our lives. He has proven himself mightier than any enemy that Satan sends against us. Each day as we consider the wonders that God has done in our lives, let us give thanks to him for such victories over his enemies who would afflict us. Sing Psalter 207.

March 25 ***Read Psalm 77***

This psalm is similar to the ones that precede it. Therefore let us consider especially verses 11 and 12. We are called to remember the works of God in past history. For us who live on an earth that is 6000 years

old, there are many of those works to consider. We must consider those found in Scripture, we must consider those in the history of the church since Christ's ascension into heaven, and we must consider those works in our own lives and in our family's history. There is no doubt that there are wonderful works of God found there. Then we must meditate on those works and see how they have affected our lives. We must see how God has sovereignly guided the works of history for our good and for our salvation. Finally, we must freely speak of those works of God to those who are around us. This is our calling, and this must we do. Sing Psalter 211.

March 26 ***Read Psalm 78***

This longer psalm follows in the thoughts of the one before it. Here the psalmist enumerates many works in Israel's history that served for their deliverance and their inheriting of the land of Canaan. Typically these works show to us the way that we are delivered into the new Canaan. May we remember them and may we teach them to our children so that they know how to walk in the ways of God. Sing Psalter 213.

March 27 ***Read Psalm 79***

There were times in Israel's history that God sent enemies to Israel in chastisement for sins committed against almighty God. These enemies did despicable things to God's holy places. In the New Testament there have also been such breaches upon God's people. Sometimes this chastisement is not physical, but it is chastisement nonetheless. As we read this psalm may we give thanks to God for delivering us from the evil of our own sins, and for turning us to seek him in all of our lives. Sing Psalter 217.

March 28 ***Read Psalm 80***

Three times in this psalm we find the phrase 'turn us." This is an urgent request to the only one who can turn a person from the way that he is going to the correct way. Of ourselves we are wandering sheep who not only get off the correct path, but we do not like the correct path. Israel had gone off the path and had been taken to captivity. God's holy places had been destroyed. Now his people look for deliverance from the only one who can give them deliverance. This must be our prayer as well. We are like those sheep; we are like Israel. We need turning. When we are turned, then we will experience the glory of the shining of God's face, blessing us in our way. Turn us, O God, and we shall be turned. Sing Psalter 221.

March 29 ***Read Psalm 81***

This psalm was written for use at some service of praise to God. Israel was reminded that the way of pleasing God was in the way of obedience to his law. When those laws were not obeyed, Israel found itself in trouble. We too need this reminder. We have several special services throughout the year. Do we come to them in the right frame of mind? Are we there out of obligation only, or do we truly want to draw near to God's face and praise him for the wonderful works he has done for us? When our hearts are attuned to him, our praise will be sweet in his ears, and we will experience his blessing upon us. Sing Psalter 222.

March 30 ***Read Psalm 82***

While this psalm was written to show judges in Israel their duty, officebearers in the church of Christ should take heed to its words. God is the supreme judge, and he will judge all men, including those whom he has placed in authority on this earth. Each officebearer has a divinely appointed task in the church of God. Ministers of the word must use that word for the edification of the flocks. Elders must rule well and care for the members of the flock in all of their needs. Deacons must collect the alms and distribute those mercies of Christ to the needy of that flock. All of us await the judge. How will he see us? Sing Psalter 223.

March 31 ***Read Psalm 83***

The last of the psalms ascribed to Asaph can be called a national psalm. It is written because of some situation of Israel as a nation. The psalmist calls upon God to remember his works in days of old as he cared for his people in many times of dire straits. It is also an imprecatory psalm, pleading for God to bring vengeance upon the enemies of the church. The basis for that vengeance is the honor of God's most glorious name. We may pray such prayers today; we will need to pray such prayers in the future. Are we as jealous for the name of God as this psalmist was? Sing Psalter 224.

April 1 ***Read Psalm 84***

In this psalm the psalmist expresses a deep longing to enter the house of God. There are very beautiful expressions that we may well use as we go through our daily lives. The psalmist seems to have been deprived of the experience of going to the house of God and desires to enter into its gates once more. We too should have the same love of the house of God. While our earthly churches do not have the same symbolism as the temple did, the result of our going there is the same. God's name is hallowed in that

place. Do we desire to go to church each and every Lord's Day? Do we let nothing get in the way of our attending church unless God prevents us? Worship is both a time of rest and a time of feeding. Just as our spiritual bodies need to be fed and need rest, so do our spiritual souls. Sing Psalter 226.

