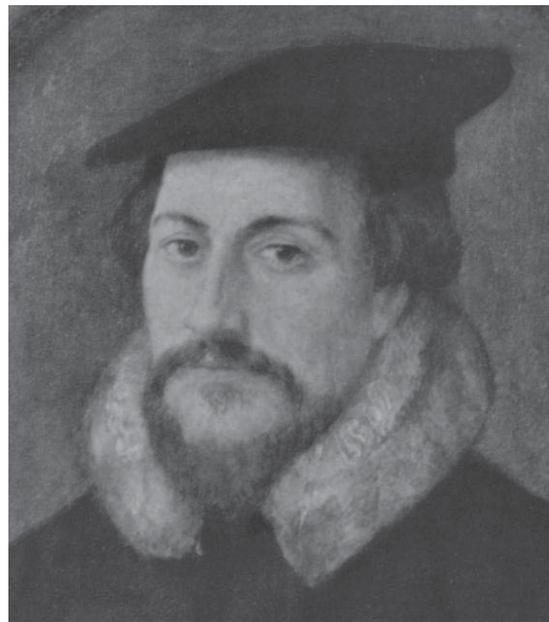

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Lights



"And of the children of Issachar, which were men that had understanding of the times, to know what Israel ought to do; the heads of them were two hundred; and all their brethren were at their commandment."

1 Chronicles 12:32

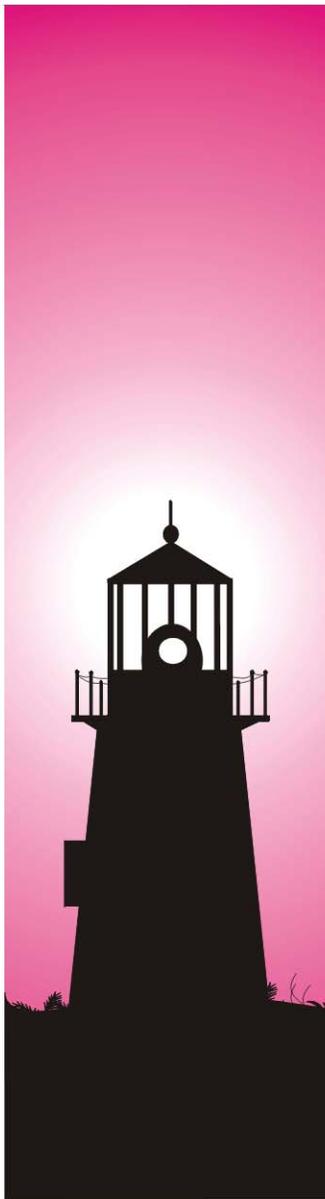


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Dare to Be a Calvinist

by John Huizenga

The members of two local churches shake off the dust from their clothes, look at each other with silly grins, and then laugh at themselves. It takes some work to even remember what the fight was all about—something about “predestination” they reckon. Now it all seems pretty silly. After all, we’re all decent people and we get along just fine in every other sphere of life. And with all the real problems in the world, we certainly don’t need to waste all our energy and resources over splitting theological hairs.

The reconciliation between two Lutheran congregations in Wisconsin was praised in the *Wisconsin Journal* as an example of how even those hot headed religious squabbles are really nothing worth fighting about, and we can all get along. Back in 1891 the local congregation was boiling with controversy over the doctrine of predestination, and the two sides built identical church buildings on opposite sides of the cemetery. After years of glowering at each other, even after the issue was “settled” in 1910 by allowing both theological positions to co-exist within the Lutheran church, the members voted to reunite.

The world sends us the message, “They’ve done it, why can’t you?” The churches that have found their reconciliation and peace call out to us, “It’s ok, you can do it too, your differences really are not as big as they once seemed by your forefathers. We all live, work, and play together; we can worship together too. We all worship the same God and believe in the same Bible.” Is there any reason to stand alone? How will you answer this question?

The members of the two churches described could not answer because most had forgotten what divided them in the first place. Those who did know, felt that the doctrine of predestination was simply one of many biblical interpretations of the Bible and our modern minds are able to deal with diversity. Forgetting history and thinking that each individual’s personal interpretation of Scripture is just as true as the other’s will leave us unable to answer the question: Is there any reason to stand alone? Ignorance and tolerance are the key to peaceful reunion. Such ignorance and toleration go hand in hand, because when each person proudly relies on his or her own ability, apart from the rest of the body of Christ, to mine the bottomless depths of God’s word, who are we to judge others?

John Calvin knew history, and he firmly believed that there was only one clear word of God. History made clear to him all the strategies and attacks Satan made earlier upon the church and the truth of God’s word. He was able to “connect all the dots” and see the pattern of attack. Not only could he see the pattern of attack, but he could see the victories of the church against those attacks. Even though the attacks came from various angles, they all aimed at one fundamental truth about God: his absolute sovereignty. And in one way or another, the devil tried to inject the lie about man: you are good, you can be like God. When you know your history, you have the advantage on the battlefield of standing on a hill and getting a much better view of the enemy. To those in the fog laden valleys, your wariness and attention to the details of God’s word are worthy of scorn.

Do you dare to be a Calvinist and dig into the history of the church’s former bloody battles? Are you afraid of what you will see or are you content to enjoy the peace of ignorance and avoid the ridicule of your “friends?”

The battles that were fought were very real. There are many today who believe that God allowed countless people to waste their lives and die fighting pointless battles. Church history only makes them depressed, and they are thankful to live in an “enlightened” age. Such history is best forgotten and buried. The heroes of faith in Hebrews 11 are pitied. To John Calvin, history was his sovereign story of the very life and salvation of the church. A story he never tired of hearing, and a story he loved to tell.

Do you, like John Calvin, identify yourself with the heroes of Christian faith, or the heroes of ungodly fantasy? Do you dare to let others know that your hero is Noah standing up to preach God’s word to jeering crowds? Do you dare to make known that you are a Calvinist who finds his true heroes in church history?

As we confront the enemies of our salvation with our loins girt about with truth, and having on the breastplate of righteousness; our feet shod with the preparation of the gospel of peace, and above all the shield of faith, the helmet of salvation, and the sword of the Spirit which is the word of God; let us not despise the gift of the confessions and creeds of the church. These are the lessons and truths learned by previous warriors of the faith in former battles. Like strongholds, these confessions tightly seal off one more avenue of attack. These confessions are like pieces of one fortress that fit together to guard the truth of salvation by sovereign grace alone.

A Calvinist is unashamed to declare what God has said about man in himself: “There is none righteous, no, not one: there is none that understandeth, there is none that seeketh after God” (Rom. 3:10-11). He rejoices in the sovereign God of his salvation who says “For I am the LORD, I change not; therefore ye sons of Jacob are not consumed” (Mal. 3:6). He is not afraid to turn over every verse of his revelation to discover another facet of that beautiful covenant relationship he has in store for his beloved. Out of thanks, and a desire to glorify her maker, the Calvinist is eager to proclaim the gospel to every living creature and live it in every sphere of life.

Calvin does not stand out as a unique brand of theology—his theology is that of every saint before and after him. He stands out as one bestowed beyond most with gifts to organize and express what every believer learns in the life God gives to him or her. For that reason I am not ashamed to be a Calvinist. I cling to the salvation revealed by the one and only true God who is absolutely sovereign in his work of salvation. The truth of his sovereign grace which is repeated over and over again in the Bible comforts my soul. History, and my doctrinal heritage, is a long and continual story about the attacks of Satan upon this central truth and the victorious suffering of God’s people who cling by faith to it.

When we dare to be a Calvinist, we dare to be a John Huss, a Daniel, an Abraham, an Enoch, and an Adam who also clung to the promises of his God. ❖

Creation Through the Spectacles of Scripture

Sawbill Lake Reflections

Part 3

by Stephanie Van Engen

We made the decision to try some hiking in Northern Minnesota. After asking if there were any trails around in the area, the only two mentioned were about an hour away on gravel roads.

