

Beacon Lights

February
2009

Volume LXVIII
Number 2

"Now no chastening for the present seemeth to be joyous, but grievous: nevertheless afterward it yieldeth the peaceable fruit of righteousness unto them which are exercised thereby."

Hebrews 12:11

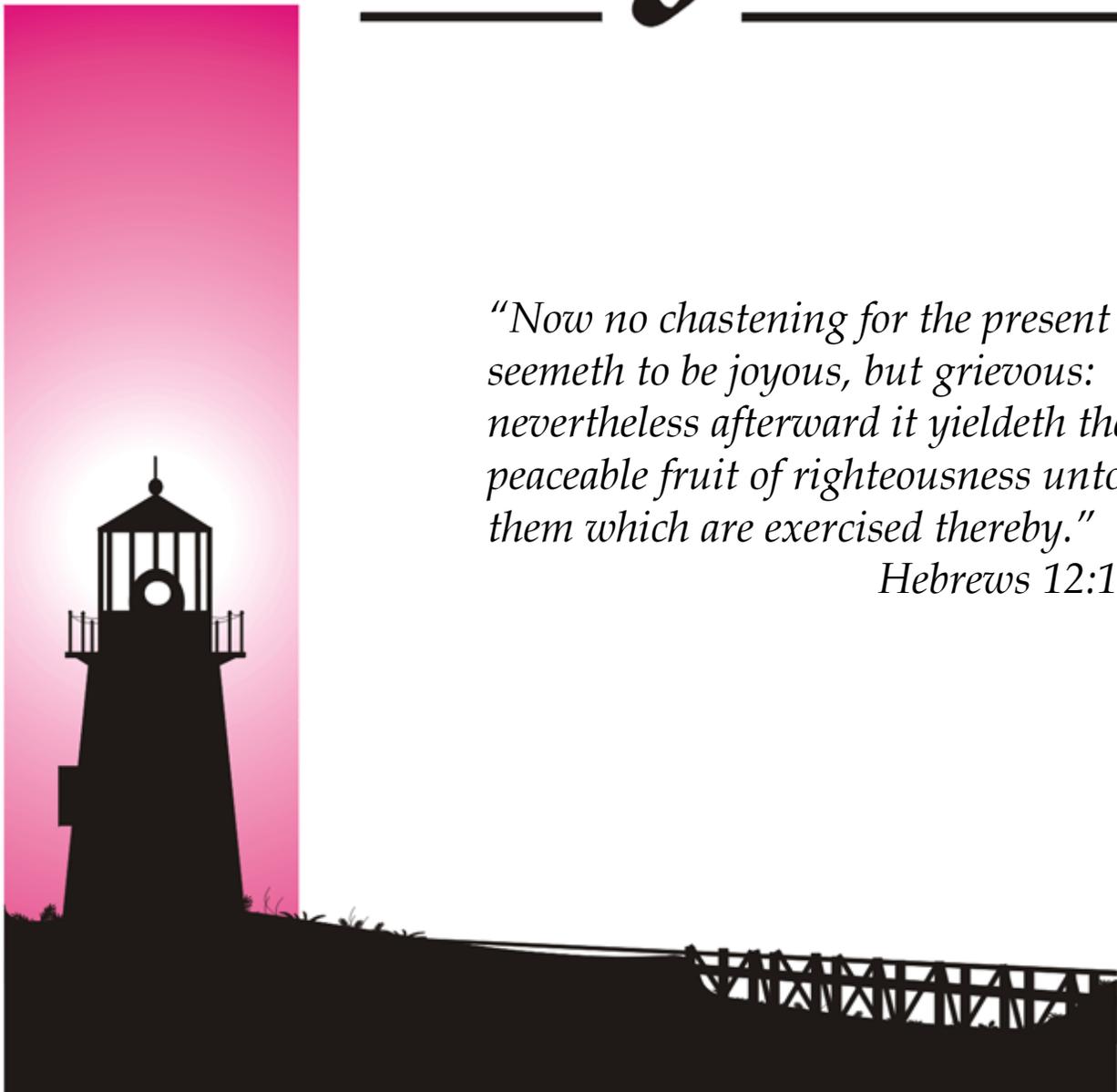


Table of Contents

	EDITORIAL
3	Weariness (1): Words for the Weary
	FRUITFUL BRANCHES
4	God's Word
	CHURCH FAMILY
5	What Should I Wear?
	OUR YOUNG PEOPLE'S FEDERATION
7	Incorporating God in Every Subject in the Classroom
	CREATION THROUGH THE SPECTACLES OF SCRIPTURE
9	A Look at Waste Products Through the Spectacles of Scripture
	DEVOTIONAL
11	Watching Daily At My Gates— February 20 – March 18
	GEM OF THE MONTH
15	The Way to Go
	WHERE WE STAND
16	Hearing Our Great Shepherd
	CHURCH HISTORY
18	I Remember Herman Hoeksema: Personal Remembrances of a Great Man (5)
22	CHURCH NEWS
	LITTLE LIGHTS
23	Journey to the Land of Noshin

Beacon Lights is published monthly by the Federation of Protestant Reformed Young People's Societies. Subscription price is \$10.00. Please send all correspondence, address changes, subscriptions, and article submissions to the business office.

EDITORIAL POLICY

The articles of *Beacon Lights* do not necessarily indicate the viewpoint of the Editorial Staff. Every author is solely responsible for the contents of his own article.

The *Beacon Lights* encourages its readers to contact the business office with any questions or comments. Letters may be edited for printing. We will not publish anonymous letters, but will withhold names upon request.

If any material of *Beacon Lights* is reprinted by another periodical, we will appreciate your giving the source and forwarding the printed periodical to the business office.

BEACON LIGHTS

EDITOR

John Huizenga
Email: editor@beaconlights.org

CONTENTS COMMITTEE

John Huizenga
Tom Cammenga
Christiana DeJong
Trisha Haak
Kris Moelker

EXECUTIVE FEDERATION BOARD

Kyle Thompson (President)
Karl Dykstra (Vice-President)
Emily Hoekstra (Secretary)
Eric Pols (Treasurer)
Denise Kooienga (Librarian)
Leah Koole (Vice-Secretary)
Eric Pastoor (Vice-Treasurer)
Justin Koole (Youth Coordinator)
Rev. Garry Eriks (Spiritual Advisor)
Prof. David Engelsma (Spiritual Advisor)

BUSINESS OFFICE

Beacon Lights
Jeanine Huizenga
621 Williams Street
Randolph, WI 53956
Phone: (920) 326-6186
Email: subscriptions@beaconlights.org

BEACON LIGHTS ON THE INTERNET

www.beaconlights.org

BEACON LIGHTS ON TAPE

A free service to the legally blind. Contact
Brad Vander Veen
11395 Hunters Meadow
Allendale, MI 49401
Phone (616) 895-1904

CHURCH NEWS ANNOUNCEMENTS

Melinda Bleyenbergh
Email: DMBleyenbergh@tds.net.

BOOK SALES

Contact the Business Office

TYPESETTER

Robert Vermeer

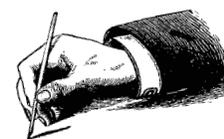
PRINTER

James Huizenga

MAILERS

Bill & Fran Leep

Weariness (1): Words for the Weary



by Andrew Tanis

Psalm 69:3 "I am weary of my crying: my throat is dried: mine eyes fail while I wait for my God. They that hate me without a cause are more than the hairs of mine head: they that would destroy me, being mine enemies wrongfully, are mighty: then I restored that which I took not away. O God, thou knowest my foolishness; and my sins are not hid from thee."

There are many places in Scripture that speak of this topic of weariness. Sometimes in Scripture, reference is made to the people of God as those who are weary. Sometimes, because of our many failures and shortcomings, the Lord mentions that we weary him. Also, there is a need to consider texts that comfort and encourage the weary, and to exhort them to live out lives of obedience because of God's unfailing love shown through his constant acts of mercy for them. We can see clearly that this is a rather broad topic, and I hope that it can be covered in two articles. For this first article regarding the topic of weariness, I plan to write about God's people as those who are weary.

First of all, we consider the people of God as the "weary ones." This can be taken from different perspectives. There are three primary ways that God's people can become weary in well-doing. These ways include the believer's devotional life, his battle against the enemies of God, and the struggle with his own sinful flesh.

Consider this topic of weariness in regard to the devotional life of the believer. There are many texts in the Scriptures that speak concerning the matter of God's people becoming weary. Isaiah 43:22 says, "But thou hast not called upon me, O Jacob; but thou hast been weary of me, O Israel." This verse refers specifically to our lives of constant devotion to God. It can take a large amount of time out of our already busy schedules to spend even a few hours a day meditating on the Word and praying to the Father. We can easily view a life of constant devotion to God as a never ending chore, and we eventually lose interest in spending our time pursuing the heavenly things.

Our text deals more specifically with our struggle with sin, and our battle against our spiritual foes. Sometimes, God's people become weary because of a constant assault upon them by their adversaries. Often, those outside of the church of Christ as she is manifested on Earth pressure the saints to join them in their rebellion against God, and to pursue a life of covetousness. They question God's knowledge and strive to get the saints to deny their faith, and to doubt God's love for them. If the onslaught from those outside isn't troublesome enough, there are the foes within the church that can often put pressure on the people of God.

Often, a believer can become troubled and weary in a daily struggle against his sinful flesh. Our own sins weary us, so that much time in this life is spent with sorrow and regret. In the consciousness of our sins and misery, we "groan within ourselves, waiting for the adoption, to wit, the redemption of our body" (Romans 8:23). We long for the day when we will experience full and complete deliverance from our sins.