April 2 ***Read Psalm 85***

Again a psalmist cries to God for deliverance from a wicked people. Again the psalmist acknowledges that the trouble in which God's people find themselves is caused by their sin. This has been true of God's people in history, and it is true of God's people today. God uses troubles from the outside to chastise his people and bring them back to the way they should fear God. In the latter part of the psalm, we see that God is just and merciful. He satisfied his justice by sending his Son to die on the cross. He also showed his mercy to his sinning people in that sacrifice. Thanks be to God for his unspeakable gift. Sing Psalter 230.

April 3 ***Read Psalm 86***

This psalm, entitled A Prayer of David, is one that we can and should use as a pattern for our prayers. Chapters like this need to be read over and over so that we can gain the full meaning of them. Our prayers can and should be guided by the inspired prayers of those whom God has given to us for examples. Even as the disciples implored Jesus to teach them to pray, so we can implore God by the use of this psalm and others like it to teach us to pray. Let us pray often, and let us pray using the words almighty God has given to us. Sing Psalter 233.

April 4 ***Read Psalm 87***

It is a wonderful thing to be part of the church of Jesus Christ. In that place only is found the salvation needed for a blessed eternal life. Men of the world wish to identify with some place or some organization as being a good thing. Their "good thing" is a thing that they have invented. To be part of the body of Christ is truly a good thing. Let us use the music God has given to us to thank him for making us part of the church through Christ Jesus. Sing Psalter 237.

April 5 ***Read Psalm 88***

The psalms are written to be used in any experience of life in which we find ourselves. The psalmist here is at a very sad time of his life. Whether this sadness was caused by something spiritual or something physical, we cannot tell. We see in the first part of the psalm a solemn description of the psalmist's trials. He knows that if death is the result of the trial, God will not leave him in that state, as there is no praise of God from a lifeless corpse. In the last part of the psalm is a cry for deliverance from the affliction. We too fall into affliction and troubles. We can use this psalm to guide us as we seek help in our time of trouble. We should seek such help only from almighty God, who is our refuge in any time of trouble. Sing Psalter 240.

April 6 ***Read Psalm 89***

A psalm of this length needs little explanation. It is one that needs to be read multiple times to understand the depth of the instruction found within it. After reading it more than once, reread the first and last verses to receive the blessing found in its depths. Sing Psalter 241.

April 7 ***Read Psalm 90***

This psalm, penned by Moses, is the oldest in the whole collection. It is one full of truth and beauty. It is said that Moses wrote these words as he was on the doorstep of the land into which he would never enter. He understands that death will take him before he can enter the promised land. Yet for him, like us, death is the entry into the promised land of heaven. As we read through the final verses of the psalm we see the immensity and depth of the work that God has given to us as we dwell in this land which is not our abiding place. Let us seek God's blessing on the work of our hands. Sing Psalter 246.

April 8 ***Read Psalm 91***

While we do not know the author of this psalm, we know that he expresses thoughts that all of God's people experience in their pilgrimage on this earth. The first part of the psalm indicates the faith that the child of God can and must have during his earthly life. This faith is only possible through the grace that God gives to his people. In the second part of the psalm we see a prophecy concerning Christ and his relationship to his father. In this relationship he has given to us the joys of salvation and blessed us with eternal life. Sing Psalter 249.

April 9 ***Read Psalm 92***

The title added to this psalm gives us explicit instruction as to its use. We are to use it not only to prepare us for proper use of the Sabbath, but we are also to use it as we go and experience a Sabbath day's blessings. The blessings of that day are far more than any good that we can receive from any activity on this earth. May we look forward to each Sabbath. May we use them in the knowledge that we are readying ourselves for the blessed, eternal Sabbath in heaven. Sing Psalter 250.

God in His Mighty Power Created No Possibility for Evolutionism

(5) Theistic Evolution: The Great Contradiction

What's worse? Outright denial of God through approval of evolutionism, or thinking God would use a mechanism such as evolution over millions of years to create and sustain? I don't even know how to begin to answer a question like that, nor do I intend to do so. This is not God. Theistic evolution portrays God as weak and having to resort to other means than his spoken word to create and sustain. God is not glorified in any way by this. When through a scientific discovery we see his sovereignly creative and providential hand and say, "How great is our God in this wondrous *act* (not extremely long process), and how weak is man!" then God is glorified.

How is this even an issue in the church today? How *can* it be an issue? This is basic theology. God is sovereign over all. He knows all; he created all; he sustains all. God's very being demands sovereignty. Do not think of God's attributes as comparable to those of an earthly king. A sovereign king is merely an earthly, sin-tainted depiction of what sovereignty actually is. If you want to see true sovereignty, look to God. God does not reflect sovereignty, he *is* sovereignty. God *is* his attributes. God *is* mercy; God *is* holiness; God *is* wisdom; God *is* sovereignty. This is in part where proponents of theistic evolution go horribly wrong. Their view of God is tainted in that they do not see God as sovereign over all. In the end their view depicts a weak God. This is clear denial of Scripture. That God is sovereign is evident from his name, Jehovah; he is self-existent and eternal.