Of the two suggested we decided to try climbing Eagle Mount, which is the highest point in Minnesota. “A mountain in Minnesota?” I secretly scoffed. How hard could this be?



Piling into the car we drove off into the unknown. As we went down the gravel road driving further and further away from our already remote campground and deeper and deeper into the National Forest, we started wondering if we would ever come to the turn off point. Along the way, however, we saw countless trees and bushes and many hidden lakes. All of this beautiful landscape and hardly anyone has ever seen it! (I drew my conclusion from the fact that it was pretty lonely out there. The only sign of civilization was the endless gravel road.)

Maybe you have played this “game” before too on some of your own travels, but it was kind of fun looking at something a little off the beaten path and wondering if I was the only one on this earth who had ever seen that particular tree or flower or pine needle. It was impressive to think that God knows about every single one of those trees there in the National Forest. It was inconceivable to even begin to understand that he not only knows about those trees, but he knows about every tree in the entire world from the beginning of time!

Finally, after a long dusty drive, we came to the sign that indicated Eagle Mount, and we pulled into the parking area. There were a couple of other cars parked there, and it was somewhat comforting to know that we weren't the ONLY ones crazy enough to be way out there, which

could easily be considered the middle of nowhere. After a picnic lunch, we were ready to go off to see the highest point in Minnesota. A quick little jaunt up a little hill and then back to the car for another hour drive back to the campground was what we were expecting.

The trail was very pleasant, as we started out. It began with a winding path through a very dense forest- a beautiful trail shaded with ancient trees. Along the way there were a few surprises, one of which were some boardwalks over marshy land. Bogs on a mountain in Minnesota? I never knew. I busied myself with snapping pictures of various wild flowers and of the kids as they hiked along. It was very nice, and the slight incline was not overly taxing.

After awhile, we came across some rather unhappy women who had already turned back and were heading for their cars. They were huffing and puffing and swearing that they weren't going on any farther. Obviously, this hike wasn't for them! I wondered what was up ahead that made them turn around.

On we went again wondering that it was taking so long! Surely the end would be just around the next bend! After we had been hiking for quite awhile we came to a large sign that indicated that we were only one third of the way there. “Only a third,” I marveled. I hadn't

expected this to take so long!

We had a family meeting gathered around the big sign. Some of the kids were sick of it and wanted to get back to fishing on the lake. Others kind of wanted to try to keep going. Since it had originally been my idea to hike, I was given the responsibility to decide what we were going to do next. It was a precarious position to be in. Should we turn around or continue on? On the one hand if I took too much time hiking here I would not easily be forgiven of those who would rather have been in the canoe fishing. On the other hand to finish what we had started would be a good experience, and we had already come this far. My interest was piqued by now, and I really wanted to see what was at the end of the trail...maybe if we hurried and picked up the pace a little I could make everyone happy. We could finish the trail and rush back to fish. It must have sounded like a fairly doable plan, so we agreed and started off again.

Somehow, after we passed behind the sign we knew we were committed. We were in it for the long haul come what may.

It was beginning to get difficult. The younger kids were tiring rapidly, and the fishermen were getting disgruntled. Probably somewhere along the halfway mark when we were seriously having some reservations about

this trail, we met some people who were coming down. They had reached the top, and encouraged us with big smiles and well wishes that it was definitely worth the effort to hike up there. That was a big encouragement to us, and it came at a good time.

We stopped to rest again and had a water and snack break. We weren't stocked with water as well as we should have been, so we began rationing, which made things a little harder. The younger kids needed some help, so the older stronger kids began giving piggy back rides to provide a break for them once in awhile. The baby of the family, who had just turned 3 a couple of days earlier, "hiked" the rest of the way on Dad's shoulders. It was slow going, but we were making progress. We were doing this together as a team now, and we needed each other.

A little while later when we were really showing signs of weariness, along came a super athletic family practically bounding up the trail behind us. It was true that their family was older, but it seemed so effortless for them. They were laughing and trading stories, and moving at a much faster pace than we were. At first as I trudged along, I was envious of their strength and positive attitude, but then after awhile I called upon reserves of strength I didn't know I had until just then, and decided to mimic their behavior. After all, it wasn't





like we had given up just yet. We were still in the running, so to speak. Onward and forward! It just couldn't be that much farther!

The landscape along the way was very interesting. At one point the trail curved around a large lake hidden away where no boat could ever reach it. It was peaceful and serene and beckoned us to explore a little longer. As we stumbled along over roots and rocks buried in the trail, I longed to sit at the water's edge and rest, but with our time restriction we dutifully pressed on. What else is up here on this mountain, I wondered?

After we had made it around the curve in the lake we came upon two signs. The one indicated a trail that was little more than a gully wash, which began a very steep incline, and the other sign a few feet away had an arrow that indicated Eagle Mount Trail. By this time my husband and some of the other kids were ahead a little ways, and I was trailing along behind with the stragglers. Now what? Which way was the right way? Being in the tired state of mind that I was, I chose the easier trail and started down that way. Looking back now I think that trail probably circled around the lake, and was named after the mount we were trying to hike up.

Thankfully we had our walkie talkies, and I got an insistent message intermixed with static that I was to take

the first trail. At first I reasoned that the trail sign said Eagle Mount Trail, and that was what we were supposed to take! (I did not want to turn around, because the trail we were on was fairly easy. I needed to be absolutely sure that the gully wash was where we needed to go!) The voice through the static was insistent, so I acquiesced and gave the distressing news to those who were with me. Disheartened, we turned around and found the first trail, which was by far more difficult.

Years ago at a high school church camp I had the opportunity to hike up Horn Peak in Colorado. While Eagle Mount was not nearly as difficult as that, it was still hard. Memories flooded over me of how people had encouraged each other on that extremely difficult climb in Colorado. Now was the time to share the advice I had learned with the kids who were with me. "Pick a spot somewhere along the trail and reach that. Don't look all the way up! When you've reached your goal rest a moment and pick another goal. It's going to be so awesome when we reach the top!"

Another piece of advice given by their dear late Grandpa was "Don't look at how much you have to do until you are half way there." We used this opportunity to remember Grandpa Van Engen, and his wisdom.

Rock after rock, root after root, one foot in front of

the other, all the time climbing higher and higher, and all of a sudden, we were at the top! We made it! It was exciting and exhausting all at the same time. We took pictures and celebrated with snacks and water. We looked out over the valley and enjoyed the height. Below us were countless trees, more hidden lakes and blue sky with puffy white clouds as far as the eye could see. The “athletic family” was just leaving, and we sat up there all alone together as a family. It was an awesome experience! God had planned an interesting day for us and had given us a special opportunity to see some of his creation. It was breathtaking!

The trip back down the trail was rather uneventful. The gully wash was a little treacherous with the younger kids, but we made it safely down. The kids seemed to be energized by going back along the trail and remembering the different landmarks from a couple of hours earlier. The fishermen were excited to be on their way back to the campground, and it looked like there would still be some time to fish!

Our Christian walk on this earth is a little like our hike up Eagle Mount. We have a goal that we are trying to reach, and there are so many times where we need the encouragement and support of each other to help us reach that goal.

The Westminster shorter catechism Q&A #1 gives a good explanation of the Christian’s purpose or goal in life. It asks “What is the chief end of man?” and answers with, “Man’s chief end is to glorify God, and to enjoy him forever.”

One of the things God has given to us to help us reach our goal of glorifying and enjoying him forever is our church family. They are a special gift to us to enrich our lives by reminding us of our goal, and encouraging us in our walk.

The members of the church quite often give help bearing each other’s burdens just like the older kids were able to do for the younger kids on the hike. In fact the trail became difficult for the older kids, because they were busy helping the younger ones. This particular trail was probably not too hard for them by themselves, but being part of the family they were compelled to help their weaker siblings. With a child on their back the trail became more of a burden. It also became a time of fellowship for them, as they walked along together. It strengthened their friendship with each other just like it does within the church family.

