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Everyone Does It!

by John Huizenga

“Everyone does it!” You’ve probably heard it. You’ve probably said it. The argument “everyone does it” is quickly perceived by young people as a silver bullet with parents and often persuades the hesitant to join the crowd. The argument packs a powerful punch that will knock the naïve flat and leave them wondering what happened.

Wherein lies the power of this apparently simple argument? Why is it so persuasive? Is it because of its impeccable logic? Not at all. The argument itself is very weak. The argument derives its force from our sinful nature, it is deceptive, thrives on pride and should never be used by the child of God. It is the cheap-shot of the spiritual coward.

At the heart of the argument “everybody does it” is the idea that right and wrong is determined by man’s majority vote, and not by God. Since everybody thinks it is all right to do something, then it must be all right for me. Many who use the argument, however, acknowledge that God alone determines what is right or wrong. How then can the argument possibly work for the confessing Christian? We need only say “I don’t care what everybody does, God says ‘no’ and therefore neither I nor you may do it.” Yet we use the argument, and the evil of it seems to work even better with the modifications necessary to make it work for the confessing Christian.

When we use the argument with parents or within our own heart we need to qualify the “everyone.” They are not, of course, literally everyone in the whole world. They are a select group: the people we admire and respect. They are those whose approval and friendship we seek. They may be a shady bunch whose bad points are for the moment well hidden. They may very well be a respectable group in the church. Whomever they may be, they constitute a group of which you want to be a part. You believe that you belong with them and ought to do what they do.

The argument that we use, then, is this: Good people are doing it, therefore it must be good for me to do. We see then, that the more godly the group appears, the more powerful the argument becomes in our thinking. Sincere Christians are doing it, therefore it must be good for me. Kids whose parents go to our church are doing it, therefore it must be all right for me. Protestant Reformed people are doing it, therefore it must be good for me. I am a Christian, I desire good Christian friends, and these friends which I myself have determined to be Christians feel it is all right to do it, it must be all right. These people are Christians, they live

according to the right and wrong determined by God, they must be right. How can you or I condemn what they ALL believe is right?

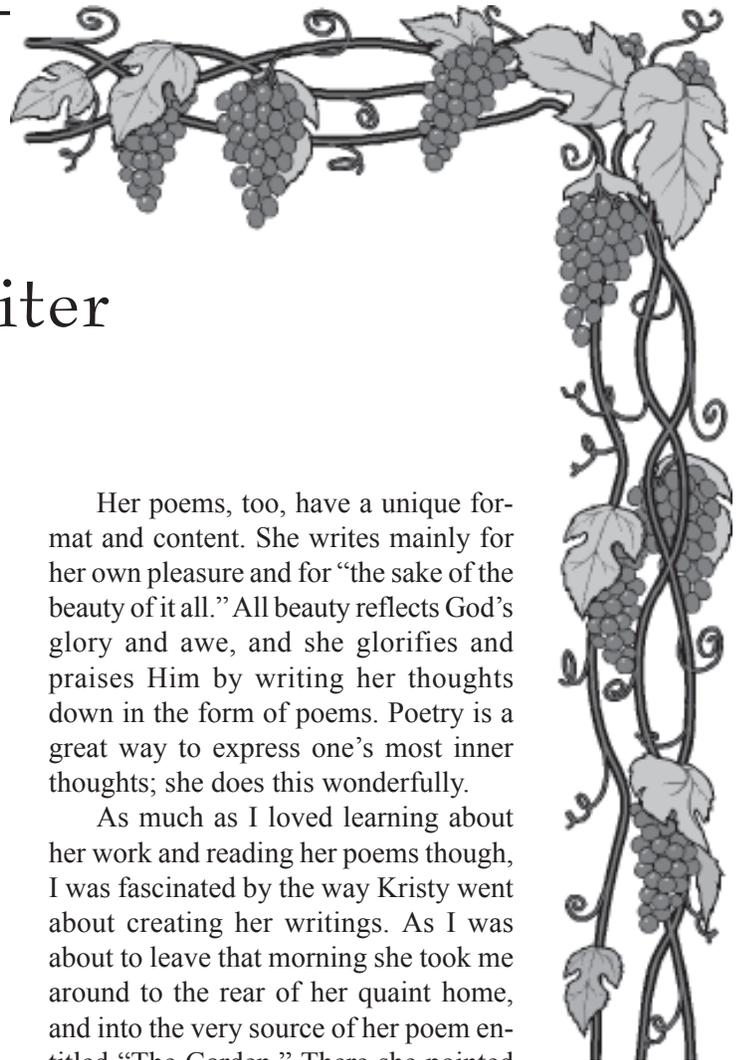
Now then, if these honorable “everyone” want to do something that I, you, your parents, or church does not feel comfortable with, is it not clear that I, you, your parents, and the church are not seeing it properly or just plain wrong? Can’t we trust their judgment? Are they not governed by the same principles we are? They have no disagreements among themselves. They must be right. It is ridiculous for me not to go along with them.

I trust that you see the logical weakness of this argument. We must understand that even those whom we trust and admire can not be the sole standard for right or wrong; for even our best works are as filthy rags. We must never lose sight of God’s Word which is the only standard of right and wrong. You must never do things just because others do it. If you feel uncomfortable, it is because you feel guilty before God on the basis of His Word living in your heart. If you try to quiet these thoughts with the idea that everybody does it, then you sin against your own conscience. Instead of listening to “everybody” you must go to the Word of God. What does God say? Your friends in the Lord will be glad to listen to God with you.

The false logic is easily overlooked, however, because the argument immediately stirs up sinful pride by threatening it. Satan used the same tactic when he approached Eve and said “hath God said?” Did God really say it? Do you really think that is wrong? Does it not look good in your eyes? Everybody does it, so do you really think it is wrong? If you really do think it is wrong, you know everyone will think you are a bit silly. You don’t want to look silly, do you? The argument “everybody does it” puts you on the spot. One’s pride is deliberately put at stake. Either you cave in to save your pride and sin against your conscience, or you stand fast on your convictions rooted in God’s word and risk wounding your pride. Pride blows smoke into your eyes so you can’t see the truth. If you use the argument, then you are putting your parents, peers, or fellow member in the church in a position where he or she will either look foolish in the eyes of men, or sin against his own conscience. This must never be done within the body of believers. The argument is the ultimate cheap-shot of spiritual cowards.