Psalm 6 speaks more of this aspect of weariness with regard to the guilt and sorrow a child of God experiences when he falls into sin, and the fear brought upon his soul because of his spiritual foes. He asks that the Lord will help him and not rebuke him in anger. He realizes how weak and frail he is, and the guilt presses on him so hard that his bones are vexed. The weeping and groaning makes him weary. The pain is so strong that tears pour down, and his eye is consumed with grief. Those who say things like "men don't cry" are void of understanding. Real men pray that God will make them cry when they feel that they have lost that ability. He desires to cry in genuine sorrow for sin. He desires to cry real tears of

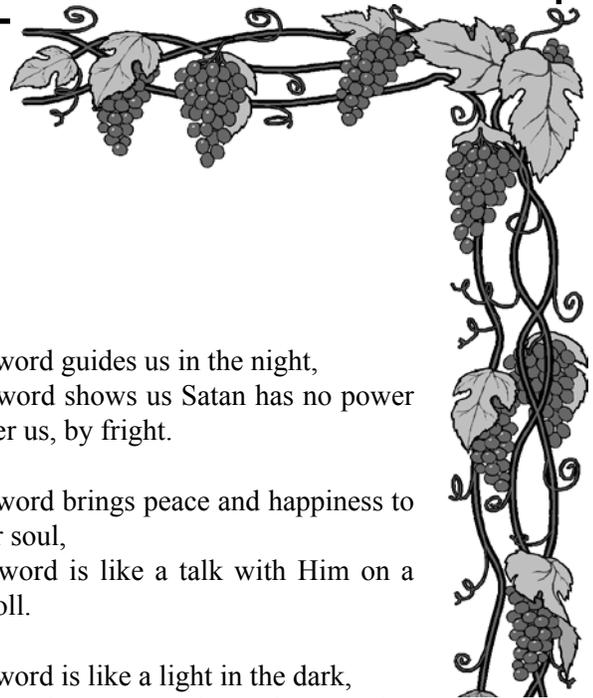
joy when he hears that his wicked deeds, and the evil motives of his heart, are forgiven only for the sake of the passion and death of his Savior.

Often, we become weary because we forget that we are equipped with the Spirit of the Lord. Micah 3:8 says, "But truly I am full of power by the spirit of the LORD, and of judgment, and of might, to declare unto Jacob his transgression, and to Israel his sin." This is one aspect of how the Spirit moves in the life of the believer. God places his Spirit in his people for rebuking and edifying his church. Also, Christ sends the Spirit as the Comforter to comfort and sustain the weary. This is recorded as "a word in season" in Isaiah 50:4. We, with the prophet Isaiah, testify that "the Lord GOD hath given me the tongue of the learned, that I should know how to speak a word in season to him that is weary" (Isaiah 50:4). Since we have been given the gift of the Holy Spirit, let us walk in that Spirit, and look for opportunities to "lift up the hands which hang down, and the feeble knees" (Hebrews 12:12).

Since we have been given the gift of the Holy Spirit,
let us walk in that Spirit, and look for opportunities to
"lift up the hands which hang down, and the feeble knees."

My next article, Lord willing, will consider this topic of weariness from the aspect of "Wearying God." In the meantime, the readers are encouraged to read through the Psalms in their daily devotions to capture more of an understanding of this weary life, and the comfort that these "wearyed ones" receive as the Spirit unfolds the Word of Life to comfort and sustain the elect in times of adversity. ❖

Fruitful Branches



God's Word

by Lydia Smits

God's word encourages the good,
Like a good man should.

God's word shines a light on our path,
God's word will even change us from wrath.

God's word shows us that we do not need the earth,
God's word shows us that we do need Jesus' birth.

God's word loves us by His power,
God's word is greater than the height of a tower.

God's word can turn the sinner to God's side,
God's word makes the wicked and God to collide.

God's word guides us in the night,
God's word shows us Satan has no power
over us, by fright.

God's word brings peace and happiness to
our soul,
God's word is like a talk with Him on a
stroll.

God's word is like a light in the dark,
God's word erases our sins and our marks.

God's word in our soul is never hollow,
God's word is what we must follow. ❖

*Lydia is a member Protestant Reformed Church of South
Holland and is 9 years old.*

What Should I Wear?

By Dan Bergman

T Tyler was usually trying to imitate and even emulate his older brother James. It was not surprising that things were this way since they were only a couple years apart and did many things together.

One day, when he knew that they were both getting ready for church, Father went in to check on Tyler's progress. As he walked in the room he looked at Tyler and asked, "What are you doing?"

"What, I'm getting ready for church like you said to," Tyler replied in a puzzled yet explanatory tone. "

"Are you planning on wearing that?" his father asked.

"What's wrong with it? It's basically the same as James is wearing. Besides, what is wrong with Abercrombie and Fitch? Don't I look nice?"

Sam's father was a little taken back by his response. He called James into Tyler's room so he could talk to them together. He started, "James, your brother here says that he is wearing this—and pointed to what Tyler was wearing—because of what you are wearing. Why are you wearing those clothes James?"

"What is wrong with what I am wearing?" James asked. James then added, "They're brand new and it's what all my friends are wearing to church. Don't you like it?"

"Yes," his father responded, "you do look nice, but do you feel it is proper attire to wear to church? I would like you both to change; you don't have to wear a suit and tie like me, but I would suggest a nice dress shirt and dress pants, at least. Remember, we are going to church, not to school or some other casual place. We are going to God's house to worship, so we should try to look our best." He added much emphasis on the word "best." "Just think about the words you find in Leviticus 19:30 and also in chapter 26:2, 'Ye shall keep my Sabbaths, and reverence my sanctuary: I am the LORD.' Their father then added, "We can honor and show reverence to God by looking our best. What you wear on the outside can reflect what you wear on the inside. Now, get ready, we don't want to be late for church."

Are not the father's words so true? How often do you and I really think about what we outwardly clothe

ourselves with on Sunday morning? What is our actual mindset? Is it more that we want to look pleasant and attractive for other people, or that we want to look pleasant in the eyes of the Lord?

Is it more that we want to look pleasant and attractive for other people, or that we want to look pleasant in the eyes of the Lord?

This is a more serious question than we care to realize. For example, do we not "dress up" differently or more than normal when we go to a wedding, a funeral or even the symphony? Ask yourself why that is. You will most likely come to the conclusion that it is because we most likely have respect for someone or even do it with honor. When we then put on our "church clothes" we should do so with not only respect and honor but also reverence. After all, we are going to the LORD's house. Did you get that? The LORD's house! We are reminded of that reverence in Psalm 89:7, where the psalmist writes, "God is greatly to be feared in the assembly of the saints, and to be had in reverence of all them that are about him." Think about the words that we find in Proverbs 3:9, "Honor the LORD with thy substance, and with the firstfruits of all thy increase."

I realize that we often do not think much about outward apparel on Sunday morning. We should, for, "Glory and honor are in his presence; strength and gladness are in his place." (I Chron. 16:27) We should constantly remind ourselves of what James and Tyler's father told them; "What we wear on the outside can reflect what we wear on the inside." How true that is! Too often we forget or do not even know that our outward clothing can very well say a lot about how we are and act on the inside. When we put on a suit or just a tie—no matter the occasion—we automatically feel differently about the event we are dressing up for.

We must have the proper mindset when we go to

God's house on the Sabbath Day. We can do that by the clothes we wear. That will then most likely affect our attitude when we come into the house of the LORD. The more casual attire usually results in the more casual feelings and attitude: and that is not adequate for worship with God in his house of prayer. We should think about the words in Psalm 122:1, "I was glad when they said unto me, Let us go unto the house of the LORD." And also Psalm 5:7, "But as for me, I will come into thy house in the multitude of thy mercy: and in thy fear will I worship toward thy holy temple." I truly feel and believe that we can better think this way by clothing ourselves with proper church attire on the LORD's Day.

The more casual attire usually results in the more casual feelings and attitude: and that is not adequate for worship with God in his house of prayer.

There are certainly things that can hinder our mindset with regard to proper church attire. There can be financial situations, the pressure to look like those in our group, or the thought of just wearing that which is most comfortable. These are but a few and general areas which can affect how we dress. I point this out to you because these areas can be some of the ways in which Satan can and is subtly trying to negatively influence the church. It is very easy to get caught up in the way the world dresses, which can then be brought into the church. Believe me, I was there and continue to struggle with it today. Think about Genesis 3:1, "Now the serpent was more subtle than any beast of the field which the LORD God had made." Satan is constantly trying to tempt the church and cause her to go astray. Remember the words we find in James 1:14, 15a, "But every man is tempted, when he is drawn away of his own lust, and enticed. Then when lust hath conceived, it bringeth forth sin:"

We must not think that we are not in the sight of Satan's scope of temptation. For, we read of how the people of old were tempted by Satan. It started way back in the Garden with Adam and Eve. Here are a few texts that show of the tempting of the people: Job 1:6, "Now there was a day when the sons of God came to present themselves before the LORD, and Satan came also among them." Job 2:1, "Again there was a day when the sons

of God came to present themselves before the LORD, and Satan came also among them to present himself before the LORD." And Zechariah 3:1, "And he showed me Joshua the high priest standing before the angel of the LORD, and Satan standing at his right hand to resist him." We can clearly see that Satan is always lurking around. We also find instances where the devil tempted Christ in the wilderness. We read in Luke 4:2 and 3, "Being forty days tempted of the devil. And in those days he did eat nothing: and when they were ended, he afterward hungered. And the devil said unto him, If thou be the Son of God, command this stone that it be made bread." Of course we know as believers that Christ stood firm and did not do as he was tempted by the devil.

Perhaps the connection between temptation, the devil and church attire is not clear to you; but I assure you there is a connection. Just remember what was said earlier in the article about the outward appearance affecting the inner appearance. Once you see the connection, you will then be more inclined, by the grace of God, to help others. We can all help each other in this by being a positive influence and setting a good example for each other. Many of you have younger siblings that look up to you and act like you when they get older—if not already. I know I was that way with my older brother. And parents are called to be the example and rule in the home. As the older generation, we are called, as stated by the Apostle Peter in I Peter 5:3b, "...being ensamples to the flock."

For, as the devil can tempt us even in the clothes we wear, we must be sure to keep that in mind and look our best come Sunday morning. We are reminded of our calling to be strong in Ephesians 4:27, "Neither give place to the devil." And again in chapter 6:11, "Put on the whole armor of God, that we may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil." We learn of resistance, when in James 4:7 we read, "Submit yourselves therefore to God. Resist the devil, and he will flee from you."