Theistic evolution is a great contradiction. If we were to pin a world view to theistic evolution, which attempts to combine two world views that are polar opposites of one another, it would be common grace. Common grace is the thief wearing a ski mask that says, "REFORMED!" on the forehead. In reality, common grace robs God of his glory. Common grace lets in his crony, a non-literal interpretation of Genesis. A non-literal interpretation does not see the importance of God's sovereign hand in creation and calls it irrelevant in the scope of eternity. With a non-literal interpretation of Genesis comes the destruction of the creation ordinances. Creation did not occur in six days with one day of rest, so the Sabbath day is desecrated without a thought; marriage is not for life any more, and remarriage is allowed; women are not called to be submissive to their husbands because God did not create Eve out of Adam. Do you see how destructive this worldview is? Not only is God's hand in creation muted, but every other area of life is tainted and twisted.

Post-modernism contributes heavily to theistic evolution as well. The spirit of the age in which we live that denies knowing truth or the possibility of truth is highly conducive to reinterpretation of the first chapters of Genesis, and the whole of Scripture in general. Man says we don't really know—besides some sort of process of evolution over millions of years which God may or may have not started—how the universe originated. Post-modernism has permeated the church and perverted many people's thinking into a denial of knowing absolute truth when it comes to origins. Some say that there is no need for us to know the truth about origins, and that it has no bearing on the scope of eternity. What they are doing is denying God when they say this.

By way of denying the absolute truth of creation

by God in six literal days, as it is clearly portrayed in Scripture, many put their children in danger. An example can be seen in the life of the Intelligent Design heavy mover, Michael Behe. What makes Behe different from many other proponents of Intelligent Design is that he believes in common descent. This is the idea that all living organisms can trace their origins back to one common ancestor. You might call Behe a hybrid Intelligent Design proponent, almost a theistic evolutionist. Behe's son Leo grew up with his father's unbiblical stance on origins and became an atheist over a period of six months. While Leo went from being a devout Roman Catholic to an outspoken atheist, the same can and does happen to Reformed Christian young people. What follows is an excerpt from an interview with Leo Behe in *Humanist* magazine.

> There was a lot of buzz about *The God Delusion* back in 2008 when I read it, and it seemed to be having an impact on a lot of Christians' faith. I had recently decided to turn my interest in apologetics toward atheism, and Dawkins' bestseller seemed to be a good place to start. *The God Delusion* has been criticized for its allegedly infantile treatment of metaphysics, but that aspect of the book was not what originally challenged my faith. The point that hit me hardest while reading was the fallible origin of Scripture, which I had never considered (to my own surprise). That point in particular was what originally shook my specific faith—Catholicism—and planted seeds of skepticism, which continued to grow as I expanded my knowledge through other literary works on both sides of the issue.
>
> The journey from very devout Catholic to outspoken atheist took about six months total. Once my trust in the Bible was shaken, I still believed strongly in a theistic god, but I realized that I hadn't sufficiently examined my beliefs. Over the next several months, my certainty of a sentient, omnipotent and omnibenevolent deity faded steadily.

What Leo Behe reveals throughout the course of this interview should not be surprising to us. This sad chain of events brings out the importance of not only teaching the God of creation, but also of condemning evolutionism and any view that contradicts Scripture. Young people go off to college and are ruthlessly attacked by evolutionism, not to mention the plethora of other temptations they face at those institutions. Universities are the devil's playground, and the game is life or death. Young people must be prepared by their parents in the home and especially in the Christian schools for the onslaught so that they don't "drink the Kool-Aid" with the rest of the world and die denying God.

While I was conversing with a theistic evolutionist about the transition in recent history from most people's holding a literal six-day creation to theistic evolution's millions of years, the man said something along these lines: "If they ('they' being anyone who held to a literal six-day creation from the beginning of history until the prominence of evolution in the 19th and 20th centuries) knew back then what we know now, surely they wouldn't have taken the Bible literally. Back then man was ignorant." Not only does this man have the wrong idea of Scripture, namely, being unclear on origins, but he also has the idea that man was a grunting, knuckle-dragging, club-wielding, cave-dwelling creature with no intelligible thought process. In reality, ancient men were geniuses. Much of the architecture and engineering of today is based on "early" man's design. More importantly, would the Great Shepherd pull the wool over the eyes of his own sheep for thousands of years? This argument about the knowledge of man is saying that God tricked senseless pre-scientific man, from creation until the scientific age, into thinking that he created the universe in six days. How ridiculous!