Other times we think the trail becomes too difficult. We feel like giving up just like the huffing and puffing

unhappy women, who had turned around on the trail to Eagle Mount. Sometimes we might slip or backslide off of the trail for a ways, but the Lord preserves our faith. He won’t ever let us turn around and give up. His love sustains and nourishes us, and so often it is through the body of believers either offering encouragement or rebuke to keep us focused on the goal.

Often too, we find that when we are facing discouragement the Lord sends along someone to encourage us, just as the smiling well wishers did for us as we were hiking along. Perhaps it is a word fitly spoken. Maybe it is a note from a church member with a Bible verse to remind us of our goal.

There are also those times when we need church members to point out the right way. We need them to show us when we are on the wrong path. It is so easy to get lost in this sinful world and head out for the wrong “trail” of sin. Perhaps the wrong trail seems easier, and we do not want to be on the right path. We need those loving church members to show us from the Bible that we are erring and point us in the right direction.

Now what about those spiritual giants in the church world? Surely we are not daunted by those who are in better spiritual shape than we are like I was with the “athletic family” that blew past us on our way up the trail. Many people in the church world throughout history have been given the calling to be spiritual giants. They write commentaries, books and study materials that we can benefit from.

Sometimes we look at a thick book written by a famous saint, and we think there is no way I can ever understand them. We make excuses and say those people are too smart or they write in a language that is too difficult to understand. Is that true, though? Have we tried to read and study the points of doctrine or church history they are teaching? Hopefully we are able to take advantage of the wisdom they have been given and have shared with us.

If you ever have the opportunity to hike up Eagle Mount or a similar trail I hope that you will be able to compare your hike with your Christian walk here on earth. Remember the trials and the encouragement from others as you are hiking, and compare that to your life, as you face trials and receive encouragement from the church members. When you have struggled and finally reached the goal of the top of the mountain, remember what your ultimate goal and purpose in life is. ❖

Stephanie is a member of Hull Protestant Reformed Church in Hull, Iowa.

Watching Daily At My Gates

by Chester Hunter

September 15 Read Isaiah 1:1-9

Isaiah means “The salvation of the Lord.” It is a fitting title as the prophet must bring to God’s people the hope of salvation. Judah was going through a very trying period in its history. The nation was wealthy but poor. It had gained much riches and power, but it had fallen into spiritual poverty. Isaiah was given the task of rebuking the wicked but bringing comfort to the small remnant of faithful believers. There is much we can learn from this prophecy as it brings to us the comfort of Christ’s first and second comings. May we enjoy the word of the Lord brought by this prophet. Sing Psalter 27.

September 16 Read Isaiah 1:10-17

How do we worship God? Do we worship him with all the reverence that is due to his most holy name? Israel of old, in its riches, was not rich toward God spiritually. They offended him every time they went to do worship in his temple. God was not pleased with them, and he would soon take them away into captivity. Isaiah was commissioned to bring these words of rebuke to them and to us. We must repent of our sins. We must put off the old man that dwells within us. We must practice the true religion that is outlined in verse 17 and repeated in the book of James. When we do these things, God will be honored and we will experience his favor upon us. Sing Psalter 137.

September 17 Read Isaiah 1:18-26

Here we find the promise of the gospel. Even though we are thoroughly tainted with filth of sin, Christ’s blood will wash us as white as snow. We, like Israel of old, have sinned and gone astray in many grievous ways. The church and its members stray from the path of righteousness, but our faithful God will bring us back. He will cleanse his church and again make her to be called the faithful city. Do we pray for this? It may not be pleasant even as it was not pleasant for Israel. But it is necessary, for it is the way to salvation. Sing Psalter 140.

September 18 Read Isaiah 1:27-31

Verse 27 is used as the title of the series of sermons preached by Prof. H. C. Hoeksema. He uses it as the theme for the book of Isaiah. It is a comfort to know that the child of God is redeemed. It is also a comfort to know that the wicked will be judged by almighty righteous God. Redemption is a

powerful and beautiful idea. It speaks of a slave who is free because someone has bought him. We are slaves to sin, but we have been bought with a price that no man can afford. We are bought by the blood of the Lamb who gave himself for us. Thanks be to God for such a gift! Sing Psalter 69.

September 19 Read Isaiah 2:1-9

In this vision of Isaiah that he delivers to the church we see two main themes. The first of the themes is comforting to us as we see a prophecy of the Gentiles being added to God’s chosen people. During the time of the Old Testament, God’s people were the Jews with a few exceptions. In the days after Christ’s ascension, the Gentiles were called. This is a blessing as we know what glories will be given to God’s people. Secondly, there is a warning in this section. The warning is not to associate with the wicked and not to busy ourselves walking in their devices. Israel of old would be taken into captivity. The church today is also chastised for not walking in the way of Jehovah. Sing Psalter 176.

September 20 Read Isaiah 2:10-22

Do you fear the Lord? That phrase is used three times in this passage. In two other books of the Bible that phrase is used as the starting point of what man should do. Here the phrase is used in a different manner. It is to be afraid of his judgment. Which fear do we possess? We must not be afraid of our God as he has given to us a way out of that judgment. That way is Christ. Let us learn from this passage to fear Jehovah in a way that is the beginning of wisdom. This way can be found in many places in the Bible. Let us look for that way and walk in it. Sing Psalter 236.

September 21 Read Isaiah 3:1-9

Isaiah continues to prophesy the calamities that would be Judah’s if they did not turn from their ways. He tells them of the upcoming captivity and the physical discomforts that God would bring upon them because of their sin. The reason for all of this is in the second part of verse 8. When we speak and act against Jehovah, he will chastise us. Notice the phrase: “to provoke the eyes of his glory.” Our calling on this earth is to glorify him in all that we do. It does not matter what activity we take part in, we must glorify God. When we do not, like Israel of old, woe is brought upon us. Are we giving God the glory due his name? Sing Psalter 76.

September 22 Read Isaiah 3:10-15

Notice the two antithetical statements at the beginning of the passage. While Isaiah must bring the message of God's judgment upon the wicked, he was also to bring a message of comfort and deliverance to the people of God. Even when the wicked prosper, we can know that our God will deliver us from all our troubles. While we may not enjoy physical fruit, we have the assurance of spiritual fruit. God will bring all men and their works into judgment and in that way we will be delivered to eternal glory. Sing Psalter 1.

September 23 Read Isaiah 3:16-26

Sometimes you read a portion of Scripture and wonder if the writer was present in our day and age. But this is true because Scripture was written for the church of all ages. We need the warning found here. We are apt to fall into the same sins of glorifying the human body and worshipping that body just as Judah of old did. The warning found in the last two verses is for us as well. May we heed the warning and walk and live in a God-glorifying way at all times. Sing Psalter 301.

September 24 Read Isaiah 4:1-6

Sprinkled throughout the book of Isaiah are these nuggets of comfort. These tidbits come from the fact that there is a supreme Comforter who is Christ. Even when it looks the darkest, as is expressed in the previous chapter and summed up in the first verse of this chapter, God does not leave his people in despair. There is a way of escape and that escape is Christ—the branch. We read in the rest of this chapter what he will provide for us. Read through this short chapter again and see what there is for us. Then seek that everlasting refuge. Sing Psalter 74.

September 25 Read Isaiah 5:1-10

Here we have the well-known figure of the church being pictured as a vineyard. God has given to his people whether they be of the old dispensation or the new dispensation many advantages. Of course we are looking at the church as an organism. In that organism are vines and branches which need pruning. Even as some years much pruning must be done to the grape arbor, so must the church go through periods in which many are cast out. As we read this chapter and others like it we must remember the beautiful words of the previous chapter where the righteous branch is promised to God's people. Let us hear the word of the Lord and be warned by it. Sing Psalter 220.