We as elect people are well aware of the devil and his many devious tactics to try and draw us away from God and destroy the church. We are reminded of that in II Corinthians 2:11, where the Apostle Paul writes, "Lest Satan should get an advantage of us: for we are not ignorant of his devices." Fellow brothers and sisters in Christ, we must constantly try to be strong and help each other be strong and fight against those temptations that are all around us. What better way to do that than in prayer; like the one we find in Matthew 6:13, "And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil: For thine is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory, for ever. Amen." Let us also remember the words of Peter

in I Peter 5:7-11, “Casting all your care upon him; for he careth for you. Be sober, be vigilant; because your adversary the devil, as a roaring lion, walketh about, seeking whom he may devour: Whom resist stedfast in the faith, knowing that the same afflictions are accomplished in your brethren that are in the world. But God of all grace, who hath called us unto his eternal glory by Christ Jesus, after that ye have suffered a while, make you perfect, stablish, strengthen, settle you. To him be glory and dominion for ever and ever. Amen.”

It is my heart-felt prayer that these words may have struck your heart and soul in that you will be ever so conscious of how important proper church attire really is, and the need for it to be mentioned.

So, what are you going to wear to church this coming LORD’S Day? ❖

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

Our Young People’s Federation

Incorporating God in Every Subject in the Classroom

by Jennifer Schwarz

“**L**et children learn God’s righteous ways and on him stay their heart, that they may not forget his works, nor from his ways depart” (Psalter #215, verse 6). This is the goal of our Protestant Reformed education. Our children of the church have the blessing of attending a Protestant Reformed school where the truths of God are taught not only in Bible class, but in every subject in the classroom. Question and Answer 103 of the Heidelberg Catechism states that God requires in the fourth commandment that the “ministry of the gospel and the schools be maintained.” This maintaining of the school does not mean simply making sure that the building is clean and well kept. It does not mean making sure that the classroom is left neat every day after class. The goal of Protestant Reformed education is to provide children with a well-rounded and God-glorifying education. Three things must be considered: what this education really is, how this education must be taught to children, and the blessing and fruit of this education.

A basic definition of education is the “act or process of acquiring general knowledge, developing the powers of reasoning and judgment, and generally of preparing oneself or others intellectually for mature life.” Proverbs 1:7 says “the fear of the LORD is the beginning of knowledge: but fools despise wisdom and instruction.” By putting these two definitions together, one can see that the education begins with the fear of the Lord. In Rev. Steven Key’s article “The Biblical Basis and Goal

of Christian Education” (*Standard Bearer*, Nov. ‘05), he states

When you boil all things down, when you take every subject of study known to man, and take it right back to its root, you will find that there is really only one knowledge, one reality behind all things and from which all things flow.” There is only one true education that truly matters and that is one that is infused with the Word of God. “This one knowledge, this ever important knowledge, is what every teacher absolutely must teach his or her students.

How can this knowledge be taught in every subject? In the Belgic Confession, Article II, we read that we know God by two means: “first, by the creation, preservation and government of the universe; which is before our eyes as a most elegant book...secondly, he makes himself more clearly and fully known to us by his holy and divine Word, that is to say, as far as is necessary for us to know in this life to his glory and our salvation.” Obviously one of the greatest blessings of our schools is the teaching of Bible classes and the catechism classes. In these classes children learn the history of God’s people. They can see the early history of Israel and the Jews and then later see how the Gentiles are also included in the covenant. They learn several Bible passages by heart and discover the importance of several doctrines that they will hold dear to their hearts for the rest of their lives.

The teaching of spiritual aspects does not end with Bible class, for simply having Bible class does not con-

stitute a Christian education. Science class is a study of God's creation. The vastness of the universe makes man realize how small he really is. Psalm 8:3 and 4—"When I consider Thy heavens, the work of thy fingers, the moon and the stars, which thou hast ordained; what is man, that thou art mindful of him? And the son of man, that thou visitest him?" The Psalm goes on to show how every creature is under the direction of the Lord. The sand on the beach is a chance to talk of the covenant made with Abraham. The rainbow is a sign placed in the heavens as a promise to Noah. The study of the human body and other intricacies of the world makes one realize evolution is not even a possibility. God's Word can easily be brought into every topic of science. Without God and faith in his word, the world is stumped by many scientific findings. I had a professor in a biology class who stated that the beginning of life is yet a mystery. The global warming fanatics search back billions of years to try to find a way to save our planet from overheating within the next several thousand years. What a way to live—not knowing where this earth came from and being so anxious about its future! As God's people, we have faith in his Word, and we know without a doubt where this world came from and how life came about. We know everything in nature is under the sovereign control of God. This is what teachers must strive to teach and show students in the classroom God's Word can also be taught in other areas. Mathematics deals with numbers, and there are several symbolic numbers in Scripture. When children are taught different colors, the symbolic meaning of colors in Scripture can be taught. Geography can be taught from a spiritual point of view in looking at the four corners of the earth and how God's people are found in every culture of the earth. Students can learn the different religions of the world and defend their own faith against these other religions.

Incorporating God into every subject is not an easy task. No matter where one attends college, he or she will not be taught, how to do this. At the same time, if a Protestant Reformed teacher does not take this biblical perspective in their teaching, they will fail in their task. The Bible demands this of a teacher. The creeds and Church Order demand it. The parents and the school board demand it. The education children receive must be God-centered. This does not mean that the science, geography, history, and mathematics subject matter becomes less important in a Christian school. As quoted from Rev. Key's article, "for our children to receive an education in isolation from the doctrinal truths that we profess to hold dear is detrimental to their spiritual health

and welfare." An education is extremely important for all children. This education must be well rounded in earthly matters, but even more importantly, it must be God-centered and God-glorifying. As Professor Engelsma says in his book *Reformed Education*, Scripture must be the foundation of every subject and worked into every aspect of the school in order for the children to truly receive a Christian education.

The task of teaching this education seems so daunting, and indeed, it is very hard work. But what exciting work it is, to teach others of the greatness of God, to teach them how to honor and serve him in every aspect of their life! A teacher cannot do this work of himself, but is used as an instrument in God's hands to fulfill his perfect will. One knows that God will provide the strength necessary to carry out this great task. The fruit will be seen as these covenant children grow up and take their place in the church of God. They will be able to continue "in the things which thou hast learned and hast been assured of, knowing of whom thou hast learned them; and that from a child thou hast known the holy scriptures, which are able to make thee wise unto salvation through faith which is in Christ Jesus" (II Tim. 3:14-15).

This knowledge that covenant children will acquire in their younger years will surely bring forth fruit as they grow older. They will become solid church members and godly husbands and wives. Their well rounded instruction will serve them well as citizens of the country God has placed them in. They will be honest and just employers or employees in the work force. There is also a solemn warning here for us as the church of God. We must continue to maintain these Christian schools God has given to us. If we do not he will not continue to bless us in our generations and will also take his blessing from our schools as well. May we continue to strive to teach our children the ways of the Lord within these Christian schools—not for our own benefit, but for the glory and honor of God. He has promised to take care of his people, and we can be certain that we will persevere until the final day when he comes again to take us to be forever with him.

*"Thou hast upheld me in Thy grace
From childhood's early days;
To Thee from Whom I life received
Will I give constant praise—
Will I give constant praise!"*

Psalter #190 verse 4 ❖

Jennifer is a member of Loveland Protestant Reformed Church in Loveland, Colorado.

A Look at Waste Products Through the Spectacles of Scripture

by John Huizenga

The life of the living creatures that God has placed upon this earth requires the consumption of food and the production of waste. Without this process of consumption, and the production of waste, life as created on this earth would cease to exist. Life requires energy. The energy required is not provided in a pure state, but comes packaged within particular arrangements of atoms and molecules. When digested, these arrangements of atoms and molecules release the energy stored within. After the particular arrangements of atoms and molecules have been broken down to release the needed energy, they are discarded as waste.

Scientists have long been fascinated by the whole process by which a living creature releases and uses this energy. With the ability to see within an individual living cell, they have discovered many secrets of this process. There in the cell, tiny machines with cogs and levers a few atoms thick break the packaging apart to release the precious energy that had traveled nine million miles from the sun. That energy had been packaged by a plant into a form suitable for use by the living creatures that moved upon the face of the earth. Once released, the left over parts are discarded from the cell, and eventually from the body of the creature as waste.

God created the earth to be filled to the brim with living creatures. He commanded the creatures to fill the earth. Wherever there are molecules of matter that can be broken down to release energy, there is found a creature designed to consume it and produce waste. Each creature has been created with a certain range of genetic flexibility to adapt and conform to the particular environment where this food is found so that it is able to live and reproduce as God commanded.

With such a creation, it would appear that the earth would soon fill with waste. Anyone who sets up an aquarium must understand this problem or the fish will soon fill their “world” with waste and die as a result. Bacteria are needed to break down the waste, and filters must regularly be changed as they fill with waste. Yet, despite the fact that the earth is filled with living crea-

tures, the earth does not fill with waste.

You most likely learned about the wonder of waste removal first when you studied the process of photosynthesis. Plants need carbon dioxide in order to grow, and that carbon dioxide is one of the major waste products produced by living creatures. With the help of bacteria and other microscopic organisms, plants also use the solid waste produced by living creatures. Not only do the plants which God created absorb and use waste and prevent it from piling up, they convert it back to the food living creatures need and bring beauty and shade to the earth. That relationship between plant and living creature is beautiful, fascinating, and amazing. “And to every beast of the earth, and to every fowl of the air, and to every thing that creepeth upon the earth, wherein there is life, I have given every green herb for meat: and it was so. And God saw every thing that he had made, and, behold, it was very good” (Gen. 1:30-31a).