Instead of using the argument “everyone does it” we must be ready to listen to the struggle one may have with doing what you want to do. If we know our parents will object, then we ought to take seriously their wisdom and discuss the problem. If we discover that a peer or fellow member of the church objects, we must resolve the problem together on the basis of Scripture. We ought to seek friends who respect our spiritual life, and we ought to be friends who are willing to listen.

Do not fall when confronted with the argument “everyone does it.” Stand firm. Don’t listen to the argument and think you have to believe that “everyone” is doing it in good conscience. Don’t let the smoke blind your vision. If you listen, you will fall, just like Adam and Eve. Let the argument stir up righteous anger against the “everyone.” Be bold to state your objections. Make them answer for what they want to do. You can and must do this by faith. Fear your God. Cling to Him and refuse to let go in order to rescue your pride. Pray for the strength to honor God with boldness. ❖



A Beautiful Writer

by Tamara DeMeester

The morning dawned bright and cheerful, and later, as we sat on her porch swing amid the gay hues of various flowers, sipping our raspberry-chocolate coffee, and relishing the taste of dainty waffles smothered in a rich strawberry glaze, I could not help but wonder at the amazing woman who sat beside me. With every comment she made, Kristy displayed to me the inner beauty that made her such an incredibly fascinating woman. And although it was my intent that morning to interview her on her writing skills and habits, I became increasingly interested in her as a person.

Kristy is a wonderful artist, a rather new, though aspiring writer, a simple home keeper, a gardener, and a loving and patient wife and mother. Although she is all of these, she makes time for each, never allowing the less important to crowd those things of greater value and instead, uses each individual role to beautifully compliment the others. And that is what makes her such an intriguing writer. She is interesting not only in what she writes, but even more so, in the way she creates her work.

Though just beginning now to research and examine the lives and writing styles of our authors, such as Jane Austin, the romantic though realistic English writer of the late eighteenth century, Kristy has already developed and been recognized for the beautiful simplicity of her work. Amidst her circle of friends she is known for her inspiring poems, and she has recently become known as the author of several short children's stories that have been published in a small religious magazine.

Kristy loves to write, but according to her, it is most enjoyable to write when one knows that her writing serves a very important purpose. Her writings for the children are a means of Biblical and therefore, ethical instruction and motivation. In these stories she made it a point to begin with the lesson of Bible text, and then she fits the story around that point, thus emphasizing the importance of the quoted message.

Her poems, too, have a unique format and content. She writes mainly for her own pleasure and for "the sake of the beauty of it all." All beauty reflects God's glory and awe, and she glorifies and praises Him by writing her thoughts down in the form of poems. Poetry is a great way to express one's most inner thoughts; she does this wonderfully.

As much as I loved learning about her work and reading her poems though, I was fascinated by the way Kristy went about creating her writings. As I was about to leave that morning she took me around to the rear of her quaint home, and into the very source of her poem entitled "The Garden." There she pointed out to me the roses, pansies, and lavender that grace the verses of her poem. I can just picture her now, perched on the little, white-washed, wooden bench just off the brick pathway of the herb garden, musing on the garden's beauty and penciling in her graceful lines.

She mentioned that the success of her work depends primarily on her environment and the way it affects her mood. "It is awfully difficult to write in the winter when you're making a summer story," she smiled, but she also said that she writes best when she is in a comfortable, yet solitary place. Sometimes she retreats to her garden to write, and other times she gets up late at night and writes in the complete silence and glowing lamp-light of her living room. All too often, though, she finds it impossible to discover a time or place to write. "But then some days are just totally uninspirational," she shrugged.

Inspiration is the key that unlocks the door to one's mind. Some days, Kristy relies on the smell of a summer's breeze. Sometimes she listens to soft classical music, while at other times she merely depends on the rules of

art to help her create a poem or story. She said that the principles of art and writing are about the same, but one can put her imagination into a story. As an art major, she is an accomplished artist and thoroughly enjoys her work, but she feels that art has its limitations. "They say that a picture is worth a thousand words...but that's about it," she laughed. She feels that she can express her feelings more completely in a literary work.

Writing has become the chief, most complete means of communication down through the centuries, but it is

through her paintings, stories, poem, inspirations, and her everyday life, that Kristy expresses herself. In this way she shares her inner beauty with others and gives of herself in a common, though totally unique way. She is a writer like those who have gone before her, but she is a writer of *her* life, of *her* fascinating beauty. ❖

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

Gem of the Month

Jesus is Born

One night on the hills of Judea
As shepherds watched over their sheep,
A messenger came from Jehovah
While 'round them the world was asleep.
Jesus is born!
Was the message he brought:
He whom God's people
Through ages had sought.

The shepherds, exceedingly frightened,
Were comforted now with these words,
And hastened to see this great wonder,
Leaving their flocks and their herds.
Jesus is born—
In a manger He lay;
Jesus, our Savior,
The Light and the Way.

Our hearts too rejoice with the shepherds
As we ponder the joyful event:
The blessing of His incarnation—
'Twas for us that the Savior was sent!
Jesus is born!
Our salvation's assured!
Wonder of God
In Christ Jesus secured.

Thelma Westra

Walking in Darkness

by Rev. Richard Moore

Question #26

Just one small question: In one of your replies last week to a question, you indicated that no young believer or old saint should stay up past midnight. You further claimed that no good comes out of this time frame. Could you elaborate on that a bit more, as it relates to God's Word?

Answer # 26

First of all as we answer this question, we may note that the point I made formerly was a passing remark that it would be better if any saint would not stay up past midnight. I also said that it is not a time when good comes to pass, and the idea is that usually when one is out after midnight he or she is in danger of involving oneself in activities that shall not serve the glory of God, but usually the pleasures of the flesh, in one way or other.

Now of course this is not always the case. A person may be working the night shift in a factory, or hospital and of needs be up after midnight, and could very well be serving the glory of God in his or her labor. It may be that one with a family chooses to drive a long distance through the night, because it is easier for the children to make the trip. And I am sure we could find many other legitimate examples of a proper staying up through the late night hours.

But clearly these are exceptions. My remarks have to do with the fact that we ought to be properly preparing for the next day of labor or activity so that we can serve the Lord with all of our energy, by getting a good night's rest. The late night time is obviously given to us for rest. The Scripture abounds with this truth.