September 26 Read Isaiah 5:11-20

Here we have a passage that sets forth the sins of Judah of old. They use the good things of God, not in his service, but for their own pleasure and the service of Satan. Notice verse 13 again. God states that his people have no knowledge. Is that true of us? Do we learn but have no knowledge of his truth? If that is true of us, woe are we because God will be exalted in his judgment; he will be sanctified because he

is holy. Finally, look again at verse 20. What do we call good? What do we call evil? What standard are we using? Are we using God's or ours? Let us, by grace, live in a way that glorifies only God and his judgments. Sing Psalter 308.

September 27 Read Isaiah 5:21-30

In this last section of a chapter of woe upon Judah of old, we, too, must see ourselves. Verse 21 is a good summary verse for us. We love the pronoun "I". We love to say, "I did this," or "I think this." When we do that, we are either trying to put ourselves in the place of God, or we are trying to outdo our neighbor. In doing so, we break the two commandments which summarize God's law. Notice the terror that is brought upon Judah of old. Will God do differently to us in our sin? Let us be warned and let us live lives in which we show that we love God and our neighbor. Sing Psalter 248.

September 28 Read Isaiah 6:1-5

Do we acknowledge that the whole earth is full of Jehovah God's glory? As we look at creation is that what we see? What about when we see man-made objects? What is our confession then? And then, even as we may acknowledge God's glory, do we acknowledge his holiness? As the text states, God is the thrice holy God. In another part of Scripture we are told to be holy even as God is holy. Do we seek to be holy all the time? Isaiah saw the evil around him. He saw that he was unfit of himself to preach to these people. As we live our lives let us seek to recognize the thrice-holy God in all things, and let us seek to live lives which glorify him in that holiness. Sing Psalter 285.

September 29 Read Isaiah 6:6-13

Are we always ready to do what God has laid out for us? He says to us every day, "Whom shall I send?" Do we say, "Send me"? There is work for each of us to do in God's kingdom. Some of it is hard work like that of Isaiah. He had the calling to tell Judah of the coming captivity. But he also had the calling to tell them of deliverance. There would be temporal deliverance from Babylon, but there would also be eternal deliverance wrought by Christ on the cross. What will be our work? Will we be ready to say, "Here am I, send me."? Sing Psalter 407.

September 30 Read Isaiah 7:1-9

In this chapter we see that Isaiah is a real prophet interacting with real kings and their problems. Ahaz was threatened by a confederacy of Syria and Israel. The false church had amalgamated with the world against the people of God. Ahaz did not deserve God's help as his heart was wicked toward God. But for the sake of the remnant that was found in Judah, God would bring deliverance. We see in verse 7 that God is sovereign, and in his sovereignty he would judge this evil confederation and destroy it. Ahaz had the reaction of unbelief. What is our reaction to the sovereignty of God? Sing Psalter 266.

October 1 Read Isaiah 7:10-16

Unbelieving Ahaz is given a beautiful sign. Does he want it? The answer is undeniably no, even though he attempts to be pious. That beautiful sign is the sign of the virgin birth of our Christ. Christ is identified as Immanuel or as it is translated “God with us”. What a beautiful name that is for our Savior! It is also a name rich with meaning for us. God is with us. It does not matter in what situation we find ourselves in this life, God is with us. We may be at the highest high or the lowest low, but our God is with us. David confessed this in Psalm 139. Paul also reveals this truth to us in Romans 8. We can rest in beautiful assurance that our God is with us all of the time. Sing Psalter 242.

October 2 Read Isaiah 7:17-25

Those who do not heed the word of the Lord will suffer the consequences. Ahaz had been assured of deliverance from Syria and Israel. But then he mocked God and would not ask for a sign. God gave to him the most beautiful sign: that of the wonderful birth of Christ. What is our reaction to God’s wonders and signs especially as they are opened to our eyes in his word? Are we filled with unbelief or do we humbly bow in adoration to our faithful Savior and covenant God? As we read his word, and as we observe his creation, let us acknowledge him as the sovereign God of all things and especially of our salvation. Sing Psalter 144.

October 3 Read Isaiah 8:1-8

After assuring Ahaz that Judah would be safe, the prophet now foretells the demise of Israel and Syria. The world power Assyria would destroy both of them. Israel would be scattered because, as the apostate church, they had left God and his word and worship. Judah, however, would not be unaffected. Because of its sin Assyria would invade Judah as well. They would not overcome it because it was Immanuel’s land. This was a comfort for the remnant who believed in the sign of the virgin birth. This is also a comfort for us as we wait for his second coming to deliver us from the wicked one and his forces. We must make it our daily prayer that he comes quickly as he has promised. Sing Psalter 146.

October 4 Read Isaiah 8:9-17

In verses 9-16 the prophet foretells that God will hide his face from Judah because of its sin. Many of that nation had forsaken God and his ways, and now God would come upon them in many ways. Isaiah says that he would not go along with the nation’s evil deeds. He would wait upon Jehovah for deliverance. This is what we must do in these last days. We must look for our Savior to come on the clouds of heaven. We must observe the signs and know that he is coming. We, like Isaiah, must be patient, but we must be active in the Lord’s work. Sing Psalter 206.

October 5 Read Isaiah 8:18-22

We see two beautiful truths in verse 18. First of all we see evidence of the covenant. God gives to us children. This is

hard for some to understand. We might wonder why some are childless while others have many. Some in the world wonder why there are children at all. Children are a blessing from the Lord as we sing in Psalter 359. God establishes his covenant of friendship with his people and gives to them children as a sign of that covenant. Secondly, God’s people are signs in the world. As they live an antithetical life, they speak to the wicked around them of God and his judgments. We must live antithetically as we have been placed in this world to do so. Sing Psalter 359.

October 6 Read Isaiah 9:1-7

Isaiah is prophesying about the present problems in Israel but also about the future blessing that would come to all of God’s people. The land of Israel was undergoing attacks from various enemies. Those who were being attacked first were looking for some hope. For the church of all ages that hope is Christ who is called by the beautiful names in verse 6. Are we looking for the dawning of his second coming? Do we want the Christ who will rule all? Make no mistake. He is coming! Let us seek him and his kingdom. Let us earnestly await his coming and embrace it with great joy. Sing Psalter 198.

October 7 Read Isaiah 9:8-14

Isaiah’s prophecy turns to Israel’s destruction. Notice first of all the power of God’s word. When God speaks, action is taken. It is God who ordains all things. Some may say that God would never send hardship. But he does to correct us and to lead us in the right way. The reason for Israel’s destruction is found in verse 13. Israel did not turn to God. Israel did not seek Jehovah, and therefore they were cut off from the Promised Land. We must heed these words: turn unto Jehovah our covenant God, and seek him at all times. May God give to us the grace to do this. Sing Psalter 379.

October 8 Read Isaiah 9:15-21

When we look at these words of judgment, we may wonder what we may gain from them. The answer is clear. We must not stray from God’s word. We must not ignore his will for us. Verse 16, which speaks of leaders, has much instruction. All of us are leaders in some way. Some might be leaders in the church. That is the focus of these verses. But others are leaders at work, school, or in a family. With leadership comes the responsibility of leading in the right way. Israel’s kings and priests had gone down the wrong path and had taken the people with them. What is there to say about us? On what path are we leading those who are following? May God give to us the grace to always lead in his ways and his word. Sing Psalter 42.

October 9 Read Isaiah 10:1-11

Isaiah continues to pronounce judgment upon Jerusalem and its leaders. Look at verse 2 again. Is this not the exact opposite of the definition of pure religion found in James 1? The second thought is the fact that God uses the wicked

to chastise his people. They are his tools even though they think that they work in their own independence. The day will come that even the wicked will acknowledge the sovereign God our redeemer. Let us pray for that day to come quickly when we may be delivered from this valley of the shadow of death. Sing Psalter 386.

October 10 Read Isaiah 10:12-19

How many times do we say, “This is what I am going to do.” And when it does not turn out we become rebellious and try to push our way ahead? Verse 15, even though it speaks about the king of Assyria, speaks to us. We, like everyone else in this world, are tools in the hand of almighty sovereign God. He uses us for his purposes and his glory. We must use the words of James, “If the Lord will,” or as the Latin has it, *Deo Volentie*. We are not the masters of our fate. We belong to our heavenly Father. He will use us as he sees fit. This is a comfort. This is our hope. Sing Psalter 282.