As God created the world and the living things which fill it, there really is no such thing as “waste” as we usually think about it. Waste is something that is left over after it has been used but is no longer useful. But in the creation of God, what is waste for one creature is necessary for another. One of the “waste” product that a plant produces is oxygen which is necessary for the living creatures to break apart food to release the energy stored within. When God said “very good,” of His creation, there was nothing vain or pointless. Everything had a good purpose and every creature fit perfectly into its place. Any reference to vanity is tied to the fall of the king of creation into sin. And the hope of all creation is tied to redemption in Christ. “For the creature was made subject to vanity, not willingly, but by reason of him who hath subjected the same in hope, Because the creature itself also shall be delivered from the bondage of corruption into the glorious liberty of the children of God. For we know that the whole creation groaneth and travaileth in pain together until now” (Rom 8:20-22).

The travail of creation grows as we near the end of Satan’s apparent dominion in this earth. The greed and

insatiable desire of man to satisfy his desires is resulting in mountains of waste. And recently it has been discovered that the ocean currents in the Pacific have been collecting tons of plastic waste that wash into the rivers and get caught in the center of the circular swirl of ocean currents.

This is known as the Eastern Garbage Patch, part of a system of currents called the North Pacific subtropical gyre. Located halfway between San Francisco and Hawaii, the garbage patch is an area of slack winds and sluggish currents where flotsam collects from around the Pacific, much like foam piling up in the calm center of a hot tub.

Curtis Ebbesmeyer has been studying the clockwise swirl of plastic debris so long, he talks about it as if he were tracking a beast.

“It moves around like a big animal without a leash,” said Ebbesmeyer, an oceanographer in Seattle and leading expert on currents and marine debris. “When it gets close to an island, the garbage patch barfs, and you get a beach covered with this confetti of plastic.”

Some oceanic trash washes ashore at Midway—laundry baskets, television tubes, beach sandals, soccer balls and other discards.

Nearly 90% of floating marine litter is plastic—supple, durable materials such as polyethylene and polypropylene, Styrofoam, nylon and saran.

About four-fifths of marine trash comes from land, swept by wind or washed by rain off highways and city streets, down streams and rivers, and out to sea.

The rest comes from ships. Much of it consists of synthetic floats and other gear that is jettisoned illegally to avoid the cost of proper disposal in port.

In addition, thousands of cargo containers fall overboard in stormy seas each year, spilling their contents. One ship heading from Los Angeles to Tacoma, Wash., disgorged 33,000 blue-and-white Nike basketball shoes in 2002. Other loads lost at sea include 34,000 hockey gloves and 29,000 yellow rubber ducks and other bathtub toys.

The debris can spin for decades in one of a dozen or more gigantic gyres around the globe, only to be spat out and carried by currents to distant lands. The U.N. Environment Program estimates that 46,000 pieces of plastic litter are floating on every square mile of the oceans. About 70% will eventually sink.” (*Los Angeles Times* “Plague of Plastic Chokes the Seas” by Kenneth R. Weiss, Times Staff Writer August 2, 2006)

What, then, does all this waste look like through the spectacles of Scripture? The word “waste” is used in a variety of ways in Scripture, but the idea of “empty, decayed” and “useless” gets at the idea in a passage such as Isaiah 51:3: “For the LORD shall comfort Zion: he will comfort all her waste places; and he will make her wilderness like Eden, and her desert like the garden of the LORD; joy and gladness shall be found therein, thanksgiving, and the voice of melody.” In each case, the word is used in connection with war or some other effect of sin and corruption in the earth. The word “vanity” also captures the idea behind the waste that we find piling up. “Vanity” means “emptiness” and figuratively refers to something transitory and unsatisfactory. We live in a disposable society. What is “in” changes so fast and everyone is in such a hurry so packaging for the things we want is designed to attract and then be discarded. Even the things we want quickly become empty when something new comes along and we throw it away.

The whole book of Ecclesiastes addresses the issue of vanity and the ever-changing fad-chasing pleasure seeking world in which we live. The mountains of waste we generate and the vast swirling Pacific toilet that never flushes are a monument to the vanity of life under Satan’s dominion. The monument grows every day, and nobody is able to stop it because only a radical change of heart for every man living can release him from the vanity that drives his life.

The Preacher of Ecclesiastes gives the conclusion of the whole matter: “Fear God, and keep his commandments: for this is the whole duty of man.” When we heed this instruction, we will minimize our contribution to the monument of vanity because the treasures we seek to gather will not be earthly, but heavenly. Given the fact that we live in this world and society, we buy and sell what is available, even if it is the product of a society of vanity, and pile the garbage each week at the end of our driveway. But when we look at our pile through the spectacles of Scripture, let us see it for what it is. On the one hand we ought to look for ways to reduce the monument to vanity in our own life; and on the other hand, we hear creation groan, and we look forward to the glorious redemption of the children of God and the melting of these earthly elements, when Christ returns, into a new heaven and earth. ❖

John is a member of Randolph Protestant Reformed Church in Randolph, Wisconsin and is editor of Beacon Lights.

Watching Daily At My Gates

by Chester Hunter

February 20 Read II Peter 1:1-7

Peter's second epistle begins with a salutation that again shows that we are saved only by virtue of being called by God and washed in the blood of Christ. Because of this outstanding fact we are called to live a life of thankfulness. This is always the application made after partaking of the Lord's Supper. This life of thankfulness is outlined in verses five through eight. Take time to look at each of the works of the Spirit found there. Even though Peter does not call them works of the Spirit as Paul did, that is obviously what they are, for we cannot do them of ourselves. If we walk in each of them, we will find that we will live a life of contentment pleasing to our God. This is the life of thankfulness that is required of us. Each of us whether we are old or young must do this. This is how we let our light shine in this dark and sin-filled world. Sing Psalter 287.

February 21 Read II Peter 1:8-15

Notice the word "but" which begins verse 9 in this section of II Peter. From the beautiful spiritual attributes that begin the chapter, we go to spiritual blindness. This shows to us that a right walk is important. Not, of course, to gain salvation, but to walk in the assurance of that salvation. That is the meaning of verse ten. Preservation of the saints is the petal of tulip that is important here. We have a certain way of living on this earth that is necessary. As Paul stated in Romans, we may not "sin that grace may abound." We must live a life sanctified by the Holy Spirit. A life that is worthy of one who waits to enter into the glorious kingdom which is ours. This is Peter's desire for the saints then, and it is the desire of every parent and elder today. Sing Psalter 384.

February 22 Read II Peter 1:16-21

The church of Peter's day was told of Peter being an eyewitness of Christ. Peter said that that was good, but there was something better. That something better is what we have. We have the Scriptures. Those Scriptures are a more sure word. For us today this is a great comfort. We can turn to the Bible, read it, and know that it contains messages of joy and hope for God's people. No matter what state or condition we are in, the Bible will show us the way. Witness the number of people who are in the hospital, who want to have a Bible with them. When you see a well-worn Bible at someone's side, you know that they

have the ultimate comfort. That Bible does not become well worn by itself. It becomes well worn when the Holy Spirit who inspired it directs us to read it, and read it, and read it some more. Know your Bible, love your Bible, use your Bible. I can give you no other excellent counsel. Sing Psalter 334.

February 23 Read II Peter 2:1-6

From the bright spot of chapter one comes this dark cloud. We see the change by the little word "but" which begins the chapter. Yes, we have good ministers, yes, we have the Word; yes, we have many advantages, but Satan will have his attempt at destroying God's people. Like a country bent on destroying its rival, he will stop at nothing to cause God's people to fall into sin. We must identify that enemy and fight against him in our lives. We must see that it does not matter what his "smooth" words may be, God will bring him to destruction. An ungodly life has its reward. We must flee from such a life, and live a life of sanctification. It does not matter what stage of life we are in, we must live that life. God will not be mocked; he will punish those who walk in an evil way. Sing Psalter 332.

February 24 Read II Peter 2:7-9

The above bright spot in II Peter 2 is really not so bright. First of all we see that Lot was not living where he belonged. Do you remember your Old Testament history? Secondly he continued to live there even, as we see above, when he knew he should get out. Finally he had to be pushed out losing most of his family in the process. But this, too, is all of grace. By grace Lot was delivered from all kinds of temptations. Peter knew this by example, and each of us knows that as well. We must be careful about where we walk in the world. We must be careful with whom we associate. God will not leave us in temptation, he will deliver us from those temptations, but sometime it will be with frightening results. Be thankful for such grace, and live a life that shows that thankfulness. Sing Psalter 202.

February 25 Read II Peter 2:10-17

We may wonder why Peter begins speaking of evildoers even as he is bringing comfort to God's people. The reason is that these are the kind of people we will be encountering in the last days. These are the kind of people who will be oppressing us. We must not fall for any of their guile.

Neither their smooth talking nor their contentiousness must take us in. In fact the time will come when we must ignore them. We cannot argue with them on their terms, and they will not allow us to use God's word. We must strengthen ourselves in the knowledge of the Word and in God's precious promises. Right now we are in the practice portion of this fight. The real fight is coming. Sing Psalter 392:1-3.

February 26 Read II Peter 2:17-22

While this is a stern condemnation to those who turn from the truth, it is a sobering thought for us to consider. By God's grace we have been brought into his marvelous light. By his grace we can continue in that light. For us to turn from that grace, if it were possible, would be a horrible thing. But yet sometimes that is the way that we walk. We can hear the most beautiful sermon and agree with the truths brought forth, and then live a most vile life. We must daily and sometimes even hourly pray that God not take his grace from us, but rather make us more and more aware of that grace. We must daily pray, "Lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from the evil one." Sing Psalter 392:4-6.

February 27 Read II Peter 3:1-4

After warning the church of those evil persons that inhabit the world, and also warning them to beware of falling into the same sin, Peter then turns to the idea of the end of time. The two thoughts are related. As the days march on, evil will grow. And that evil will attack the church. They will poke fun of the church. Much of this "poking fun" will come from those who have knowledge of doctrine. Their first attack will be on the certainty of Christ's return. They will say that we live in a dream world thinking that Christ is coming back. We must recognize them for what they are—scoffers! And then we must turn to our Father in prayer and watch and wait for the return of our Lord Jesus Christ. He is coming. Of that there is no doubt. Sing Psalter 28.