However, more to the point I was concerned with the sanctified activity of the saint, young or old. And then we ought to acknowledge that it is not good for us to be spending the wee hours of the night in various activities. Realizing that most of the activities we might engage in during these hours are in the service of sin. That is true whether we are on a late night date sitting in a car with our girl friend or boy friend, or sitting in a business establishment that is still open at that time of night, usually a bar or tavern, etc.

The reason that the late night is dangerous to the saint is set forth in principle by many Scriptures, we

examine very briefly a few. The principle is seen when one chooses to seek out his activities in the darkness, the Proverbs say in Proverbs 2:13-14 those "Who leave the paths of uprightness, to walk in the ways of darkness" are really those "who rejoice to do evil, and delight in the frowardness of the wicked." Now I understand that darkness in this text is speaking of spiritual departure, but this is done because darkness is a picture in Scripture of such spiritual departure.

The Holy writer says, in Ecclesiastes 2:14 that "The wise man's eyes {are} in his head; but the fool walketh in darkness:" The sum of the matter is that the Scripture repeatedly speaks of darkness in association with foolishness, sin and evil. We see this also in the words of our Lord as He addresses us in Luke 12:35 "Then Jesus said unto them, Yet a little while is the light with you. Walk while ye have the light, lest darkness come upon you: for he that walketh in darkness knoweth not whither he goeth." And in one other example and in this text we again see the principle idea set forth that God's children are of the day and speaks of a contrast between the day and night. In I Thessalonians 5:5-8 "Ye are all the children of light, and the children of the day: we are not of the night, nor of darkness. Therefore let us not sleep, as {do} others; but let us watch and be sober. For they that sleep sleep in the night; and they that be drunken are drunken in the night. But let us, who are of the day, be sober, putting on the breastplate of faith and love; and for an helmet, the hope of salvation."

In the last text it is striking that we are called upon to be spiritually alert, and spiritually sober, it is very difficult to do this and to be this in the late hours of the night. Our physical strength and alertness not only becomes impaired in the late night, but you may be sure that our spiritual strength and sobriety shall wane in the late hours of the night. In this we place ourselves close to the fire, and too often we shall be burned.

For our spiritual welfare we ought to be very careful when it comes to the hours that we keep. There is plenty of time during the day and evening to serve the Lord in our activities.

Remember to write your questions to me at revmo@mtc1.mtcnet.net Also feel free to write follow up questions.

Her Neighborly Love

By J.P. de Klerk

Franny could not credit her senses that it had ever happened before that the whole family was together at home for lunch. But it was immensely pleasant around the kitchen table, the five of them: father, mother, Otto, Martin and Franny. Mother served pea soup with pieces of bacon in it. That was the very thing for the first day with snow of the season.

The city of Leeuwarden (capital of the Dutch province of Friesland) was suddenly confronted with heavy falls of snow and a stinging cold wind. The weatherman of the radio had said that there were already some traffic accidents and jams in the area. Franny could not even see the houses at the opposite of the street anymore, because of all the snowflakes which passed by the window.

Franny had one-month holidays, because the offices of the firm she worked for were under construction, which had something to do with a merger of two big companies.

Her brothers, older than she was, had a lot to talk about the outlook for a skating-match on the canals, if the frost continued. Father asked, "Are your skates not due for grinding?"

"Yes Dad, tonight I will have a look in the attic to see in what condition they are," answered Otto.

Mother asked Franny whether she was going out later on.

"Yes, Mum," Franny said, "I want to mail some letters and cards, which I have written this morning."

"Well, would you be kind enough to order our old-fashioned Christmas cake again, from the confectioner?"

"Sure, Mum. We cannot do without him, can we?" said Franny, and they winked at each other.

The De Vink family was not rich, but they managed, thank God. Father had had a severe accident several years ago, when he was yet a bus driver, and he still had problems with his right leg and his back. Mother had asthma, which was especially unpleasant when it was moist weather. But she was always contented and happy as a



child of the Lord. Cheerfully she endured disappointments in life.

Every Saturday they would eat fish from a corner shop; they all loved herring, mackerel, plaice and haddock. That was their only luxury once a week.

* * *

After Franny had made the part of the street in front of the house free of snow, she did some sprinkling of salt and sand on the concrete tiles. Then she went to the post office and the confectioner. On her way back she noticed, that the show window of the toy shop was filled up with Christmas trimmings and a small electric train went around in circles.

But in a corner her eyes caught a notice on white cardboard, which said in defective characters:

CLOSING DOWN SALE.

Urgently needed shop girl.

There was no Christmas tree behind it, but a lot of balls of fine glass, reflecting the people and the snow outside.

Franny knew that the owners were an elderly married couple and she wondered why they suddenly wanted to close shop. Since early childhood she often gazed at all the toys behind the thick glass, especially the dolls of all kinds and sizes, but never before she had realized that there would come a day that the shop no longer would be there, that these people would be gone.

Suddenly she noticed that between the green and the trimmings there was a face; the old lady looked at her and she pointed with a finger at the white cardboard. Franny smiled, but asked herself, would God expect her to go inside and lend a helping hand, as a shop girl? Were these old people important to God? She had plans for the month of December. Would she have to sacrifice them?

Franny went, and the lady walked with her through the shop to the living room. She said, "My husband, working bookkeeping."

Franny saw a tall man with white hair and a short beard, sitting on a swivel chair with fine woodcarving, behind a big roll-top desk. He stood up and he exchanged quickly a few words in Chinese with his wife. Then he stretched out his hand and said, "Welcome, young lady. I am Deng Liu and my wife is Dorothy Liu."

"I am Franny de Vink. I am willing to help in the shop this month."

"Please, sit at that comfortable chair there."

Dorothy went back to the shop.

"I will greatly appreciate your help. Look, our problem started all of a sudden with this letter from the Town Hall," explained Mr. Liu. He gave her a letter, in which he was told, that all the shops on his side of the street had to be closed before the end of the year, because they had to be demolished to make place for the construction of an office building of the Council.

It gave Franny a fright.

"But if they pull all this down, they don't say where you can go to. Is there any other place available?"

"Good question," said Mr. Liu and sighed deeply. "Miss de Vink, I simply adopt an attitude of waiting. I am convinced our Heavenly Father will provide what is best for us, and part of His plans. I have had a visit of a

man, who asked me whether I wanted to buy a house in a new flat building, high above a traffic tunnel, but I was shocked when I heard how expensive that is nowadays. We always made just enough money to stay alive with our shop! Well, yesterday night the minister of our church came and he has completed all kinds of forms for us, for the Social Welfare people. Well, we have the Dutch nationality, but we have no children or any other relatives alive. Perhaps we will soon die ourselves, when we have no longer a shop to look after. It will be so strange. Do you understand what I mean? Some people nowadays act like robots, without feelings, but we are ordinary people, of flesh and blood. But, I should not complain, since you have come along."