God created us with the sole purpose that we glorify his name *alone*. This is not accomplished by denying his sovereign hand in creating and sustaining the universe and all it contains. This is not accomplished by changing the days of Genesis 1 into long periods of time. We could discuss all the different categories of Theistic Evolution, but time and space prevent us.

Think about some of the attributes of God. His mercy, his righteousness, his sovereignty, his holiness, and his infinite wisdom all make sense when you confess literal six-day creation. Thanks be to God for giving us a system of beliefs that makes sense! Could it be any other way?

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The Role of a Physician Assistant

A Brief History of the Profession

The physician assistant (PA) role emerged over the last five decades due to the expanding demands of the medical field and to combat a shortage of doctors. The first PA program was started by Dr. Eugene Stead at Duke University in 1965 in recognition of the need for additional medical providers. He based the PA role on an existing relationship between a fellow physician and his assistant. Military corpsmen were some of the first PAs and were ideally suited to fill these positions once they completed their military duties, since they could continue to use their medical knowledge gained during military training and field work to serve the general public. Now, PAs are recognized physician extenders and are often viewed by patients as approachable and knowledgeable providers. The profession is beginning to stretch beyond U.S. borders to countries around the world.

Education

A physician assistant is a mid-level provider who has received graduate level training and works under the supervision of a physician in virtually all medical specialties. The term *supervision* indicates the physician is the final decision-maker, but delegates the PA to function as a representative of the physician. The degree of supervision required may vary from state to state.

In Michigan there are five accredited physician assistant programs. While individual programs may have slightly different prerequisites, the student who wishes to be accepted to one of these programs should have a strong health science background, taking courses such as human anatomy and physiology, general chemistry, biochemistry, epidemiology, and statistics. Work experience involving some aspect of patient care or interaction is also generally necessary, with the number of hours needed dependent on each program, typically between five hundred and one thousand hours. I had the opportunity to work on third shift at an assisted living facility near my home while I was completing my prerequisites. I was responsible for the care of residents with mild to more advanced dementia and had to learn to handle emergencies, such as a heart attack in the middle of a night, falls, and delirium. I dispensed medications in the morning and assisted with ADLs (activities of daily living, such as bathing, dressing, feeding) for the residents. This group of people was special to me and I wanted to treat them as if they were one of my grandparents, taking extra time to look after them and to treat them with respect. This opportunity was helpful for me because it reinforced my desire to enter the healthcare field and it also taught me to appreciate the people who do the "hands on" work.

My decision to become a PA came to me gradually through a series of experiences and by realizing how I could use my affinity for Science and English in a vocation. After graduating high school I attended Hope College, which has a strong reputation for developing students in fields of pre-med, nursing, research, and education. I decided I wanted to pursue medicine and became interested in the PA profession after shadowing both physicians and PAs during one of my senior courses. Upon graduating from Hope I applied to Grand Valley State University's PA program and was accepted.

Most PA programs are master's level and are designed to structure the education model similarly to the training a physician receives in comparison to the nursing model. For example, as part of Advanced Human Anatomy and Physiology, the PA students take a human cadaver lab, one of my personal favorites because you can see how intricately the human body is created. PAs also receive extensive training in pharmacology (indications for medication, side effects, how they work) and pathophysiology (study of disease). Clinical rotations are performed after completing classroom courses and allow the PA student to experience a wide range of practices such as General Surgery, Cardiology, Family Practice, and Emergency Medicine; most programs also offer elective rotations for subspecialties. These rotations provide the opportunity to expand medical know-

ledge and skill sets, create professional connections, and guide the student to choose a field in which to practice. A master's thesis or project may be required by individual programs.

The physician assistant field is regulated on state and national levels. This means that each state has different regulations to which a PA must subscribe. The state of Michigan allows PAs to have a broad scope of practice, and they can write prescriptions for almost all medications except those limited to certain physicians due to the type of medications, such as a limited group of pain medications that are restricted due to tendency for abuse. Physician assistants are required to take a national certification exam in order to obtain their license and recertify every six (soon to be ten) years. Although this process is not necessarily enjoyable, this requirement is important because it requires professionals to reinforce their knowledge base and stay up to date with current practice guidelines. Continuing medical education is another part of this recertification process, which necessitates 100 hours of documented education hours every 2 years. Education hours are gained by attending conferences, reading journal articles, proctoring students, giving lectures, etc.