February 28 Read II Peter 3:5-12

There are two ideas that could hold our attention. The first is that of the destruction of creation. We will treat that tomorrow. The second is verse nine. Many in the church world misrepresent the meaning of that verse. They say that God will give all man a second chance to repent because he does not want any to perish. The verse does not say that. Rather the verse says that God does not want any of us—his people—to perish. To us he is longsuffering. He does not have to be longsuffering. It is only of his grace that he is. Because he is longsuffering, we should walk in a walk of sanctification. God is God. We should not try to apply man's attributes of any kind to him. His mercy

is great, and by that mercy we have been saved. Let us give daily thanks for that and show that in our daily walk. Sing Psalter 166.

March 1 Read II Peter 3:13-18

As we finish this epistle, there are a few things to be noticed. First of all, after the destruction of the earth that is only a destruction of things of this earth; it is not annihilation, there will be a new heaven and a new earth recreated out of the stuff of the old earth. Think of the world after the flood. Secondly, Peter reminds us to be diligent in the walk of sanctification even though there will be many temptations. Finally there is a beautiful doxology which is also a command. We must grow in grace and in the knowledge of our Savior. This means that in our walk of sanctification we must be busy with our Bibles. We must wear them out looking for that which he has given to us as an inheritance. Let God be glorified in our walk on this earth and we will be ready for the new heaven and the new earth. Sing Psalter 375.

March 2 Read Micah 1:1-5

The setting of this word of prophecy was in dark times in Judah. While they may have had prosperity in earthly matters, spiritually things were at a low. Even during the reformation of Hezekiah's time many people ignored Jehovah. From the kings listed in verse 1 we see that Micah was Isaiah's contemporary. From the words of verses two through five we see God's justice shining forth. God is daily in his holy temple looking down upon us. What does he see? A people living in sin or in obedience to his ways? To this we must answer each day and when we come before him in heaven. He will come. Will we be ready? Think of Psalter 392. Sing Psalter 392.

March 3 Read Micah 1:6-10

The prophet continues with his words against Judah and Israel because of her past sins. This section is aimed mainly at Israel. You will notice some familiar images here. Notice verse ten. These words come from David's mourning at the time of Saul's death. David was worried about God's church. The prophet is as well. During this time in history, Israel was making noises about overcoming Judah. There were times that she even attacked them. God's church is often under fire from those who once were part of that church. However, they, like Israel, were part of the church institute; they will not be present with the church triumphant. But there is hope. That we will find as the prophecy unfolds. Sing Psalter 34:1-5.

March 4 Read Micah 1:11-16

There is much history recounted in these verses. If we would research each of these towns carefully we would learn of Judah's plight and the cause of it. In short, Judah's

plight was attacks by Syria. In short, the cause was her sins. Notice verse twelve. Sometimes we say that “bad” things do not come from God. Verse twelve states the opposite in no uncertain terms. The last verse of this section tells Israel to mourn. Only in that way will she receive forgiveness and deliverance. Do we mourn our sin? We should and we must. Sing Psalter 34:6-10.

March 5 Read Micah 2:1-5

The prophet pronounces woe upon those in Judah who sin against their neighbors. This is just not a casual sin; it is premeditated. Micah prophesies of the captivity to come. For the sin of taking someone’s possessions, their possessions would be taken away. And then in the fifth verse, he tells us that they would not return from that captivity with the repentant. There is much here for our instruction. First of all, we must not be covetousness. Secondly, we must truly love our neighbors as ourselves. Finally, when we fall into sin, we must repent. These words are as applicable to us today as they were in Micah’s day. Sing Psalter 379.

March 6 Read Micah 2:6-13

Here we have in a nutshell Israel’s and Judah’s punishment and deliverance. In verse six we see their sin. They rejected God’s word. In verse nine we see the punishment. In verse twelve we see the deliverance. What about us? What do we say about God’s Word? Do we ignore the admonitions of elders and ministers? Do we look for Christ as the one who will break us out of this world of sin? While we know what the goal (heaven) is, do we live a life worthy of reaching that goal? Or do we like Israel of old reject that goal and live a life that is pleasing only to us? If we do, we cannot expect the good things. It is only by grace that we, like Israel, will be redeemed. Sing Psalter 339.

March 7 Read Micah 3:1-7

In these verses we see not only the necessity of office bearers to behave themselves in their offices, but also of all people of God who occupy the office of believer. God has entrusted us with a great office. How will we use it? None of us may say that we have nothing. Each of us has at least one talent in the church of God. What will he say to us at the end of our lives? If we do not use that talent well, he will not answer us when we pray. Even the young people in the church are part of that office. What are you doing with your talent? Sing Psalter 223.

March 8 Read Micah 3:8-12

In contrast to the false prophets, Micah declares that God sends him with the power of the Holy Spirit. In that power he proclaims the judgment of God upon first of all the leaders of Israel and by association the people of Judah. The judgment is not nice. Their beloved Jerusalem will be

destroyed. The temple that they profaned will be smashed. There will be nothing for them, and they will be taken into captivity. This is a warning to us as well. When we do not walk in God’s ways, judgment will be brought upon us. God is not pleased when we do not walk in his ways. He will not hear us when we pray. These Old Testament prophecies are for our instruction. We must hear them, and say “Thus saith the Lord.” Then we must pray in repentance for forgiveness. “Is there no hope?” we may say. The hope is coming. The hope is Christ. Sing Psalter 352.

March 9 Read Micah 4:1-5

This is a beautiful part of Scripture. It is one that we can reread and gain more and more understanding each time that we read it. Micah not only looks ahead to Judah’s restoration after the captivity, but he also looks ahead unto Christ’s final coming. We see in verse two that he speaks of Gentiles being counted among God’s people. What a blessing and comfort that is for us! Let us be comforted, but let us pay close attention to verse five. All around us people are holding onto gods. It may be some idol god or it may be gods of their own making; for example, money, sports, pleasure or any other like thing. While they are doing that we must walk in the name of Jehovah. We must because we can. We can because God has made it possible through his Son. Thanks be to God for such a gift! Sing Psalter 53.

March 10 Read Micah 4:6-8

Even though God’s people have been in captivity, he will lead a part of them out. From that remnant he will make a strong people and his Son will rule over them. While this directly points to the birth of Christ, it also gives to us hope in the world in which we live. God will lead us into the new Jerusalem, the Zion which will be ours in heaven. What does that tell young people to do? They must repent and look for the coming of the King. There is hope for them, and there is a shepherd who will lead them through the valley of the shadow of death. Sing Psalter 53.

March 11 Read Micah 4:9-13

In the world in which we live, we sometimes think that evil has the upper hand. Look at verse nine again. Do we have no king? Do we have no counselor? Do we not receive preaching? The world thinks they have the upper hand over us, but we must know that they do not know God’s thoughts because his thoughts and ways are not man’s ways. In the way of leading us through this world, he will lead us to glory. In glory we will see the destruction of those who plot against us. This should not make us proud or complacent, but rather this should make us seek to live lives of thankfulness for the deliverance from the evil that is in this world. The end will come, and Christ will have dominion over land and sea. Sing Psalter 200.

March 12 Read Micah 5:1-6

In the trying times in which Micah wrote, he then brings to them this glorious prophecy. Verse two is one that is known by many out of all the verses in Micah. Jesus is the Prince of Peace who will bring to his people peace even against all those in the world who do not want his kind of peace. This is the point of Scripture. There is a Jesus, and he comes for his people. All of Scripture testifies to the fact. Whether it be the prophecies of the Old Testament or the prophecies of the return of Christ, Christ is coming, and he is coming for the good of his people. Sing Psalter 198.

March 13 Read Micah 5:7-15

There are two ideas to notice in this portion of Scripture. First of all, notice the nice similes in verses seven and eight. The comparisons are rich with meaning. Dew was important to the Judean farmer. Without it his crops would die from lack of moisture. To be compared to dew is spiritually very rich. The fact that the small remnant is compared to the lion is also spiritually rich. God does not and will not leave his people. He will be with them. Secondly, we see the contrast between those who obey God and those who do not. Just to be called a Christian is not sufficient. We must be called by God to live a life of sanctification. And that life we must live on this earth. If the church and its members do not, they will go lost even as Israel and Judah did. Sing Psalter 371.

March 14 Read Micah 6:1-7

God speaks through his prophet to the people. He asks them what has he done to deserve such treatment as they are giving him. He reminds them of several events in their history. Chief among them is their deliverance from Egypt. He reminds them of the attempt of Balaam to curse Israel and the failure of that attempt. Are we any better? God comes to us daily in creation and in his word and asks us what has he done to deserve the treatment that we give to him? Do we worship him in spirit and in truth? Let us consider these things as we go to his house each week and let us truly reverence our God who has done wonderful things for us. Sing Psalter 137.

March 15 Read Micah 6:8-16

After asking Judah if God was justified in showing their sins, he continues to point out from their history that he was. Verse fifteen is one that we must take to heart. If we do not walk in his statutes, those acts that we take for granted will not turn out so well at times. We must not be surprised if life is hard if we do not follow his commandments. The faithful, who heard Micah, and we of this age, must think back to the hope that was given in the earlier chapter. God did send his Son to Bethlehem. He has died for us. He is coming again. Yet, we must live by watching and waiting

patiently for his return. Sing Psalter 214.

March 16 Read Micah 7:1-6

In this last chapter, Micah bemoans Judah's state. He can find no comfort among those counted as God's people. This can be our thought at times. Because of sin, either our sins or the sins of others, it feels as if we can find no friends. Some have problems during holidays with these feelings. But Micah knows the right answer. He implies it in verse five. He knows that trust must be in God alone. As we walk in this earth, we must trust in God to lead us through all difficulties. He will, you know. Oh, we sometimes do not understand that leading. But we must say with Paul, "All things work together for good..." Trust is a precious thing. As a little child trusts his father, so we must trust our heavenly Father. Sing Psalter 8.