He pointed to a small table with an old book in leather.

"That is our Bible in classic Mandarin Chinese. We got it when we married in 1949, before we had to flee for the Communists."

Franny felt a lump in her throat and nodded. She noticed that he walked with difficulty.

"Don't you worry," he said, "because my legs are of wood. Look, I have made this for the shop window. It says that everything is reduced fifty percent. Don't you think that will attract a lot of people? Yes, you will get a busy time in our shop. Not afraid, Franny?"

She laughed. "I have a month holiday. I find it a challenge to do this."

His eyes lighted up and he smiled.

"Now tell me, Mister Liu, how is it in the shop, are the prices mentioned on every article?"

"Yes, but you will see that there is also a long list hanging on the wall, in alphabetical order. You will have to split up these prices yourself, because I don't have the time, to do that. I hope a lot of people will come to buy all the goods. If they don't, it will be a big loss."

"Are you worried about the grim winter weather? It could be worse. I think word of mouth will seal the success of your sale. And after all the Lord is in control. You know that."

"True, but my mood changes each time. It is such a strange experience. This shop became my own blood, sweat and tears."

"What about all those Christmas decorations, which look so fragile?"

"Oh, these balls, they are sold in little boxes of carton."

"Have you never been burgled?"

“No, thank God. I am not insured against that. Everything is expensive enough. After the bills are paid every month, only about thirty percent is left for food and household articles.”

“Yes, Dad said also something like that lately. He believes we are heading for a big depression. I don’t know.”

Her eyes went quickly over the old art objects from China on the mantel shelf, and the small so called palace lamps of gilded wood and silk, framed old drawings of people and houses in a distant past, small vases of porcelain, and so on.

“Yes, Franny”, said Mr. Liu, “these are souvenirs of the past we can not forget.”

* * *

At home, she quickly changed her clothes. She choose a simple white woolen dress without a collar. She was wearing a raincoat with a detachable lining over it against the snow showers. Mother was gladly surprised that Franny had decided to help the old people in the toy shop

In the meantime it had become very busy there. It looked like a beehive with a buzzing swarm of bees coming from all directions. The fifty percent discount seemed to be irresistible.

With some difficulty Franny got inside and she heard talking and laughing with each time warning words from Mrs. Liu. “Look at it and put down”. She was obviously afraid that something would break amidst the crowd.

A young woman came to Franny, as soon as she had put away her raincoat, “Miss, can I get a battery with this fire engine?” Franny looked in the box of the toy and pointed at a tiny transparent compartment at the side, and there it was. “O, sorry, I had not noticed that”, said the customer. “Would you be so kind to put a fine piece of paper around this gift?”

“Sure, madam,” said Franny.

But Mrs. Liu took quickly over and stretched out a hand, while she said, “You give me, I have papers. You pay, yes?”

Franny smiled. A small boy plucked her by the sleeve. “I want to buy that little buffer stop for the electric train of my brother, but it hangs there, too high above my head.” She gave it to him and he handed her the exact money. She did not need to wrap it, he said.

A man with a colorful icecap on his head gave a plastic box with draught pieces to Franny and asked, “Miss, do you know the price of this, because it seems the sticker has come off.”

So, she went to the list on the wall, with the heavy breathing of the man behind her back. A young girl with a doll got in her way, and she asked her to wait a moment. Out of the corner of the eye, she saw Mrs. Liu putting a rope around three boxes with Christmas decorations. At the back of the shop Mr. Liu was talking with a lady who was interested in a wooden warehouse with a tackle. She found the price on the list and told it to the man with the icecap. Other people followed. It was going on and on. Franny found it exciting.

A grandfather and a little boy wanted to know how a steam engine did work that they had discovered in the shop window. Franny quickly dusted it with a piece of soft cloth. “It’s simple,” she explained. “My brothers have one. Here at the top you screw this off, put clean water in it till there, so you leave a small part empty for security reasons. Now, under it is the burner, open it and fill it with methylated spirit, carefully, then close it well, turn the wick up, just a little bit, make it damp and you can light it. When the water boils, the steam whistle will go and you can use that small driving belt to connect with whatever you want next to it; you see you have enough choice. But the whole thing is rather expensive.”

She had barely finished, or a lady came with a complaint about a doll, with an eye that refused to close, and a girl could not find the key of an artificial mouse, and two boys started a fight because they wanted the same toy truck.

Outside it snowed again. Mr. Liu put all the lamps on he had in the shop, and checked the central heating.

A man in a check suit gave Franny a big box with an electric train, like the one in the shop window, and asked to wrap it for him with a knot of ribbons on top. She managed to do it with the help of Mrs. Liu. There was a roll of festive paper of double width hanging on a pole next to the cash for that purpose. He whispered in Franny’s ear, “I don’t want the fifty percent reduction. I know what is going on here. Poor people.”

A young girl with a white woolen shawl showed Franny a small new Bible, gilt-edged and said, “There are three of them, with fitting empty boxes, behind the teddy bears. No price tags. Are they also for sale?”

Franny asked Mrs. Liu, who turned around and looked at the girl with a softened look. Then she said, “Very good, take them, no money.”

Suddenly Franny saw in the corridor behind the shop a little boy playing with two tractors, and she asked him, “Where is your mother?” He bowed his head and seemed shocked by that question. He drove with the tractors over

her feet and mumbled, “Mummy is in heaven. But Daddy is in the shop with Henry.”

A big boy with a fur cap on his head came and took the tractors away. He said, “Come here. I have found something else for you. Dad can not afford these expensive toys.” He put them back on a shelf and apologized to Franny.

A toddler, red-cheeked, gripped her left hand and pulled her to a small, wooden wheelbarrow, next to which stood his mother, who said, “Sorry, Miss, but I cannot get him away from this. I want to buy it, if you could help me to get it to the door.”

Franny laughed: “Union is strength, Madam. Together we will overcome this problem.”

By the time that it became six o’clock, it was obvious that the door could not yet be closed because of the constant arrival of more and more customers, who came now from all over Leeuwarden.