Pros/Cons of the Occupation

One of the benefits of being a PA is flexibility to switch between specialties if desired, and to work in a variety of settings. For example, I could switch from a cardiology position to oncology to a surgical position during the course of my career. The background education a PA receives is comprehensive, and the PA is viewed as an individual who can be molded to the needs of the physician/practice. Subspecialty training is often gained "on the job" and sometimes through advanced training courses.

Also, I think it may be easier for PAs to balance work and home life than it is for a physician, depending on the type of position held. Due to high patient volumes and emergency situations I often work overtime, but my supervising physicians put in many hours more per week with meetings, emergency trips to the hospital during the night and 24 hour on-call responsibilities. This is more than I am willing to devote to a job because it can cause too much interference with church and family responsibilities. However, I think it is important for Christians to pursue an education and profession that allows them to support their families, church and Christian schools.

Another benefit of working under the supervision of a physician is that they provide medical malpractice coverage, which can be very costly. The practice I work for assumes responsibility for my actions, but I also maintain my scope of practice. This means that I perform my duties according to the limitations of my training and under the boundaries set by my attending physician(s). For example, as a cardiology PA I may order studies such as an echocardiogram, but I do not provide a formal impression on the results of this study, as it is the physician's responsibility to interpret the test. I may explain what the results mean to the patient once I have the official report from the physician.

In my current position I have few responsibilities regarding the business aspect of medicine. The structure and maintenance of a medical practice requires a significant amount of attention. Although I could choose to own and run a medical practice (allowed by PAs in Michigan with supervision of a physician as indirectly as requiring only telephone contact) I currently have no desire to worry about the costs and decisions of maintaining a practice.

One of the disadvantages of my position is that hospital-based medicine is 24/7 and 365 days a year. This requires work on the Sabbath day, and although it is a work of necessity, it may pull the Christian away from worship. The work can also be stressful and demanding. One must also be able to face situations where God's rule over life and death is denied by a patient or family. Conversely, opportunities to witness are often encountered.

Responsibilities of the PA

As a PA student at Grand Valley State University I had the opportunity to participate in a clinical rotation at West Michigan Heart, a multi-specialty cardiology practice in Grand Rapids. I was surprised by how much I enjoyed this rotation, as I originally expected to join a pediatric practice or work in a surgical field once I completed my degree. The tempo of this rotation was fast paced and challenging, and I enjoyed the range of patients on this service.

A few months later I accepted a position with West Michigan Heart and started work as a hospital-based PA. Some of my responsibilities include assessing patients in the ER in consultation or for admission, preparing patients to go to the cardiac catheterization lab for procedures, answering emergency floor calls, and daily rounding on patients. I write prescriptions, order diagnostic and therapeutic

studies, and interpret results of labs and tests. I may request a consultation from another specialty when required. At one point my shifts were divided between the hospital and the outpatient setting at West Michigan Heart's main office, where I saw patients for post-hospital follow-up, emergency visits, and patients who received shocks from their implantable cardioverter defibrillators. As I gained clinical experience I gravitated toward the subspecialty of heart failure and became part of the Advanced Heart Failure team. These patients tend to be complicated with multiple medical problems often related to the decline of their hearts. I enjoy the problem solving aspect of my job and the challenge of performing patient assessment, assimilating data and formulating a plan.

About a year and a half ago I was asked to transition my role again and focus on heart transplant and mechanical cardiac support devices, temporary or long-term heart pumps that are implanted in the heart catheterization lab or surgically to support patients with severe cardiomyopathies (weak hearts). My official title is Ventricular Assist Device (VAD) Coordinator. It took me a couple of months to decide to accept this position as I worked through how I as a Christian could support this venture. How did I view heart transplantation? What about implantation of a long term heart pump in a patient who is 75 years old and failing due to progression of advanced heart failure? Is this a defiance of God's plan or acceptable use of modern technology and medical advances?

As I worked through these challenging questions, I remembered that God has provided us the gift of medicine, and the advanced options that are available should always be weighed against his word. He has also taught us to look forward to our heavenly home where we will have a new life and body in him. Finally, we are called to rely on the Great Physician for healing and be content in his plan for our life and death. Keeping these principles in mind, I would like to share two brief examples of patients I have treated in my current role.

Almost a year ago I met a patient in his early 30s who was hospitalized for congestive heart failure. He was diagnosed with a cardiomyopathy about 6 months earlier and was suddenly struggling to live. Our team took him to the OR for emergency surgical placement of a left ventricular assist device (LVAD), a mechanical heart support device that would take over the majority of the pumping function of his heart. Several months later he developed recurrent heart failure despite adequate support from the VAD. He was placed at the top of our heart transplant list and within a month received his new heart. He is home with his wife and family and doing well.