March 17 Read Micah 7:8-13

After all of the despair we read about earlier in the book, the prophet confesses the hope that is the true child of God. The repentant sinner is able with confidence to know that his God will deliver him even when it looks as if all is against him. Even though Judah would lie desolate, Micah knew that God would restore his people, and the enemy would have to slink away in sin. This is great comfort to us. Christ will return and take us unto himself. The day will come when the evildoer will see that the church will be exulted unto her bridegroom. Until that day comes, let us wait with patience for his coming. Let us live prayerful lives praying daily, "Even so come Lord Jesus." As Jesus himself told us in many parables near the end of his earthly ministry, we must watch and wait in prayer. Pray daily, and pray for the strength to endure. Sing Psalter 75.

March 18 Read Micah 7:14-20

Micah ends this beautiful prophecy with the words of verse eighteen through twenty. Read them again. First of all, we see confession of God's greatness. This is where we must start. God is great. And why is God great? He is great because he can forgive our sins. We are slow to forgive our neighbor. We, who have done worse things, are forgiven by God. Secondly, we see that we must know that God does have compassion upon us in such a forgiveness. Yes, God is angry at the wicked every day. Yes, God's justice must be satisfied. Christ has satisfied that justice for us so that we are not consumed. Finally, notice the reliance upon the covenant. That covenant is so precious to us. It is a gift that will never wear out. God remembers us in his covenant. Thanks be to God! Sing Psalter 36.

The Way to Go

*How shall the young direct their way
 Within this evil world?
 When all around and every day
 So many barbs are hurled;
 Yes, Satan's forces darts are aimed
 At God's own chosen ones;
 The reprobates he long has claimed,
 But he desires God's sons.*

*The sons and daughters bought by Christ
 He's trying to possess.
 He uses fascinating means
 To lure them to transgress
 The wondrous, holy way of life
 Which God the Lord commands.
 He calls the righteous life "a bore",
 As at their sides he stands.*

*Young people, chosen by the Lord,
 Don't heed the devil's call!
 His "pleasant ways" all turn to grief;
 He just desires your fall.
 You have a safety net—`tis prayer:
 Our Father always hears,
 Sustains and comforts, shows His love,
 Delivers us from fears.*

Thelma Westra

Hearing Our Great Shepherd

by Ryan Barnhill

What a thought! My sheep hear my voice. There are no sweeter words in the whole world. Such a rich voice with words of comfort, love, and rebuke. Jesus himself tells us that he is our Shepherd and that we hear his voice. Let us study this voice of Christ, our great Shepherd. In doing so, let us seek to understand the voice of Christ, see to whom this voice is directed, and the words that are spoken.

John 10:27—“My sheep hear my voice, and I know them, and they follow me...” What is this voice? Scripture provides us with many passages that speak of this voice. In Genesis 3:8, Adam and Eve hear the voice of the Lord as he walks through the garden. They hide themselves because of the sin that they had just committed. Ezekiel 43:2 describes that the voice of the God of Israel “was like a noise of many waters: and the earth shined with his glory.” These are but two passages among many others in Scripture that start to scratch the surface on this subject.

These passages speak of the love and power found in the voice. In our text, the voice is compared to one of a shepherd who calls his sheep. It is an irresistible voice, a sweet voice that reaches into the inner depths of cold, dark hearts. It is the voice of Christ, and therefore it is one of truth.

This voice stands in stark opposition to the false voices of our age, and in all of history. Think of all the false voices you have studied in history: the storming voice of Adolph Hitler in the dark of night, promising his followers a Germany free of oppression; Sigmund Freud and his vain studies of the mind; Mohammed and his foolish dreams; Confucius and his philosophies. That only scrapes the surface of man’s depravity throughout history.

Furthermore, who can avoid the voice of relativism today? It cries out on college campuses, permeates the churches of America, and threatens the neighborhoods. It cries, “do whatever you want!” It tolerates the most heinous sins and leaves the most corrupt ideas in its wake, all the while despising the absolute truth found

in the Word of God. I am convinced that Satan is working extremely hard to erode the Church in the United States through relativism. Satan rubs his hands in glee when those who commit even the grossest of sins are simply seen as being “cultured.” We do not experience persecution in this country, at least not physical torture or imprisonment for speaking what we believe. Yet, Satan is working hard to make us tolerant thinkers, a bunch of chickens that don’t dare to speak TRUTH! He wants us to blend in with the lukewarm, wish washy culture that surrounds us, one that does not believe in absolute truth. Satan speaks to our flesh through the society we live in, and that voice is appealing to the flesh. Our world stands broken and very much confused from these deceptive and wicked voices.

We could even talk politics for a bit. Who has not heard the voice of politics? This article will be published after elections take place, but it would still do us well to cast a cautious eye on politicians. Watch the commercials and read the promises—John McCain is your man! Put your trust in him, for he can deliver you from economic woe, he can secure our borders, and he can protect you from domestic and foreign terrorism. Vote for Barack Obama! He can alleviate your medical needs, and he can get you out of this economic crisis. The voice of the politician is clear—trust in me because I can give you what you need. So powerful is the allure of earthly shepherds.

Put those voices aside now, for there is a sweet melodious voice in our hearts. God be praised. We hear the voice of Christ! Sheep hear the voice of Christ. What does it mean that sheep hear the voice of Christ? We are the sheep described in John 10. I cannot think of one person who would glow with pride after having been compared to a sheep. I am not a farmer, but you know as I do that sheep are not flattering animals with which to be compared. Sheep are dumb animals. They wander and are nearly devoured by predators that surround their grazing grounds.

It is these animals that we are compared to. Even as

sheep hear their shepherd, so we also hear Christ's voice. Such a voice we cannot hear ourselves. We cannot and do not participate in eternal election. John 10:26 clearly sets before us unconditional salvation: "But ye believe not, because ye are not of my sheep, as I said unto you." Notice the words there. Christ is telling the unbelieving Jews that, because they are not of his sheep, (because they were not elected before eternity to be his own) they do not believe. Believing is never a pre-requisite for salvation. Can you imagine the terror of a conditional salvation? Would you ever entrust something valuable to a sheep, much less certain elements of salvation?

It is also important to notice that Christ calls only the elect and not all men. In Matthew 25:33 we read that "he [Christ] shall set the sheep on his right hand, but the goats on the left." This verse clearly displays God's gracious mercy toward his elect sheep and his just judgment toward the unrighteous goats. It is foolish to think that Christ calls many, but some reject his voice. Then Jesus is no longer our sovereign Lord. If he calls all men, and some do not come unto him, he is but a powerless man. No, God in Christ chooses his sheep before eternity without the will and work of men.

Jesus then calls a particular people with an irresistible voice. That voice is a saving voice! What is the result of hearing this saving voice of Christ? John 10:27b, 28a—"and they follow me: and I give unto them eternal life!" Such great love is unthinkable. Such love that the mighty and powerful Christ would subject himself to such lowliness, that he should become desperately poor for stubborn, dumb, totally depraved sheep! Such love that came to a focal point at the cross of Calvary, where he descended into hell, endured hate among men, and suffered the heavy wrath of the Father, so that we might go to glory! Salvation is accomplished by the One who was made sin so that we would be made righteous!

We hear that sweet voice. It speaks to us on Sunday as we sit under faithful preaching. It speaks to us every day in the Word of God during devotions. It speaks to the children and young people in the catechism room and through Christian school teachers. It speaks to the older members of the Church in Bible societies. The voice speaks through the singing in church. Jesus speaks powerfully through his Spirit to the soul of the dying saint, penetrating deeply into even the mind and heart of one who is ravaged with cancer or Alzheimer's disease. Yes, his sheep certainly hear him!

The voice speaks to us words of rebuke. Christ spoke a word of rebuke to the Pharisees in John 10:26 – "But

ye believe not, because ye are not of my sheep, as I said unto you." Let us not separate ourselves from the Pharisees here. Yes, it is true that this group of Pharisees was unrighteous, but we must remember that even those who are saved have only a small beginning of obedience in this life. Sheep wander and make foolish decisions. How true is this for us, too! Our faith becomes weak. We stumble and fall. Maybe it is the case that we are not faithful with personal devotions. It could very well be that we do not always have an excitement to hear the preaching. We struggle with sin. Sometimes we may even be tempted to lend an ear to other, more "appealing" voices in this world. Certainly Christ comes to us in rebuke at times in our lives.

In the voice of Christ we also hear unspeakable comfort. Read verse 29 of John 10: "My Father, which gave them [the sheep] me, is greater than all; and no man is able to pluck them out of my Father's hand." Preservation of the saints—doctrine is lively and personal! God preserves me in Jesus Christ from beginning to finish! He holds my hand as I stumble, and leads me out of the valley of sin, trial, and despair to the everlasting light! Do not look to other cultures for your answer. They will tell you to "trust yourself; do it on your own." Do not look to the Roman Catholic Church or those in the Reformed community who support the Federal Vision, for there your preservation is based on your own works, stripping all comfort from your salvation, and denying the reality that you are a sheep. By grace, hear the Great Shepherd of the Sheep!

God be glorified. That is the end of all things. Let us then end with a fitting benediction in Hebrews 13:20, 21: "Now the God of peace, that brought again from the dead our Lord Jesus, that great shepherd of the sheep, through the blood of the everlasting covenant, make you perfect in every good work to do his will, working in you that which is well-pleasing in his sight, through Jesus Christ; to whom be glory for ever and ever. Amen." ❖

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

I Remember Herman Hoeksema: Personal Remembrances of a Great Man (5)

by Prof. David J. Engelsma

A Pastoral Heart

Although a profound theologian, learned scholar, and formidable controversialist, Herman Hoeksema had the heart of a pastor. His published sermons demonstrate the love of a shepherd for the people of God, especially his own congregation, First Protestant Reformed Church of Grand Rapids, Michigan.