Franny made a phone call to her parents and asked if they didn’t mind that she hang on till the last one had left. They agreed. Mr. Liu gave her quickly some cookies. The people around them were in a festive mood. Mrs. Liu received praise for the beautiful wrapping she did; she said she liked the sound of revelry she had never heard before in the shop.

It was close to eight o’clock when it became quiet and Mr. Liu locked the door. He made a phone call to a Chinese takeout and ordered three extra big “loempia’s” (spring rolls) with chicken. A boy would bring them.

Mrs. Liu gave Franny a kiss and said, “I am so happy you came to us.”

They looked round in the shop and there were clearly empty places here and there on the shelves, which would be filled up for the next day. There was yet enough in store for that exercise.

They ate in the kitchen, where Mr. Liu thanked God for His blessings and Mrs. Liu read a chapter from the old Bible from China.

Franny was tired but quite happy when she came home and told all about her experiences in the shop. Otto and Martin decided that they would clean the street before their house every morning as long as there would come a fresh layer of snow every day. Mother would provide salt and father some ash from the stove in the kitchen, against ice. The weather forecast was not encouraging.

Franny went early to bed so that she could be back in time in the shop the next morning. She felt she had to be responsible and realistic, willing to help her Chinese friends till the last day they needed her.

* * *

Before nine o’clock she was back at work.

Before the first customers came in, Mister Liu told her that he and his wife had noticed that she was doing such a skillful job. Then he hesitated a moment and said that they would like so much to go to the Church the first Christmas Day. They had alienated former friends and knew nobody who could go with them.

Franny made a telephone call to Rev. Theun Hoff of the Liberated Reformed Noorder Church at the Grote Kerkstreet. He was very kind and helpful, knew someone with a big car who would be willing to come and pick the Lius up (which was important because of the problem Mr. Liu had with his legs). The Lius were delighted.

In the Church there would also be a special chair at his disposal, which the sexton would take from the vestry.

* * *

Before Christmas the shop was sold out. Mrs. Liu let a curtain down behind the empty shop window.

Mr. Liu wanted to give Franny money for her work, but she refused and asked him to give that to the poor relief board of the Noorder Church. She had seen the apartment Rev. Hoff had found for the Lius. It was at the Groeneweg and had three rooms at the corner of the street. Franny’s parents and brothers would lend a helping hand with the removal.

* * *

In the Church, Franny was there with her family and the Lius in between them. Mrs. Liu had told her that the mother of her husband had been a Dutch girl, but her mother had come from Korea.

She worried a bit over the future, without the shop, and Franny saw that she stared in front of her with an expression of melancholy on her face. But she knew the melody of the first song Rev. Hoff mentioned, who stood at the high beautifully carved pulpit.

A men’s choir sang some well-known Christmas hymns.

The sexton counted 647 visitors. With emotion they all listened when Rev. Hoff was reading the famous words from Luke, about the angel who spoke to the shepherds about not being afraid, because he brought them such a wonderful message. It became a morning never to be forgotten. ❖

J.P. de Klerk is an author and journalist from the Protestant Reformed Church in New Zealand.

Psalter 350— Devotion to the Church

by Beth DeVries

Many are the Psalter numbers that ring dear to our hearts, and the more we sing them the more precious they become. *Psalter* number 350 has become special for me because it reminds me of my friends and what an encouragement they are. The first stanza calls us to God's temple, not alone but with our friends. We should long to meet our friends both in church and at church functions so that we may build each other up to live a life glorifying to God. The last line of this stanza always strikes me because we do not often times have willing feet to go to God's house whether on the Sabbath or during the week, but communion with God and friends makes us eager to go to Zion.

We often think of God's house as a beautiful building but are reminded in the second and third stanzas that it is not the place that is beautiful but the gathering of God's people. Though we be ugly sinners God has redeemed and made us lovely in the blood of Christ.

As we meet to worship God may we never forget that it is to praise and glorify His name. When we hear God's word proclaimed it is one of the means He uses to

show us how to live closer to him and to know His will for our lives. We should seek to hear the preaching as it is necessary for our salvation as Romans 10:14-15 states.

The fourth stanza reminds us how precious is the peace that abounds in our churches. There are many times in the history of the church when discord reigns. May we find a solace in meeting in God's temple and feel the safety of His walls for human walls will not save us. The world around us becomes more turbulent, yet may we pray that God's truth shall stand forever.

Our covenant friends and family are so dear to us that may we remember them in our prayers. Those that seek to serve God will strive to see that the truth of God's sovereign grace will keep His people faithful to Him. May we ever seek to maintain the unity and truth of the church by God's grace alone. ❖

350 Devotion to the Church
PSALM 122 L. M. ILLA Lowell Mason

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The Song of Zion

by Chester Hunter

A Psalter-Psalm Devotional of Praise to Our Sovereign Covenant God

December 1—Read Psalm 39

Psalm 39:1 People of God, do we watch our tongues at all times? This seems to be the theme of this Psalm. David, in this first verse, seems to take an impossible task upon himself. This is a task that we must undertake as well. It seems to be that one of the identifying marks of the age we live in is to use our tongues in a sinful way. David wants to be careful when he is around the wicked. What about us? Do we watch the words of our mouth when we are around the wicked? Can the wicked tell that we are different by what we say and especially by what we don't say? Like David we must watch our tongues and not use them to sin against our God. Sing Psalters 104:1 and 105:1.

December 2—Read Luke 1:5-20

Psalm 39:2 In the passage we read for today, we are reminded that Christmas is coming. What does that mean for us? It is not in our natures to just keep quiet, but if we did what would be our thoughts? David kept quiet for awhile. He spoke neither good or evil. He thought that this would be good for him. In doing this he could not escape knowing his sins and miseries. Zacharias also kept quiet for awhile; though his quietness was put upon him by God for the sin of unbelief. He did not believe God's word about a son and he became deaf and dumb for nine long months. I think his sorrow was stirred as well as he realized his folly in not believing that with God nothing is impossible. What about us? Do we see our sin? Do we realize our need for a savior even during this time of the year? Let us be quiet for awhile and ponder these things. Sing Psalters 104:2 and 105:3.