October 11 Read Isaiah 10:20-34

Notice the words of hope for the people of God. In verse 20-22 we read that a remnant shall return unto almighty God. They will not return in their own works. They return because of the righteousness wrought by the virgin’s Son, by the Prince of Peace who is Christ Jesus. Immanuel shall come to earth, and by grace his remnant will return unto him. Being part of the remnant is no shame. Being part of the remnant is salvation. Sing Psalter 222.

October 12 Read Isaiah 11:1-9

We see prophecies of both the first and second comings of Christ. Principally there is but one coming—his coming to take the church to be his bride forever. But we look at the two aspects. First of all there is his coming in which he takes on human flesh and dies for our sins. Then there is the final coming in which we receive full heavenly glory. For Israel of old this prophecy gave hope to the faithful few. For the church of today we, too, must have faith to look for Christ to come on the clouds of glory to receive us unto himself. Let this be our hope and our prayer. Sing Psalter 344.

October 13 Read Isaiah 11:10-16

When Christ comes on the clouds of glory, he will gather his people from the four corners of the earth. He will also judge his and their enemies with a sovereign judgment. We see two things of note in this passage. First of all, the Church of Christ, his body, is a universal catholic church. People from all races will be brought together. We must not let this surprise us. We must look to spread the gospel to all corners of the earth. Secondly, Christ’s coming is with judgment. The judgment of the wicked is the way of our salvation. This is the theme of Isaiah. This is our hope and comfort. Sing Psalter 320.

October 14 Read Isaiah 12:1-6

Here and there in the book of Isaiah we see songs of praise uttered by the prophet. This psalm was applicable for those who would return from captivity some years in the future. Notice the beautiful words about God sprinkled throughout this short chapter. God is our salvation, strength, and song. Even though Judah had been taken into captivity, it could sing that Jehovah God had done excellent things. As we go throughout the various issues of life, we do well to take this Psalm on our lips often. We, too, await the end of captivity. We wait when our God will take us to the new Jerusalem. Our God is great. Do we confess that daily? Sing Psalter 413.

October 15 Read Isaiah 13:1-8

There are several of these “burdens” in Scripture. They are always put upon some wicked nation who afflicted the people of God. These are burdens which are too heavy for them to bear. These are the way of God’s judgment upon them. As the final burden crushes them, they howl and melt away. We, too, deserve such a burden. But we have one to bear it for us. Notice that I said for us and not with us. Christ bore the whole load when he suffered the accursed death of the cross. That is our hope, and that is our salvation. Sing Psalter 224.

October 16 Read Isaiah 13:9-13

We have here a foretelling of the destruction of Babylon. It is also a prophecy of the destruction at the end of time. Israel of old was not to make Babylon their permanent dwelling. They were to live there, but not as if it was to be the home of their descendants. It is no different for us. This earth is not our permanent dwelling. Our home will be in the new heavens and the new earth. We are but pilgrims here. We must live each day according to that principle. All of the “I will”s will come to pass. Of that there is no doubt. Sing Psalter 23.

October 17 Read Isaiah 13:13-22

We might wonder what word God has for us in this passage of Holy Scripture. But the word is simple and twofold. First of all our God is sovereign. All things are in his hand. Not just some things or things that we think need to be in his hand. All things belong to his counsel. It needs to be because otherwise there would be no hope for us. The second part of this word is that he cares for his people. God used Babylon to chastise Judah for its sin. Babylon had to pay for the cruelty upon Judah for which they were responsible. God heard the prayers of his faithful. We can be assured that he will hear our prayers as they rise up to him each day. Let us remember to go to his throne of grace and find mercy in time of need. Sing Psalter 108.

Halloween or Reformation Day?

by Winifred Koole

How wonderful in meaning are Paul's words to Timothy as recorded in II Timothy 3:15: "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." Equally meaningful are the same words as applied to our covenant children today.

For many years that same holy Scriptures which they are privileged to read and study was hidden in darkness, and its glorious truths buried under superstitions and traditions of men. The church, with rare exception, had no access to the Word of God—and little interest in it either. It was not until the sixteenth century that God raised up a man, Martin Luther by name, to lead the church out of the bondage of Roman Catholicism into the liberty wherewith Christ had made it free. Such an event, so significant in the history of Christ's Church on earth, should be observed and thought about by us who are the heirs of the fruits of that Great Reformation.

What does October 31 mean to you? Does the name "Halloween" bring a quicker response than that of "Reformation Day"? What flashes through your mind—visions of witches...pumpkin faces...masks...tricks or treat? For most people this is truly the case. Halloween is celebrated by the world in just that way.

The name "Halloween" means hallowed or holy evening, and October 31 was called this because it came before All Saints' Day. November 1 was set apart by the Roman Catholic Church early in the seventh century to honor all their saints, especially those who did not have a day named for them. But Halloween as the world knows it had its origin even further back in history. Among the early heathen tribes that inhabited Britain before the birth of Christ were the Celts. The men who exercised much influence in the tribes' religious and civil affairs were priests called Druids. The Druids believed and taught that on a certain evening during the autumn festivals ghosts, spirits, witches, and elves roamed about with intent to harm the people. This superstitious belief has lost its ability to frighten this generation, but the pagan and heathenish customs have been carried over to the

present day celebration of Halloween. For that is the day when goblins, witches, and other weird specters make their hilarious appearance. What a foolish and meaningless day! In the schools of our nation, plans are made in advance to celebrate it to the full. Rooms are decorated with pumpkin faces, witches, and black cats. Parties are being arranged; costumes are being readied; masks are being purchased or made. Fathers are braggingly telling their children the glowing details of the pranks and tricks they used to pull off. Police look with dread to the coming of that evening when it seems as if all the evil spirits are actually out wandering on the streets. Communities, alerted to the incipient danger, rally to entice the youth to harmless parties. Adults stock up on candy, gum, and such to be ready to pay tribute to masked figures who shriek in threatening voices: "Trick or treat!"

Why are the people of God willing to let anything so essentially heathenish obscure an event as important and significant as Reformation Day? Are we not delivered from Roman Catholicism and heathenish superstition? Do we not have a calling also here to testify that we are the children of the "day," not the night!

The observance of Reformation Day and its glorious implications begins in the home. The family should discuss the liberation of the Church and the unshackling of the Word of God. Stories of the personal struggle of Martin Luther and events leading up to his nailing the 95 theses on the church door at Wittenberg, appeal strongly to the imagination of all of us. For a long time he had searched for favor with God, but this peace was denied him even in the seclusion of the monastery and despite self-imposed chastisements. With the discovery of the almost extinct Bible and his avid study of it, Luther was being prepared for his role as the great Reformer. The sale of indulgences and Tetzl's shameless part in this traffic proved to be the spark that set off the Reformation.

Such interest engendered in the home can be built upon and enlarged in the school. Our Christian schools of today are making an earnest attempt to supplant Halloween with Reformation Day by educating the children in the proper celebration of October 31.

Various Young People's Groups in our denomination reveal that the Reformation has meaning for them also. As they gather together on that day in their mass meetings, they reiterate in songs and speeches the fruits of the Reformation: freedom from the vain and corrupt traditions of the Romish Church and a restoration of the Holy Scriptures to the church of Christ.

Yet there is need of constant reformation within the Church. She must continue to reform as long as she is on the earth. The knowledge of the truth grows...Calvin

follows Luther, the Confessions follow the 95 theses, and so on. More time should be spent by every one of us in a sincere study of the precious Word of God, instead of catering to the flesh which would make things easier and not too deep or doctrinal. As sons and daughters of the Reformation, let us be zealous, watching over the truth, holding fast to what we have. The world may have its Halloween...the church has its Reformation Day! ❖

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From the Pastor's Study

Reformation Day Thoughts

by Rev. G. Lubbers

A very rich young Israelite came running to Jesus. We read that Jesus loved this young man. Every word which he spoke to him was infinite love in the form of instruction and correction.