The second example is a male patient in his mid-forties who had lymphoma as a teenager and had radiation therapy to his chest to kill the cancer. This left him with scarring in his lungs and heart and he subsequently developed a cardiomyopathy that did not significantly affect him until the last few years of his life. He was referred to our team due to rapid decline, and after much debate among the team it was decided he would have a temporary support device placed in the cardiac catherization lab to determine if his condition would improve over time with support from a device.

Interestingly, this patient's father was an evangelical minister, and he and the rest of the family were waiting for what they called "a miracle of healing." They described hope for a complete restoration of this man's physical health. Despite the medical team's advanced therapies and the family's prayer for a "miracle," the man continued to decline with progression of multi-organ failure over a 3 month course in the ICU. Up to the very end the family did not want to discuss the impending death of this man. This situation was difficult for me because I thought that as fellow Christians the family would rejoice that this man's earthly suffering was drawing to a close and he would soon begin a new life in his heavenly home. While this was not the easiest opportunity for me to express my beliefs, there have been many circumstances that have allowed me to direct the patient and the family to comfort in Jesus Christ.

My job as a VAD Coordinator has been one of the most demanding and autonomous positions I've had as a PA. I see patients in clinic to evaluate their candidacy for a life support device, admit patients to the hospital, perform emergency evaluations for cardiogenic shock patients, troubleshoot device complications and manage patients in the ICU. I think I have the best of both worlds because I make clinical decisions for patients and often have more time than the physicians to work directly with them. The reward of providing compassionate care and helping critically ill patients recover and return to their daily life is a great joy.

My advice to the high school or college student is to pursue your education with your God-given

strengths and abilities in mind. Research the field you are interested in, and if possible talk with or shadow someone in that profession to find out what is required and what they like or dislike about their position. There are a variety of opportunities in the health care field, from teaching to research to nursing to PA to physician. The professional men and women in our churches who represent these fields can motivate and support the young people to consider these occupations by speaking at career day, writing letters of recommendation, and providing a positive example of a Christian in a professional role. On a personal note, I encourage any additional questions regarding my job and appreciate the opportunity to share my story.

Sarah is a Physician Assistant for West Michigan Heart at Spectrum Health in Grand Rapids, Michigan. She is a member of Trinity Protestant Reformed Church in Hudsonville, Michigan.

Book Review

Lisa De Boer

Crazy Love Book Review

I begin this review with a bit of trepidation, because after stalling and procrastinating for weeks on end, I still can't decide if I'm going to recommend that you read this book. *Crazy Love* was (and still is) a conundrum to me.

Our summer book club chose *Crazy Love*, by Francis Chan, thinking that it would make for some good discussion…and it most definitely did. It was interesting to see the opinions of our book club members shift and change as we made our way through the chapters. Most of us came to similar conclusions, but we took different routes on our way to those conclusions.

I'll admit that I literally judged this book by its cover. (Check it out online and you'll see what I mean.) Add to that the fact that *Crazy Love* is written by the pastor of a mega-church, and I certainly didn't expect to agree with very much of it.

Francis Chan's book is geared toward the "average" Christian in America today. It is directed at the conservative, upright, church-going believer who "does all the right things." The premise of this book is simple: God's love for his people is so illogically, absurdly gracious and undeserved that it could be considered "crazy" by someone looking in on the Christian faith from the outside. If we as Christians really believe this, shouldn't we be responding in a fashion that is similarly "crazy" when viewed by unbelievers? We as believers can identify with and agree with this premise. The life of the antithesis will always appear crazy to the unbeliever. We do not (or should not) care about the things that the world cares about, such as money, fame, and outward beauty.

Our book club agreed with the premise of the book, but in the practical working out of the premise, we at least partially parted ways with Chan. Chan encourages the Christian to perform radical acts in response to God's radical love for us—radical acts such as moving to Africa to serve the poor, downsizing our houses so that we can give more to the church, moving to the ghetto so that we can witness to gang members, quitting our jobs to stay home with our kids, and staying committed to one spouse for our entire lives. Oh, wait a minute. The last two are not mentioned by Chan. But marriage for life is considered radical in today's society. A college-educated woman who quits her well-paying job to be a mother in the home would be considered crazy in the eyes of the world. My point is this: although we might not agree with everything Chan says, we can certainly apply his ideas to our own lives.