December 3—Read Luke 1:59-80

Psalm 39:3 While being quiet, David had time to think of things. Zacharias did as well. When their silence was ended, they had the same reaction, They had to speak. We have Zacharias's thoughts in writing for us to read as we did today. Notice the adoration which he gives to God. I am sure that David had the same fire burning in him. As he thought on many things, he knew this—that all things speak of God's glory and he must as well. How about us? Do we see that the glory of God is to be found all around us? As we work, whether with our hands or with our minds, do we see that God must be glorified? In the world of nature around us God has given to us many testimonies of His glory. Do we see them and react to them? Let us think on these things and praise God "from whom all blessing flow." Sing Psalter 105:3.

December 4—Read Job 4:12-21

Psalm 39:4 Young people, do you know how physically frail you are? Do you know that compared to much of God's creation, you do not amount to much? Look at the mountains as they stand as monuments to God's greatness and power. How do you measure up? Compare your life span with creation; you are nothing but a breath. Sometimes youth thinks himself invincible. Most of us have had occasion to be brought face to face with the truth that God may take a youth's life at any time. David makes the request of God that he does in this verse because David knew his own sinful nature. David's nature, and ours, likes to boast in how great we are and how we will never come to harm. Our times are in God's hands, and we must never forget it. Only God is immortal. Let us think on this truth, and see how it affects our lives. Sing Psalters 104:3, 105:4 and 107:1.

December 5—Read Isaiah 64:1-8

Psalm 39:5 David continues the thought of yesterday's verse. It is the last part to which I call your attention. The word vanity in Scripture means emptiness or nothingness. Do you think the sports stars of today's world use these words? Do you think those men who desecrate the Sabbath and then claim to give God glory for their victories would conclude that man in his best state is nothing? Should the child of God elevate these men with the glory that we give them? Look at our walls and closets? How many Sabbath breakers adorn those walls and the clothes we wear? Do we forget that even man in his best state is vanity? Let us ponder these things and look at our lives and see if we need to make changes. Sing Psalters 104:4, 105:5, and 107:2

December 6—Read Psalm 39

Psalm 39:6 Man is constantly building monuments to his greatness. Look at the streets, buildings, companies around you. How many of them are named after some man? What does it mean? If the man is alive, it may cause him to fall into the sin of pride, if he hasn't already. If he is in heaven, he probably wishes that these things would not bear his name because he realizes that all glory must be given to God. If he is in hell, he knows nothing at all except the terrible torment his sin has brought on him. If we are busy in this life making much money, do we realize that after we die we don't have it anymore. David saw this truth and so did Solomon. They realized that making fame and fortune accounts for nothing in God's eyes. We must think on these things and ask God to give us

the proper perspective on our lives. Let us do that as we prepare to enter His house of worship tomorrow. Sing Psalters 104:5 and 105:6.

December 7—Read Joel 3:9-17

Psalm 39:7 It is the Sabbath, God's day of rest. It is a day to stop our worldly labors and rejoice in the day that God has given us to glorify Him. Our verse today is fitting for this purpose. For what do we wait? Are we waiting for the Lord to take us to the eternal Sabbath in heaven whether that be by death or by the end of all things? Are we waiting for Him to show us His way in our lives. We must wait for the Lord. David gives to us the reason in the last part of this verse. We must wait for Him because He only is our hope and salvation. There is nothing else in which we can hope and expect it to come to pass. Use this day well to ponder these things, people of God. Parents, speak of these things to your children and young people. Young people, is God your hope? Do you have anything else to wait for? Sing Psalters 104:6 and 106:1.

December 8—Read Daniel 9:16-19

Psalm 39:8 David realizes that it is only by the way of forgiveness from sin that he could have any hope. Daniel, while in the hands of his captors, realizes the same thing. Daniel also realizes that it is because of Israel's sin that they are in such a state. He also knows that only by confession and forgiveness will they be delivered from captivity. People of God, do you realize this truth? Does the fact of confession and forgiveness ring in your ears daily? Are we willing to confess our sins before God? If we won't, He will bring chastisement upon us until we confess this truth. Sin is no laughing matter. It must be forgiven, and it can only be forgiven by our Father in heaven. Keep us from sin, O Lord and lead us in right paths. Sing Psalters 104:7 and 106:2.

December 9—Read Job 2:1-13

Psalm 39:9 Job was stricken by Satan with God's permission. Job goes to the ash pile to mourn his distress and wonder why this affliction was upon him. After all wasn't he the man who was "a perfect and upright man, one that feareth God, and escheweth evil?" How could this happen to him. He sacrificed daily for himself and his children. Why was this happening to him? Eventually it was revealed to Job that this was God's doing and was for his profit. Do we realize this? When calamities come, do we realize that it is the hand of God upon us for our profit? Or do we lash out at those around us, or against the world, or even against God? We must be silent and know that God does all things for the good of them that love him as Paul teaches us in Romans 8:28. Sing Psalter 104:7.

December 10—Read Proverbs 3:1-12

Psalm 39:10 In yesterday's meditation we saw that affliction in this life may be chastisement from our heavenly Father who knows what is good for us. Does David seem to be too bold to make the request of today's verse? Does he know better than God? Can we tell God that we have suffered enough, and it is time to stop? The answer, of course, is no, but David does it because he knows that God is a God of mercy. He has experienced the mercy of God in the past and he knows that God will hear his prayer. Remember that he confessed his sin. This is necessary. There will be no mercy from God without confession. We, too, by God's grace through Christ can pray to have God's strokes taken from us. We, too, have tasted of God's mercies which are great. God will hear our prayers and answer them in His grace. Sing Psalter 106:2.

December 11—Read Ecclesiastes 2:1-11

Psalm 39:11 If you watch a moth through its whole life cycle, you would discover that its beauty is truly fleeting. This is the picture of us and our beauty gotten by sin when it is chastised by the touchstone of God's justice. What we think to be beautiful in and about ourselves is nothing and emptiness before the hand of Almighty God. This is not something that happens to a few in this life; our text tells us that every man is vanity. Solomon who learned the principle from his father, tells us that "all is vanity and vexation of spirit." How do we respond to these truths? Are we puffed up with pride and try to hide behind our man-made beauty? Or do we with humbleness of heart bow before God and say, "O God how great thou art!?" Sing Psalters 104:8 and 106:3.