Strange as it may sound, this young man has a troubled soul, a troubled and accusing conscience. He did not yet find rest for his soul. And so he comes running to Jesus, and the question is a very necessary one.

Listen to it, will you my dear young reader?

He asks: "good master, what shall I do to inherit eternal life?" Matthew 19:16, Mark 10:17 and Luke 18:18 all record these words. These words must be of extreme importance. The fact is, that that is the question which filled the heart of the great Martin Luther after he became a Monk in the cloister at Erfurt. He went here to find peace of soul in becoming thus, by his efforts, holy enough to be accepted of the holy and righteous and good God. He tried to do this in the way of works. He walked the road of "penance," "contrition," "confession," "absolution." But he found no forgiveness from God. He did not hear Jesus say "Thy sins have been forgiven thee" (Mark 2:5). He met an angry God, whom he could not really love and adore.

And thus it was with this young man who came to Jesus. Yes, thus it is with every one of us until we rest in the blessed grace of the free gift of the forgiveness of our sins.

This rich young man must find rest for his soul. He must learn that he will not merit, but that he will inherit eternal life. Eternal life is for "heirs" of the promise. And so he must learn to look at all his good works as so much loss and dung for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus. To bring this young man to his spiritual senses, and to the old tried paths, Jesus recites to him the second table of the Law. He recites Commandments 5-9. Thou shalt not commit any sin. Be perfect!

As this young man read this law he said: all these things have I observed from my youth! I have done all this, "Master!" Oh Jesus loved this young man. He reaches out to give him the inheritance of eternal life: faith in Jesus Christ! He shows him in a very pointed and pedagogical way that he does not understand what observing of the law is. He fails to understand that the law is spiritual, holy and good. So he says: one thing thou lackest. Go sell all that thou hast and give it to the poor in love, and come follow me, taking up thy cross for the Gospel's sake, for my sake.

This is a very disappointing answer for our sinful flesh!

The young man went away sorrowful. He had been rebuked by the law of God as to its spiritual nature. He had been told in this answer of Jesus what it means that there is only one who is good, that is, God. Let God be true and every man a liar! And this answer of Jesus to

the rich young self-righteous man had drawn blood from the disciples of Jesus. Who then can be saved? Who then can inherit eternal life?

No one! There is none that doeth good, no not one! There is none that seeketh after God! God looked down from heaven to see if there were any that understood. And there *was* none! There *is* none!

The camel must pass through the eye of the needle! That is easier than for a rich man to inherit eternal life and enter into the kingdom of God.

Luther learned this very profoundly. He saw this in himself and in all his fellow men. His entering into the cloister-life at Erfurt afforded no help; it deepened his problem! Until....

Yes, until he heard the gospel-call: come unto me all ye that labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. (Matt. 11:28) Then the heavy burden of his sins and guilt was taken from his back. He learned that it is tempting God to try to do what none of the fathers in the Old Testament were even able to do. (Acts 15) Christ took Luther's burden. He gave him a new yoke to bear, and a light burden. He gave Luther his prepared righteousness without works of law which he performed. Luther heard the gospel of the glory of the blessed God. He heard the message that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners, the lost, the guilty, the filthy sinners, yea godless sinners, who were enemies.

The just shall live by faith!

That is the miracle of grace. Yes, the camel passes through the eye of a needle. A man is born from *above*. With man this is impossible, but with God, all things are possible. This is the mystery which the believing saints of all ages experienced, and the angels, which hover over the mercy-seat, wonderingly adore, and seek to look into.

How shall these things be, since I know not a man?

This shall be the wonder of the Incarnation: the Holy Ghost shall come upon you.... Even Elisabeth, who was barren is made alive. For with God, all things are possible!

In the dead bones of the church which seemed to lie dead in Sacerdotal error, God stirred with his Spirit. He stirred up one man: no he stirred up the hearts of all the elect in the Sixteenth Century, and gave them to bewail their sins before God's face, but now to seek their all, not in an attempted life of good works of merit where they could say "all these things have I kept from my youth." Perish the thought! Now they come to the blessed "rest" of soul of the justified-sanctified believer, who confesses: I am righteous before God and heir of everlasting life! I am an heir-child of God! Yes, my conscience accuses me

that I have kept none of God's commandments, I have transgressed them all, yea, even now I am still inclined to all evil, I have but a small beginning of the new obedience. But, the blessed rest! God deals with me as if I had never sinned, yea, as if I have kept all of his commandments, since I receive the benefit of his justifying grace with a believing heart!

The Reformation wonder of the sixteenth century was not something new. It was not something which Luther discovered and which was a novel gospel for a Calvin and the reformers. It was simply a return to the call of Jeremiah 6:16: "Thus saith the LORD, stand ye in the ways, and see, and ask for the *old paths*, where is the good way, and walk therein, and ye shall find rest for your souls"!

And then there were ever those of whom it is said that when they heard this message, responded: "We will walk therein." Luther joined the throng of believers before him. And multitudes have found this way of the Lord, coming to Jesus, our peace. And they sang of this "rest" from pulpits, it was heralded from the housetops, it was written in confessions of the believers, it became once more the clarion call of the Gospel preaching, and the keys of the kingdom of heaven opened the doors for every believer unto life, and shut the very doors for unbelievers.

Blessed rest for the weary! Streams of water for the thirsty, the balm of Gilead for all our wounds.

Yes, the camel goes through the eye of the needle. This is no challenge for a Houdini to master. It is the power and wisdom of God!

Such is the very heart of our blessed gospel. It is the pearl of great price. This gospel of grace is entrusted to us as churches. It is entrusted to the minister each Sunday, and to the teachers in our schools, and to the professors in our seminary.

The Reformation is lived over each day and in every life of every believer. He comes from the dead center of "all these things have I done from my youth," to the cry, Good master what must I do to inherit eternal life? And then, by grace he sees the cross, the merits of Christ, delivered from his sins and raised up again for his justification. And he believes with the heart and confesses with the mouth unto salvation. And so this word is not far from us, it is nigh in our hearts. And then we live reformation life; life out of God! ❖

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Harvest

by Rev. William Langerak

At this same time each year, it seems that the world is morbidly preoccupied with death. A favorite name for the season is fall, something leaves do after they shrivel up and die. A celebrated holiday, Halloween is merely a weak attempt to mock death and hell—and by implication Jesus who has the keys of both. Even Thanksgiving Day seems to be, for many, little more than a day to “eat and drink, for tomorrow we die.” Let it not be so for the believer.

Halloween is merely a
weak attempt to mock
death and hell...

The season we know as fall, Scripture calls harvest. It does so in God’s promise to Noah, “While the earth remaineth, seedtime and harvest...summer and winter... shall not cease” (Gen. 8:22). Harvest is a time of celebration for the church. The greatest joy is harvest time (Is. 9:3). During harvest, Israel had its great holiday Feasts of Passover, Unleavened Bread, and Weeks (Pentecost). Then they enjoyed a Sabbath’s rest and fruit of their labor (Ex. 23:16). The laws governing harvest ensured everyone could partake of the bounties. The Israelite landowner could not harvest the corners of his field, remove every scrap of food, or return to fetch any sheaf he had forgotten; this harvest food was for the poor, orphans, widows, and Gentiles (Lev. 23:22; Deut. 24:19). Jesus even benefited from this harvest generosity, for his great ancestor Ruth the Moabitess, survived by gleaning the crops Boaz obediently had left (Ruth 2:23).

By his providence God made sure joyful events of covenant salvation occurred at harvest. It was during harvest that Israel both escaped the bondage of Egypt and also crossed the Jordan into the land flowing with milk and honey (Josh. 3:15). At harvest time Samson was provoked to war against the Philistines, and reduced their crops to a smoking wasteland (Jud. 15:1). Gideon’s timely victory at harvest kept Israel from starving (Jud. 6:11). The ark was returned to Israel at

harvest (I Sam. 6:13). When God brought his people from captivity, it was called a harvest (Ps. 126:5-6). And even the great temple would be built on an old harvest threshing-floor (II Chr. 3:1).