This came home to me many years after Hoeksema's death when I was editing his series of sermons on Romans for publication as *Righteous by Faith Alone: A Devotional Commentary on Romans* (RFPA, 2002). The series of sermons, as he preached it in First Church in the late 1930s, had two grand themes. They ran through the sermons from beginning to end. One was the glory of God as revealed in the gospel of justification by faith alone.

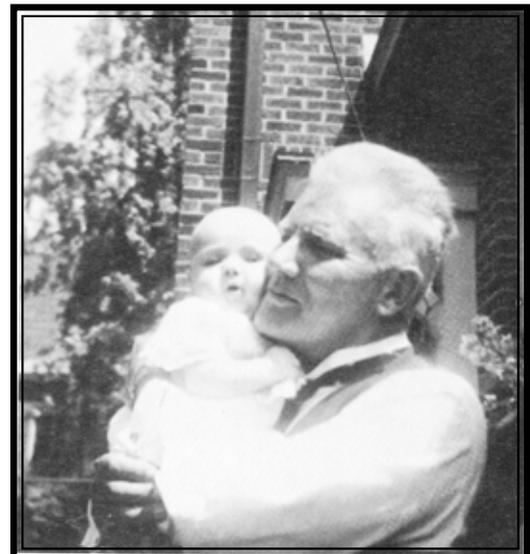
The other, hardly less prominent, was the comfort of every believer by this gospel of justification. Again and again, Hoeksema explicitly applied the gospel-truth of righteousness by faith alone to the burdened souls of the members of the congregation, struggling with the guilt of their sins and fearful of the wrath of God to which their transgressions and corruption exposed them.

Especially did Herman Hoeksema the pastoral preacher exert himself to deliver members of his congregation from the doubt that was then, and still is today, perversely promoted and even praised by disciples of the Puritans. These are the contemporary representatives and advocates of the movement in the Netherlands in the seventeenth century that called itself the "*nadere reformatie*" ("further reformation"). Falsely charging the Reformation of the sixteenth century with having failed to do justice to the experience of salvation, this movement arrogantly took upon itself the responsibility of completing the unfinished Reformation.

Rather than completing, or even developing, the Reformation, however, the movement of the "further

reformation" radically deviated from the Reformation. Whereas, for assurance of salvation, the Reformation directed the faith of the elect believer to Jesus Christ as presented in the preaching of the doctrine of the gospel, outside the believer; the "further reformation" turned the believer in on himself, to his own mysterious, mystical experiences, or feelings. The result was doubt, doubt on a huge scale, doubt that afflicted the vast majority of the members of the congregations (even though they confessed themselves believers), doubt that lasted for years, doubt in which many eventually died (with all the terror that must accompany dying without assurance of salvation).

The Puritans and their theological disciples in the "further reformation" denied that true, justifying faith in Jesus Christ as proclaimed in the gospel is assurance of salvation, as is the teaching of Question and Answer 21 of



With grandchild, Anita

the Heidelberg Catechism. Assurance of one's own salvation comes to a believer, if it comes at all, only after the believer has struggled with doubt—prevailing, terrifying, hellish doubt—for many years. If a believer does finally obtain assurance (and only a few of God's favorite children ever do!), he gets it, not by believing only in Jesus Christ, but through an extraordinary, mystical experience, which he himself has labored to bring about.

In Hoeksema's day, those in North America whose theology thus robbed confessing believers of the comfort of assurance were the theologians, ministers, and teachers of the Netherlands Reformed Congregations.

It is obvious in the Romans sermons that Hoeksema knew that some in his congregation were afflicted with the Puritan disease of doubt and the related disease of grounding assurance of salvation upon the broken reed of a mystical experience. Hoeksema called the disease "sickly mysticism." As a good undershepherd of Jesus Christ, Hoeksema could not tolerate this spiritual sickness. He certainly did not excuse it. Much less did he promote it. Rather, he probed the sore in order to heal it with the balm of the gospel of justification by faith alone.

It is obvious in the Romans sermons that Hoeksema knew that some in his congregation were afflicted with the Puritan disease of doubt and the related disease of grounding assurance of salvation upon the broken reed of a mystical experience.

Preaching Romans 7:24, 25a, "The Wretched Christian," Hoeksema observed that the text teaches that the "wretched Christian seeks deliverance" ("who shall deliver me?"). Then he exposed the disease of doubt:

There is [a] type of people who do not seek. They are a sickly kind of people. They are people who have a certain sickly knowledge of sin. They are people who leave the impression that they rejoice in the fact that they are able to say that they are so miserable. You can recognize these people by the fact that they always stop there. They say, "O

wretched man that I am!" And there they stop. They do not seek. This is not the apostle. If one knows his misery, he seeks spontaneously (*Righteous by Faith Alone*, 299, 300).

Immediately, Hoeksema added: "And he finds." This too was directed against the miserable Puritan and "further reformation" doctrine, which teaches that many, if not most, believers seek the deliverance of assurance all their lives without ever finding it.

A man once said to me that he had been seeking all his life. I told him that was not true. Scripture says that he who seeks shall surely find. This man said, "Yes, but in God's time." I answered, "Yes, and God's time is, 'Before they call, I will answer them.'" This surely follows. You cannot ask the question without the answer being there. If you seek, you shall surely find (*Righteous by Faith Alone*, 300).

As a good pastor, Hoeksema warned against seeking deliverance from sin, including assurance of deliverance, in the wrong, Puritan and "further reformation" way.

How do you seek [deliverance]? There is only one way: in the Word of God. Some people would like to have an angel come down from heaven to tell them. That cannot be. Others would like to have a certain word, or a certain experience. But it is a seeking outside of the Word of God. These people do not find. You cannot find God outside of the Word. But if you seek the answer to the question "Who shall deliver me?" in the Bible, you will find the answer (*Righteous by Faith Alone*, 301).

When he explained the outstanding passage of Scripture on assurance of salvation, Romans 8:15, 16, Hoeksema again pointedly warned his flock against the teaching of assurance that produces doubt. The text reads: "Ye have received the Spirit of adoption, whereby we cry, Abba, Father. The Spirit itself beareth witness with our spirit, that we are the children of God." Hoeksema posed the question, "How does the Spirit do this?" that is, give all believers and their children "assurance... that we are children of God." He answered his question, negatively, combatting (as his answer indicates to every one who is in the least familiar with Puritan and "further reformation" doctrine) the proposed way of assurance of Puritanism:

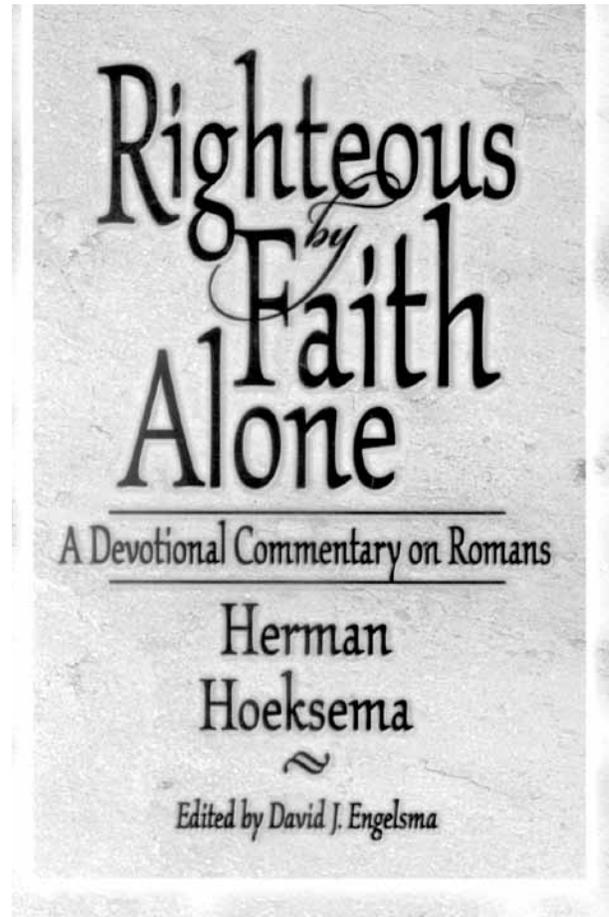
[The Spirit] does not do it [give assurance of sonship and salvation] in a fanatical way, nor does he do it in a mystical way. Some teach that the Spirit directly, mystically, audibly, tells every child of God,

Righteous by Faith Alone is available at
Reformed Free Publishing Association
1894 Georgetown Center Drive
Jenison, Michigan 49428-7137
Phone: 616-457-5970 Mon., Wed., Thurs. 9-3
and Fri. 9-2 (EST)
Fax: 616-457-5980
E-Mail: mail@rfpa.org

by Herman Hoeksema
702 Pages
Hardcover (Aug 2002)
ISBN 0-916206-71-8

DESCRIPTION

This exposition on what the author calls “one of the richest and most beautiful parts of the word of God” is clear in language, simple and warm in teaching, rich in practical application, and faithful to Scripture. This exposition is addressed not to the scholars, but to the very same audience for whom the apostle wrote the epistle: the “beloved of God, called to be saints.”



outside of the Word, that he is a child of God. But there is no such thing. I never heard such whisperings of the Spirit in my heart. And if I did hear such whisperings, I would not trust them. I could not be sure that these whisperings were not the testimony of some other spirit. The Spirit never says anything outside the Word...Not directly, but through the Word, this testimony comes to us (*Righteous by Faith Alone*, 333).

Showing thorough knowledge of the Puritan and “further reformation” doctrine of doubt and demonstrating a good pastor’s determination that this doctrine not take root in his congregation, and be rooted up where it might have lodged, Hoeksema added something to his negative answer.

But even then we must be careful. Some people, when they say that this testimony comes to us through the Word, mean that the Spirit at a certain

time comes with a certain text. This is not true. I do not mean to say that the Spirit never comes with a certain text, at a certain time, and under certain circumstances. But I mean this: your assurance cannot rest on that. The Spirit does not work through a certain text, but he works through the whole Word of God. It is through the whole of Scripture that the Spirit bears this testimony (*Righteous by Faith Alone*, 333).