As mentioned already, Chan encourages remarkable acts of self-denial in our Christian life. This raised many questions in our minds and in our discussions: Does true, biblical love for God always look "crazy", or is there room for quiet, humble, everyday Christianity (i.e. mothers in the home, faithful schoolteachers, good stewards of time and

money)? Are we able to serve God and respond in love to him right where we are, or are we called to uproot our families and live somewhere less comfortable? If everyone moved to Africa to minister to the poor, what would happen to the church here? Is there a problem with our "typical" stable church community of fellow believers worshiping together, helping each other, and giving evidence of our love for God in this way? Does it mean that we don't love God enough if we are comfortable? Should we feel guilty for being socially, spiritually, and financially comfortable? Personal evangelism makes some of us uncomfortable. Does that count? Do sacrifice and service equate to Christianity and a closer relationship with God? Or are sacrifice and service a *manifestation* of a close relationship with God? Some of these questions were rhetorical, others made for great book club discussion, and still others had to be answered for ourselves.

We noted that many of the radical acts referred to by Chan involve money, giving, and financial self-denial. He attacks the comfortable, middle-class lifestyle of many Christians with a vengeance. While it was good for all of us to examine our hearts in this matter, we felt that Chan focused heavily on financial giving as a way of showing our love for Christ. The impression is left that if you give more, you are a better Christian. The author at times causes the reader to feel guilty for experiencing God's good gifts instead of encouraging us to enjoy them and use them in his service.

Any prospective reader of *Crazy Love* needs to be aware that pre-millennialism and the social gospel are sprinkled throughout the pages of this book. This was no surprise, given the topic of the book. What *was* surprising to us was that in spite of all Chan's talk about doing good works, he is careful to avoid a works-righteousness theology. He addresses this in the third chapter, insisting that God's mercy cannot be earned. He stresses that all our good works could never outweigh our sins, and refers to Isaiah 64:6: "…all our righteousnesses are as filthy rags."

Chan makes many good points throughout the book…and then stops. There were many times when we felt like we were left hanging. Some of his thoughts and ideas were not fully developed, and the reader is left to decide what comes next. Whether intentional or not, this was at times frustrating.

Many of the chapter titles in this book are designed to get your attention. "Marketing tactics" was the term used by one of our members. Titles such as "Stop Praying," "You Might Not Finish This Chapter," and "Serving Leftovers to a Holy God" will definitely draw in the reader. In spite of the catchy (and sometimes annoying) titles, most of the chapters had interesting, thoughtful points to make. "Stop Praying" refers to standing in awe of God and his works, before just "rush[ing] into God's presence with words." "You Might Not Finish This Chapter" is all about how our lives are fragile, and each day could be our last—so are we ready to meet our Maker?

In addition to the points mentioned in the chapters above, there are many other thought-provoking themes fleshed out in this book. Chan writes an entire chapter on lukewarm Christianity, and although some of the specifics focus heavily on finances, there are other aspects of a lukewarm faith that should resonate with all of us. "Lukewarm people think about life on earth much more often than eternity in heaven," and "Lukewarm people will serve God and others, but there are limits to how far they will go…" were two that stuck with me.

The author has an interesting way of looking at and interpreting Scripture passages. Sometimes this sent me scrambling for the context and my commentaries, and other times all I could do was nod in agreement. A great example of this is when Chan suggests inserting your own name into the well-known chapter on love. Read 1 Corinthians 13, and every time the word "charity" appears, replace it with your own name. "___ suffereth long and is kind. ___ envieth not…" Then ask yourself if those things are true. Are you squirming yet? I am.

Crazy Love is a good book for the discerning reader. Read it carefully, read it thoughtfully, and read it with your Bible nearby. Francis Chan will entertain you, challenge you, frustrate you, prod you, and yes, lead you to the foot of the cross.

Although I do not agree with everything in *Crazy Love*, I still liked the book. It made me take a good, hard, look at myself and how I live my life. Chan's words resonated with me in ways I did not expect. Crazy, huh?

Special thanks to Brendan Looyenga and Sarah Kamps for putting their thoughts on paper and thus contributing heavily to this book review. Some of "my" words are direct quotations from their wonderfully detailed and copious notes. Thanks also to the rest of our book club (Michael DeBoer, Mitchell Kamps, Justin and Cathie Koole, and Kelly Looyenga) for their

insightful comments during our lively discussions this summer, thereby also contributing to this review.

Lisa is a member of Grandville Protestant Reformed Church in Grandville, Michigan.