December 12—Read Hebrews 13:10-21

Psalm 39:12 People of God, do you confess with David that you are a stranger here on this earth? As you shop for Christmas presents does that truth show? Or are we convinced that this world is our home and we need to have as many of its delights as we can? David was living in Jerusalem. God had given him peace from his enemies. No foreign nation threatened his home; yet he knew that this earth was not his abiding place. He knew that this was still the "valley of the shadow of death." Because he knew this, he wept and prayed for God to deliver him. Is this our desire, people of God? Do we wish to leave this place and go to heaven? Are we praying "Thy kingdom come" in all sincerity? This world is not our home; we look for that city "whose builder and maker is God. We can do that through our Lord Jesus Christ who lived in this world and died for His people. Let these be our thoughts as we look to celebrate His birth. Sing Psalters 104:9, 106:4-5, and 107:3-4.

December 13—Read Psalm 39

Psalm 39:13 David asked God to spare him before death took him. David must have wanted to do more in God's kingdom. He must have felt that his work was not finished yet. Is our work in the kingdom finished on this earth? Are we doing any work in the kingdom? Do we have any work to do in the kingdom of Christ? We most certainly have kingdom work to do in this life! While all are not ministers, or elders, or deacons, all have been given work to do. Each saint from the youngest child to the eldest white-headed grandfather has a calling to do in this life. We must seek out that calling by the study of God's word and by prayer. Then we must carry out that calling. We may not shirk our responsibility. We may not bury our talent in the sand as the unprofitable servant did. We must all glorify Him and do the work He has given us. Let us pray for the grace to do this while we have breath. Sing Psalter 104:10 and 106:6.

December 14—Read Psalm 40:1-5

Psalm 40:1 To me this Psalm is a continuation of the previous one. David finds the answer to his prayer of Psalm 39. He does this by waiting patiently. Do we wait patiently? Young people, are you too eager to grow up and do adult activities instead of waiting for God's time? Parents, are you impatient concerning God's will for your life and the life of your family? Aged saints, is it hard for you to wait for your path into glory? We must wait with patience. Why? Because our times are in God's hands. It is He that has ordained the carrying out of our life. If we try to run ahead of Him, like Jacob, we will meet with disastrous results. Wait upon the Lord and He will bring His way to pass for us. Sing Psalter 108:1 and 111:1.

December 15—Read Isaiah 12

Psalm 40:2 In waiting for Jehovah, David received the blessedness of salvation. As Christmas approaches, are we thinking about salvation's blessings? Do we remember that the babe in the manger becomes the accursed one on the cross. Christ died the painful death of the cross to lift us out of the horrible pit of sin. He died that our feet might be established upon the rock of His truths and that our goings might be established in this life. Are we thinking of these things? Are we looking to commemorate these things on Christmas? Salvation is a wonderful gift. It is appropriate to think of how we received it at this time of the year. Let us look beyond the world's supposed joy and look to the joy of our salvation. Sing Psalms 108:2.

December 16—Read Revelation 14:1-7

Psalm 40:3a One of the blessings of salvation is the blessing of a new song in our hearts. In principle we have that song now. In glory we will have it in perfection. Are we singing that new song daily? Are our songs those songs in which God delights? Or are our songs those which magnify man by exulting over his sin like the song of Lamech? Or are our songs the insipid songs of Arminianism which make Jesus a weak and ineffectual savior dependent on our help? What are we singing, people of God? Is it the songs that cause angels to weep with joy or sadness? Sing Psalms 108:3 and 111:2.

December 17—Read Matthew 5:12-16

Psalm 40:3b The second part of this verse gives the reason why God calls us to sing His new song. This reason is that He uses our feeble efforts to show others His ways. This is the testimony of our Heidelberg Catechism's exposition about good works. This is the testimony of Scripture. He has set us as lights in this world to glorify His name and that He may use us to bring others to Christ. Notice this is much different from those who sing about "this little light of *mine*, I'm going to let it shine." This is the truth of the gospel of salvation by grace alone. How do you see the Christ of Christmas? Is He the sovereign one who causes all to happen to His will? If so, then sing the songs of Zion so that His name might be glorified and His church gathered. Sing Psalms 108:4 and 111:2.

December 18—Read Isaiah 26:1-8

Psalm 40:4 The redeemed child of God is the happy (blessed) child of God. He is happy because he trusts in Jehovah and bases the activities of his life upon the Word of God. As he lives in this world he does not bow to peer pressure and do what pride would have him do. He does not worry about the in crowd. He delights in obeying the law of God. He does not give into deceit and lying, but rather he speaks the truth and is truthful in all of his activities. People of God of all ages, are you blessed ones? Are you happy? If not, upon whom do you put your trust? If it is placed upon man and his ways, you will never be happy in this life or the life to come. Sing Psalms 108:5 and 111:2.

December 19—Read Revelation 15

Psalm 40:5a People of God, do we stop and consider the works of God's hand around us? Do we look at nature through the "spectacles of faith" and see that our God is a great and wonderful God? As we consider the incarnation, do we truly understand the greatness of this thought of God on our behalf? God gives us the wonders of creation so that we can in a small measure understand Him. We must be constantly looking for those things which teach us of His greatness. We must do it in things large and small. We must do

it in things pleasant and unpleasant. Why? Because our gracious God has given them to us for our benefit to His glory. Sing Psalter 108:6.

December 20—Read Isaiah 55:6-13

Psalm 40:5b Yesterday we spoke of God's works and their wonderfulness. The rest of the verse looks at His thoughts and their greatness. Do we really realize how great God is? Do we confess this in our daily lives? It is easy and tempting for us to bring God down to our level. We do this when we pray in a wrong manner. We do this when we use His names or attributes in vain. Our speech must reflect God's greatness. This must be evident in every prayer that we utter. God is great; there is none other. How do we pray to Him—in reverence or as an equal? God is great; there is none other. Do we take His name in vain daily as we talk to our friends and companions. Let us pray for the grace to glorify our great God in our speech each and every day of our lives. Sing Psalms 108:7 and 111:3.

December 21—Read Psalm 40:6-10

Psalm 40:6 Once more we prepare to enter God's house, the Lord willing. What is our attitude as we go to church? Are we doing it grudgingly or out of custom or habit? Is it our delight to attend the House of our God? In today's verse the Psalmist realizes that it is not the outward act of worship which is required of our God; it is the obedient inward act of submitting ourselves before His throne of grace. In every part of the worship service today, we must worship in spirit and in truth. We must sing from the heart and not just from the lips. Our prayers must be holy and reverent to our God. We must attend faithfully to the preaching and hear the word of him who speaks, "Thus saith the Lord." In doing these things, we will please our heavenly Father and worship Him in a right way. Sing Psalms 109:1 and 111:4.