Hoeksema was referring to the mystical notion and practice that one gets assurance of salvation by letting his Bible fall open at random and blindly stabbing his finger at a text that happens to speak of salvation, or by having a stray text come into his mind, unexpectedly, as he goes about the business of his everyday life.

His positive answer to the question, “How does the Spirit give assurance of salvation?” was this: “The Spirit takes the content of the Word of God. He applies

it to our hearts.” The role of preaching in this assuring work of the Spirit, Hoeksema indicated in his sermon on Romans 1:16, 17 (*Righteous by Faith Alone*, 9-15), his sermon on Romans 10:14, 15 (*Righteous by Faith Alone*, 474-481), and his sermon on Romans 10:16-18 (*Righteous by Faith Alone*, 482-495). Hoeksema added, concerning the way in which the Spirit gives assurance, that “the Spirit works assurance in the fellowship of the church and in the way of sanctification” (*Righteous by Faith Alone*, 334).

The significance of faith in receiving assurance, Hoeksema had indicated earlier in the series of sermons on Romans. In his sermon on Romans 4:3-5, Hoeksema taught his congregation that “saving faith...reveals itself as undoubting certainty.” “Saving faith is that I am certain...that I am justified” (*Righteous by Faith Alone*, 143, 144; emphasis added).

Note well the verb in the second of these quotations concerning faith: True faith is certainty. Denial of this fundamental truth concerning saving, justifying faith was the false doctrine of Puritanism and the “further reformation” that caused the God-dishonoring and soul-tormenting doubt of multitudes, as is the case still today with the avowed disciples of the Puritans and the “further reformation.”

Herman Hoeksema’s sermons expressed a pastor’s heart. Is not a pastor’s heart expressed in preaching that gladly obeys the divine call to the prophet, “Comfort ye, comfort ye, my people”? Is not a pastor’s heart expressed by teaching that joyfully brings to the congregation the basic theme of the Heidelberg Catechism, namely, comfort in life and death for every believer and covenant child of the believer that consists of conscious belonging to Jesus Christ, because “by his Holy Spirit he also assures me of eternal life”?

Does not a pastor’s heart compel the minister to war against false teaching that is destructive of the comfort of the gospel, that God wills for all his children, that all God’s children have a right to, and that is necessary in order to live faithfully and to die hopefully?

Does the heart of a pastor of the flock of Christ bring a message that plunges many, even the majority, of the congregation, who profess to be believers, into doubt of their salvation; that makes assurance of salvation impossible for many of them as long as they live; that shuts them up to face death themselves, and bury loved ones, in the terror of damnation; and that assures a few on the basis of a false, deceitful, and weak ground, namely, an extraordinary experience?

Hoeksema’s sermons were a public expression of the man’s pastoral heart.

I saw this heart in his ministry “from house to house” (Acts 20:20). ❖

Prof. Engelsma is professor emeritus of Dogmatics and Old Testament in the Protestant Reformed Theological Seminary.

Family Conference 2009

Hosted by

First PRC of Edmonton, Alberta, Canada

July 2-5, 2009

"Calvin & The

Christian Family Life"

Join in a week of uplifting
Christian Fellowship

Speakers:

- Prof. D. Engelsma
- Prof. B. Gritters
- Rev. J. Marcus

Visit our website: EdmontonPRC.org

www.edmontonprc.org

Church News

BAPTISMS

“He is the LORD our God: ...He hath remembered his covenant for ever, the word which he commanded to a thousand generations.”

Psalm 105:7, 8

The sacrament of Holy Baptism was administered to:

Jessica Lyn, daughter of Mr. & Mrs. Jason Gunnink—
Byron Center, MI

Elise Gabrielle, daughter of Mr. & Mrs. Kyle Bruinooge—
Byron Center, MI

Levi Thomas, son of Mr. & Mrs. Jason Schipper—Faith,
MI

Natalie Dawn, daughter of Mr. & Mrs. Scott Van
Uffelen—Faith, MI

Lauryn Kate, daughter of Mr. & Mrs. Brendan
Looyenga—Faith, MI

Allison Paige, daughter of Mr. & Mrs. Ross Wassink—
Holland, MI

Raquel Elizabeth, daughter of Mr. & Mrs. Nathan
DeVries—Hope, MI

Graham Richard, son of Mr. & Mrs. Rich DeMeester—
Hope, MI

Davis Richard—Mr. & Mrs. Eric Dykstra—Hudsonville, MI

Kierra Lael, daughter of Mr. & Mrs. Veryl Heynen—Hull,
IA

Amos Gabe, son of Mr. & Mrs. Chad Andringa—Hull, IA

Analise Marie, daughter of Mr. & Mrs. Eric Pols—
Providence, MI

Dylan Lee, son of Mr. & Mrs. James Jansma—Loveland,
CO

Colton John, son of Mr. & Mrs. Mark Moore—Loveland,
CO

Sawyer Benjamin, son of Mr. & Mrs. Eric Petroelje—
Southwest, MI

Caleb Charles, son of Mr. & Mrs. Randy Vaalburg—
Southwest, MI

Levi Matthew, son of Mr. & Mrs. Matthew Dykstra—
Trinity, MI

Hattie Catherine, daughter of Mr. & Mrs. Kirk
Karsemeyer—Trinity, MI

CONFESSIONS OF FAITH

“Teach me, O LORD, the way of thy statutes; and I shall keep it unto the end.” Psalm 119:33

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

Seth Kalsbeek—Hope, MI

Chad Nienhuis—Hope, MI

Jason Koole—Hope, MI

Lydia Bruinsma—Pittsburgh, PA/Southwest, MI

Anthony Bauman—Pittsburgh, PA/Southwest, MI

Jacob Andringa—South Holland, IL

Edna De Jong—South Holland, IL

Brittany Kooiker—South Holland, IL

Lucas Maatman—South Holland, IL

MARRIAGES

“For this God is our God for ever and ever: He will be our guide even unto death.” Psalm 48:14

United in the bond of Holy Matrimony were:

Mr. Travis De Young and Miss Kasie White—
Cornerstone, IL

Mr. Nathan Vis and Miss Allyson Lenting—Cornerstone,
IL

Mr. Nate Holstege and Miss Sarah Griess—Loveland,
CO

Mr. Sean Vander Meulen and Miss Alicia Buiters—
Lynden, WA

"LITTLE LIGHTS"

... let it shine!

by Connie Meyer

Journey to the Land of Nosin

I looked about, up high and low
and right and left, the way to go
was hard to see,
but still I know
I'm chosen

To tread the path—and then I saw
what narrow pass wove through the wall
of leek deceit,
the bondage draw
of Goshen.

Without a Guide I'd surely slide,
but in His hand I safely ride.
Proclaiming grace,
He sets my stride
in motion.

I cried without and cried within
to call about my cherished kin,
"We're going out
and coming in
to Nosin!"

And on the way we'll grow to see
the pearls and gems that there will be
prepared for us
in full decree
of doctrine.

The victory will be complete
to end the height of all conceit,
her walls will crash
and so defeat
the heathen,

As Pharaoh's band was buried and
his heart of rock sunk down to sand
beneath the waves,
our flesh is planned
to go in.

And then we'll be forever free!
No tempter's snare enticed will we
desire to yield
for there we'll see
through no sin.

Oh what a land, where night is banned
and streets of gold are where we'll stand.
We'll sing for joy
more than we can
imagine.

Where every eye is swaddled dry,
where beasts and birds and men dwell nigh,
where every word
in loving sigh
is spoken.

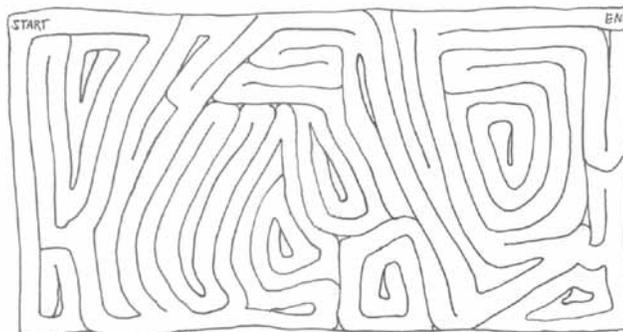
So let us go and join in hand,
our Guide will make us understand
our journey to
the promise land
of Nosin.

Find the underlined words in the puzzle below:

Now the Lord had said unto Abram, Get thee out of thy country, and from thy kindred, and from thy father's house, unto a land that I will shew thee.

Genesis 12:1

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



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

BEACON LIGHTS

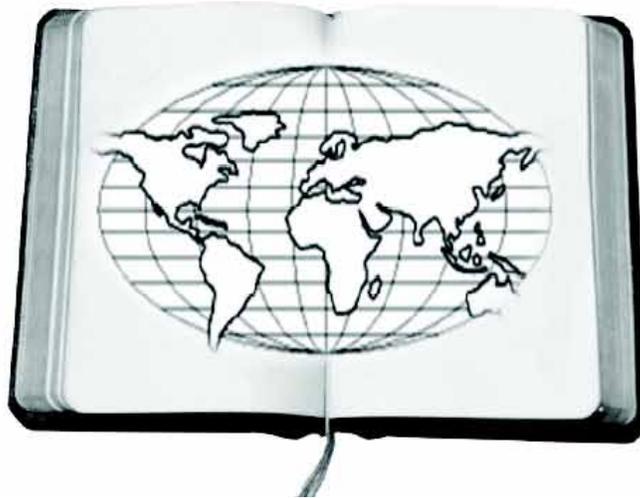
621 Williams Street
Randolph, WI 53956

Periodical
Postage
paid at
Jenison, MI
(UPSS046-840)

2009 Young People's Convention

Hosted by Trinity PRC at Lake Williamson Camp, Carlinville, IL

Aug. 17-21, 2009



A Church Gathered From All Nations

The Church Made Up of All Nations (Rev. R. Kleyn)
The Calling to Preach to All Nations (Rev. A. Stewart)
God's Everlasting Covenant and Missions (Rev. J. Mahtani)

*Now looking for chaperones!
Application form can be found on the website!*

www.prcconvention.com