Church News — Melinda Bleyenberg

BAPTISMS

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

The sacrament of holy baptism was administered to:

Weston Alan, son of Mr. & Mrs. Chad Mingerink—Byron Center, MI
Kameron Kurtis, son of Mr. & Mrs. Kurt Mingerink—Byron Center, MI
Michael Bruce, son of Mr. & Mrs. Josh Lubbers—Byron Center, MI
Wyatt Adam, son of Mr. & Mrs. Nick Dykstra—Byron Center, MI
Hayley-Ann Joy, daughter of Mr. & Mrs. Tim Boverhof—Byron Center, MI
Samuel James, son of Mr. & Mrs. Peter Byker—Faith, MI
Joelle Lynn, daughter of Mr. & Mrs. Tom Pastoor—Faith, MI
Eden Heidi, daughter of Mr. & Mrs. Casey Baas—Faith, MI
Jacob Henry, son of Mr. & Mrs. Joel Brummel—Faith, MI
Elsie Renae, daughter of Mr. & Mrs. Steve Uittenbogaard—Faith, MI
Macy Anne, daughter of Mr. & Mrs. Scott Moelker—Grace, MI
Ainsley Grace, daughter of Mr. & Mrs. Steve Huizinga—Grandville, MI
Joash Kenneth, son of Mr. & Mrs. Joe VanOverloop—Grandville, MI
Levi Matthew, son of Mr. & Mrs. Mark VandenBerg—Holland, MI
Silas Henry, son of Mr. & Mrs. David Rutgers—Hope, MI
Paige Elise, daughter of Mr. & Mrs. Brad Butler—Hudsonville, MI
Neveah Joy, daughter of Mr. & Mrs. Joel Nieuwenkamp—Immanuel, Lacombe, CAN
Jason Lars, son of Mr. & Mrs. Samuel Watterson—Limerick, Ireland/ Ballymena, N Ireland
Zoey Jane, daughter of Mr. & Mrs. Justin Verburg—Peace, IL
Casen Joseph, son of Mr. & Mrs. Jon Pipe—Providence, MI
Will Brayden, son of Mr. & Mrs. Joe Kleyn—Providence, MI
Isaac Jonathan, son of Mr. & Mrs. Caleb VanBaren—Randolph, WI
Evan Parker, son of Mr. & Mrs. Brandon Feenstra—Redlands, CA
Matthew Kyle, son of Mr. & Mrs. Shaun Karsemeyer—Redlands, CA
Simon Andrew, son of Mr. & Mrs. Brent Meelker—Redlands, CA
Anna Paige, daughter of Mr. & Mrs. Kyle Bleyenburg—Sioux Falls, SD
Jade Kensley—daughter of Mr. & Mrs. Marc Velthouse—Trinity, MI
Aubrey Joanne, daughter of Mr. & Mrs. Matt Dykstra—Trinity, MI
Alivia Grace, daughter of Mr. & Mrs. Jeff DeVries—Trinity, MI

CONFESSIONS OF FAITH

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

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

Ryan Gritters—Byron Center, MI
Jennelle Dykstra—Byron Center, MI
Joel Rau—Hope, MI
Erin Rau—Hope, MI
Hannah Koole—Hope, MI
Tyler Ophoff—Southeast, MI
Roger Neth, Jr.—Sioux Falls, SD

MARRIAGES

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

United in the bond of holy matrimony were:

Mr. Bret Dykstra and Miss Kyndra Hassevoort—Byron Center, MI
Mr. Owen Wiersma and Miss Rosie Bodbyl—Grandville, MI

NOTICE

Nearly one thousand people have already ordered a copy of the *2012 Denominational Directory*. There are still some left. If you would like a copy, call Laura Huizinga at (616) 453-6858, or send a $12.00 check, made out to Hope Young People's Society, to the following address:

Laura Huizinga
4668 Fenwood SW
Grand Rapids, Michigan 49534

Tell us your name and your church and we will get the directory to you as soon as possible.

Connie Meyer

The Squirrels

"LITTLE LIGHTS"

... let it shine !

A squirrel jumped from branch to branch. Another squirrel chattered from below and climbed a tree to chase the intruding squirrel away. Bushy tails swished. Both squirrels scurried high in the branches now, first one heading the chase, and then the other.

Then it stopped.

One of the squirrels was gone. Silent wings, twice as long as a squirrel, sliced through the air where the branches were few, where the second squirrel had just landed. The claws of an owl held his next meal. The squirrels had been too busy in the game to see the danger coming.

"For when they shall say, Peace and safety; then sudden destruction cometh upon them…and they shall not escape. But ye, brethren, are not in darkness that that day should overtake you as a thief. Ye are all the children of light, and the children of the day: we are not of the night, nor of darkness" (1 Thessalonians 5:3-5).

Find all the words quoted in the above story from 1 Thessalonians 5:3-5 in the puzzle at the right:

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

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

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