Harvest joy is God’s gracious blessing. Since he is pleased to give it in the way of wise toil, Scripture gives much admonishment regarding harvest. The ants are examples of diligent labor to harvest while there is time (Prov. 6:8). A wise son gathers during harvest, but the fool sleeps (Prov. 10:5). If the sluggard will not sow if it is cold, he begs during the harvest (Prov. 20:4). They that sow iniquity and wickedness, harvest the same (Job 4:8). And so when his people do not live thankfully in obedience, God takes away harvest joy and replaces it with desperate sorrow (Is. 17:11). When they eat like piggish sots, he sends the beast, fire, insect, and worm to destroy the harvest, saying, “Be ye ashamed...because the harvest of the field is perished” (Joel 1:11). When they oppress the poor, he withholds rain so the harvest is withered (Amos 4:7). If they trust in their own strength, he sends enemies to take their food so they cry, “The harvest is past...and we are not saved” (Jer. 8:20). But with repentance and thanksgiving, he sends harvest blessings again. For they that sow in tears, harvest in joy (Ps. 126:5).

Perhaps the world’s preoccupation with this time of year is because they sense that harvest marks their own death, it is the season of their fall from glory. To the wicked, God cries, “The harvest is ripe...for their wickedness is great” (Joel 3:13). Concerning Babylon, he shouts, “It is time to thresh her: yet a little while, and the time of her harvest shall come” (Jer. 51:33). Even the hypocrite shall not escape this apocalyptic harvest, for Jesus will tell the reapers, “Gather ye first the tares, and bind them in bundles to burn” (Matt. 13:30, 39). But make no mistake, harvest is a thankful time of celebration for the church. Its beginning was Pentecost, the original Thanksgiving Day. Then the Spirit of harvest was poured out and the Lord sent corn, wine, and oil to be satisfied therewith (Joel 2:19-28). This great harvest of God’s first fruits is on-going in fields white for harvest (John 4:35). Pray “the Lord of the harvest, that he

would send forth laborers into his harvest” (Luke 10:2), a harvest completed in the great day of our Lord with the cry of the angel, “Thrust in thy sickle and reap: for the time is come...for the harvest of the earth is ripe” (Rev. 14:15). ❖

Rev. Langerak is pastor of Southeast Protestant Reformed Church in Grand Rapids, Michigan. This article is reprinted from the Standard Bearer, Volume 83, Issue 5, “A Word Fitly Spoken.”

Church History

JOHN CALVIN

Hero of the Reformed Faith

By Sharon Huizinga

The name John Calvin is well-known to us all. His name is a “household word.” But I don’t think much is known concerning his life. My purpose in writing this, is to make him a little clearer, both to myself and to others.

John Calvin was born in Noyon, Picardy, in the northern part of France, in the year 1509. His parents were Gerard and Jeanne Calvin. He had one younger brother by the name of Anthony Calvin. Calvin, it seems, was brought up by his mother, a very pious woman, to be Roman Catholic. “Gerard Calvin,” says L. Penning, in his book *Genius of Geneva*, “had his eyes firmly fixed on earthly things, and because of this his children suffered.”

When Calvin was twelve years old, he signed the oaths of the chaplaincy as was the custom. As he grew older, he was sent to Paris where he received his education, and then went on to study in Orleans, Bourges, and Paris Universities. When he was twenty-three, he allied himself with the cause of the Reformation because he had become dissatisfied with the Roman Catholic Church.

At the same time, King Francis I of France decided to settle the religious question in France. But, he favored the Catholics and many Protestants were persecuted. One man, De Klerk, refused to pray to the Virgin Mary and was tortured. His lips and nose, and eventually his entire face, was seared with a red-hot iron. And so Calvin fled to Basel, Switzerland where he wrote the Institutes of the Christian Religion. This was published in 1536, and is considered by many to be one of the most important and systematic works of Protestant theology.¹ After the publication of this book, Calvin went to Geneva before continuing on his way to Strausburg. In Geneva he met

William Farel, who was convinced that Calvin was the man “sent by God to help him in his reform work in Geneva.”² But Calvin was a shy, quiet man who wanted nothing more than a quiet place where he could receive instruction instead of giving it. Finally, Farel stood before Calvin and with flaming eyes said, “May God curse your rest, if you dare hold back and refuse to give help and support.” In the face of such vehemence, Calvin bowed his head.

With Calvin’s help, Farel was able to begin a reformation in the city, both political and religious. But all was not peaceful within the walls of Geneva. There were many battles between the Catholics and Protestants. An example of this can be found in the book *Genius of Geneva*, by L. Penning. Here I read that one of the servants in an inn where Farel, Viret, Froment, and Calvin stayed, put poison in their soup. Viret ate it, but he did not die.

Many immoral practices were defined. Most were forms of entertainment. Those considered sinners were forbidden to take part in religious services, although they did have to attend them.

Many people were opposed to Calvin’s strict rules, and when a man by the name of Caroli accused Calvin of denying the Trinity it was the last straw. A synod was held, and although Calvin was cleared and set free, the slander spread. It was decided that Calvin and Farel were to be banished from Geneva. From Geneva, Calvin went to Strausburg where he stayed for three years, writing and teaching theology. It was here that he met Idelette Von Bure, a woman possessed of gentleness, kindness, and piety. They were married and lived happily together for seven years until her death. Idelette was a true comfort

to Calvin, and he loved her deeply. They had one child, but he died after only a day.

In 1541, Calvin returned to Geneva after his reform party won. Here, he perfected an autocratic system of political and religious government. He selected a group of men called presbyters, who were to control the social and cultural lives of individuals down to the smallest detail.

Calvin was a respected man. He consulted all of the great Protestant religious leaders of his time. Calvin published many works which had a great influence on Protestant theology. One example of his influence would be in Scotland. Here John Knox followed his teachings and brought about the Scottish Protestant Reformation.

Calvin died in 1564, shortly after the followers of Calvin separated from the Lutherans. By doing this, they formed the first great division in the Protestant Church.

Calvin was a great hero of the Reformed faith. Because of him we now have the five points of Calvinism, which were developed from his teachings. They are: Total Depravity, Unconditional Election, Limited Atonement, Irresistible Grace, and Perseverance of the Saints. We owe a great deal to John Calvin, and we ought to thank God for his dedicated, hard work.

Endnotes

1 Moose, George L. *World Book Encyclopedia*, Vol. 3.

2 Penning, L. *Genius of Geneva*.

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Autumn Beauty

*In the golden hush of autumn
Wandering down a pathway rude,
The serenity and beauty
Fill my heart with solitude.*

*See the mist above the water,
Feel the cool of summer's end.
Fallen leaves become a carpet
As my footsteps homeward wend.*

*I'm enchanted by the grandeur
Of an ordinary scene
Where the reds and golds of autumn
Now supplant the summer's green.*

*If my Father clothes this planet
With enchantment such as this –
My poor mind can never fathom
Heaven's splendor – heaven's bliss.*

—Thelma Westra

"LITTLE LIGHTS"

... let it shine!

by Connie Meyer

500 Years Ago...

"Let Us Find the Truth!"

(7)

The truth was there. John Calvin had found it. The burning question for him now was—how to clearly and logically set it forth. He was the man who saw this need. He was the man to do it.

The doctrines of the Reformed faith were new. No, they were of old—did not Augustine, centuries ago, teach these things? Did not Paul, the apostle, too? But they were new now. Rome had covered them up and held them down for so long!

Luther had poured the first sprinkle of moisture onto the dormant seed, and it sprouted. But there was still much confusion. The ground was still dry. God gave Calvin a pitcher of water to make the seedling grow. Calvin's *Institutes of the Christian Religion* filled a large part of that pitcher.

What was this work called the *Institutes*? Instruction. Instruction in true Christianity. It was a clear and logical explanation of the doctrines in Scripture, a catechism, and a confession of faith. It was instruction in theology for preachers and common people alike, and a defense of the Reformed faith over against Rome and the Anabaptists. It was a defense of the sorely persecuted saints in France and elsewhere, and an application of doctrine to a life of godliness—what Calvin called piety.

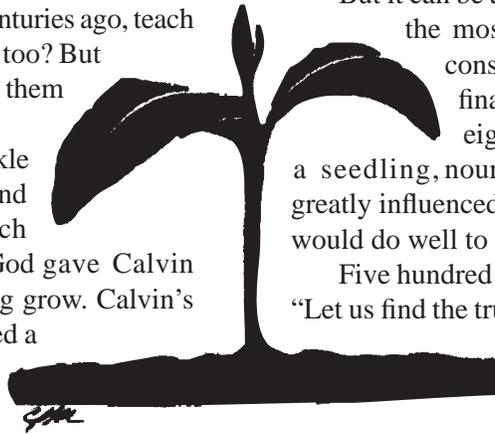
Calvin was only twenty-four years old when he began this monumental task. He studied amidst thousands of books in his friend's library in France. Two years later the first edition was published in six chapters. Calvin worked on the *Institutes*, expanding and developing it for the next twenty-three years. But the original truths he set forth in the beginning never changed.

John Calvin accomplished and endured much in his life. He could not stay in France. He went to Geneva, Switzerland, as an exile and a pastor. Then he was thrown out of Geneva. Then he was invited back, and he graciously—reluctantly—returned with his new wife. But he returned to more mockery and persecution. He was often ill. Still, he diligently preached and taught with amazing strength of mind and will. He established

a university in Geneva. Theodore Beza and many other reformers came there to learn how to preach the truths of sovereign grace. He wrote numerous commentaries and letters, commentaries we still reach for today when we have questions. He died in the Lord in 1564.

But it can be argued that the work that endured with the most force and influence was his clear, consistent teaching in the *Institutes*. The final edition was published in 1559 with eighty chapters. The work itself grew like a seedling, nourished and hoed. It was a work that greatly influenced the Reformed creeds. It is a work we would do well to read today.

Five hundred years ago... a man was born who said, "Let us find the truth!" And he did. Let us thank God for raising up such men. Let us today love the truth that was then found. And let us grow in it. ❖



Find the following underlined words from only the first sentence of the full title of Calvin's 1536 *Institutes* in the puzzle below:

The Institute of the Christian Religion, Containing almost the Whole Sum of Piety and Whatever It is Necessary to Know in the Doctrine of Salvation.

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

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

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Church News

BAPTISMS

“For the promise is unto you, and to your children, and to all that are afar off, even as many as the Lord our God shall call.” Act 2:39

The sacrament of Holy Baptism was administered to:

- Corey Jonathan, son of Mr. & Mrs. Philip Hall—Ballymena, N Ireland
Jonathan Christopher, son of Mr. & Mrs. Justus VanDerWalt—Bethel, IL
Maggie Jane, daughter of Mr. & Mrs. Joe Lubbers—Byron Center, MI
Sadie Faith, daughter of Mr. & Mrs. Kurt Mingerink—Byron Center, MI
Kara Brielle, daughter of Dr. & Mrs. Paul DeJong—Edgerton, MN/Souix Falls, SD
Kohen Daniel, son of Mr. & Mrs. Dan Hanko—Faith, MI
Brady Allen, son of Mr. & Mrs. Joel Holstege—Faith, MI
Cory James, son of Mr. & Mrs. Jason VanOostenbrugge—Faith, MI
Jordan David, son of Mr. & Mrs. Brain Koole—Faith, MI
Seth Matthew, son of Mr. & Mrs. Philip Kleyn—First, MI
Jadon Lee, son of Mr. & Mrs. Jamie Langerak—Grace, MI
Landon Nicholas, son of Mr. & Mrs. Nick Kamps—Grandville, MI
Brady Daniel, son of Mr. & Mrs. Tyler Schimmel—Grandville, MI
Kennedy Jane, daughter of Mr. & Mrs. Luke Engelsma—Grandville, MI
Evan Scott, son of Mr. & Mrs. John Cleveland—Hope, MI
Gwenyth Miriam, daughter of Mr. & Mrs. Matt Overway—Hope, MI
Maraya Emily, daughter of Mr. & Mrs. Bryant VanOverloop—Hudsonville, MI
Adam Jack, son of Mr. & Mrs. Jack Kooienga—Loveland, CO
Jaelle Elisabeth, daughter of Mr. & Mrs. Craig Poortinga—Loveland, CO
Brooklyn Joy, daughter of Mr. & Mrs. Sam Carson—Loveland, CO
Evan David, son of Mr. & Mrs. Raphael Neff—Lynden, WA
Quinn Isaiah, son of Mr. & Mrs. Tom Bergman—Providence, MI
Emma Rose, daughter of Mr. & Mrs. Todd Kaptein—Providence, MI
Peyton Alexander, son of Mr. & Mrs. Nick Hopkins—Redlands, CA
Brelynn Kate, daughter of Mr. & Mrs. Darin Gritters—Redlands, CA
Molly Alise, daughter of Mr. & Mrs. Brent Snippe—Southeast, MI
Timothy Joel, son of Mr. & Mrs. Tim Vander Meulen—South Holland, MI
Gideon Thomas and Gracia Kaye, twins of Mr. & Mrs. Tom VanderWaal—Trinity, MI
Evan Jay, son of Mr. & Mrs. Ben Bomers—Trinity, MI
Kailyn Joy, daughter of Mr. & Mrs. Todd DeBoode—Trinity, MI

CONFESSIONS OF FAITH

“Ponder the path of thy feet, and let all thy ways be established.” Proverbs 4:26

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

- Craig Feenstra, David VanDenTop, Melissa Elzinga & Kelli Elzinga—Grace, MI
Eric Bodbyl, Brian Key, Jason VanTil, Nathan Meulenberg, Gina Kamps & Jeff VanOverloop—Grandville, MI
Jennelle Meyer—Hope, MI
Tabitha Meyer—Hope, MI
Michelle Fischer—Randolph, WI
Ryan Karsemeyer—Redlands, CA
Kyle Karsemeyer—Redlands, CA
Samantha Holstege—Southeast, MI
Jodi Looyenga, Erinn Pastoor, Erika Schipper & Anna VanDonselaar—Southwest, MI
Ed & Carol Banton—Spokane, WA
Ben VanDrunen—South Holland, IL
Rachelle VanDyke, Jared VanOverloop & Joanna Haveman—Trinity, MI

MARRIAGES

“Trust in the LORD with all thine heart; and lean not unto thine own understanding. In all thy ways acknowledge him, and he shall direct thy paths.” Proverbs 3: 5 & 6

United in the bond of Holy Matrimony were:

- Mr. Ryan Halma and Miss Brittany VanBemmel—Doon, IA
Mr. Craig Feenstra and Miss Angela Runge—Grace, MI
Rev. Heath Bleyenbergh and Miss Deb Key—Grandville, MI
Mr. Tom Pastoor and Miss Abigail Kamps—Hope, MI
Mr. David Haan and Miss Paige VanGinkle—Hull, IA
Mr. Matt and Mrs. Vanessa Span—Immanuel, Lacombe, Canada
Mr. Eric Solanyk and Miss Stacey Hoekstra—Loveland, CO
Mr. Dan and Mrs. Becca Regnerus—Randolph, WI
Mr. Todd Ferguson and Miss Deanna Meelker—Redlands, CA
Mr. Scott Gaastra and Miss Emily Boer—Redlands, CA
Mr. Jed Pipe and Miss Heidi Hoogendoorn—Southeast, MI
Mr. Carl VanDenBerg and Miss Jennie Kiel—Southeast, MI
Mr. Tyler De Jong and Miss Jennifer Van Baren—South Holland, IL