December 22—Read John 1:1-14

Psalm 40:7 We have in the next few verses evidence of the type of Christ that David was. In this verse we see Christ's obedience to His Father in coming to this earth for our salvation. It is good for us to consider this thought at this time of the year. Why do we celebrate Christmas? For what reason do we attend many programs? Why do many ministers preach a "Christmas series"? Why do we join together to sing the Christmas carols that so many of us love. Are we celebrating the birth of Him who came to this earth to die on the cross for our sin? Is the source of our joy the cross? This is what Christmas is all about! It is little of a baby in a manger; it is much of Christ dying on the cross! Christ was obedient to His Father for our sake. Thanks be to God for this gift. Sing Psalter 109:2.

December 23—Read Hebrews 10:1-10

Psalm 40:8 Today's reading is the New Testament proof of the Old Testament prophecy. The Jewish Christians had to be convinced that Christ had come, and that He had died on the cross. The writer of Hebrews turns to the today's texts for such proof. Do we delight to do the will of God no matter what it means for our earthly life? That's what Christ did. He humbled himself and suffered the shameful and painful death of the cross in obedience to His Father. In doing so He confesses that God's law was in His heart? What about us? Is God's law in our hearts daily. Is it a delight to do the will of the Father? Do we knowingly pray, "Thy will be done?" Let us do this in our hearts and by our actions not only now but every day. Sing Psalter 111:4.

December 24—Read Luke 4:16-27

Psalm 40:9 During Jesus's life on earth He preached often in the synagogues of Galilee. On one occasion early in His ministry He preached in Nazareth, his hometown. He preached knowing that his audience would not like what He said. He told them that they were sinners and that He was the only way of salvation. He did not mince words; He did not hide part of the truth being afraid of the consequences. Is this our experience? Are we bold to speak the name of Christ before those who would mock us or even do us hurt. Can we say with confidence, "I have not refrained my lips, O Lord, thou knowest"? Let us pray for the grace to proclaim God's name and worth to the people with whom we come into contact. Sing Psalter 109:3.

December 25—Read Luke 2:8-20

Psalm 40:10 The passage that we read for today is the familiar Christmas story as experienced by the shepherds. Young people and children, what is your speech going to be full of in the next few days? Are you only going to talk about the presents you received? Or are you going to speak of the great salvation that you have been given through the way of the baby in the manger? The shepherds went home praising God and telling all that they saw about the Christ. Are we witnessing to those around us? Are we praising God for His goodness toward us? Do we faithfully proclaim the loving-kindness shown to us by God? That is what our verse for today says that we must do. Let us pray for the grace to be truly Christ-like and spread the word of our salvation through the blood of Christ. Sing Psalters 109:4 and 112:1.

December 26—Read Psalm 40:11-17

Psalm 40:11 When we are bold enough to proclaim the greatness of Jehovah, we find that we are nothing in His sight. We find that of ourselves there is no good in us. Therefore we, too, must pray the prayer of verse 11. We must ask God for mercies to sustain us in our daily lives. The only way we can go through this life, no matter what our age, is by the lovingkindness and truth of God. Notice that truth is part of our assurance. It is by way of knowledge of God and His ways that we are sustained by Him. Are you studying, people of God, to learn that truth? Are your Bibles well-worn from seeking to find God's truths? Are you a familiar fixture in the society room discussing the Word of God? By doing these things God will give you blessed assurance of your salvation, not because of your worth but of His grace and mercy. Sing Psalters 110:1 and 112:2.

December 27—Read Job 14:14-22

Psalm 40:12 We all should be familiar with the hardships of Job. Job's faith was tested by God in order to bring him to the realization that God was God. David, too, felt the hand of God upon him and felt that there was little worth in him. What about us? Do we realize that the hardships of this life are for our profit? Do we know that God is refining us by His holy fire making us pure? Sometimes our heart is heavy because of the sadnesses of this life. Many of God's saints have had this experience. It is the way that God uses to bring us to glory so that He receives the glory. As we look to the end of this year and the beginning of the next, let us see that our God cares for us even when all appears to be dark and gloomy. Sing Psalter 110:1 and 2.

December 28—Read Jonah 2

Psalm 40:13 Yesterday we saw the depths of despair to which David was plunged by God. Today we see his response. Instead of

complaining or moaning about bad luck, he immediately turns to God and asks for deliverance. Notice that he asks God to make haste to deliver him. He does not want to wait and see if he can pull himself up by his own bootstraps. David knows that if he tries to escape his trials in his own strength, he will fail. This should be our reaction to the trials of this life. We should run to God in prayer and ask for help and deliverance. As we close another year and look at the uncertainty which may arise in the future, let us rely upon our heavenly Father to give to us what we need. Sing Psalter 110:2

December 29—Read Genesis 11:1-9

Psalm 40:14-15 Part of David's trials in this life were the wicked which were against him. We see here again David as a type of Christ. Just as David was afflicted by Saul and other reprobate so Christ was afflicted by Satan and his army. David reacted to persecution in the only way a child of God should. He does not retaliate. He does not take up the sword against them. He does not call them names. Rather, he prays this imprecatory prayer to God. He asked that God remove his enemies from him. He does this because he knows that God will protect Him. He knows that God never lets one of His saints be afflicted by Satan. The truth of preservation of the saints is a glorious truth that we have. Through it we have the confidence to pray to God for help and protection. Sing Psalter 110:2.

December 30—Read Philippians 4:1-10

Psalm 40:16 From the congregation of the wicked David goes to the congregation of the righteous. David now prays for them. He asked that the elect can feel the goodness of God's presence. He prays that they may rejoice in that goodness. As we look back over the year past, are we able to say, "The Lord be magnified"? Are we glad in the way that Jehovah has led us for the past year? Do we see His hand in our way and are ready to rejoice and to be glad in that way? Do we love the salvation that God has wrought for us by His Son's death on the cross? Young people, how about you? Is the way God has led you through church and catechism pleasing to you? Are you happy about the means of grace He has provided for you? Let us rejoice in the God of our salvation and thank Him for His many blessings. Sing Psalters 110:3 and 112:3.

December 31—Read Isaiah 41:10-20

Psalm 40:17 David closes this Psalm on a personal note. He confesses that he is poor and needy. This is not a physical financial statement. This is a spiritual financial statement. He examines his life and sees his deficiencies. He realizes that he is nothing and has nothing to offer. In spite of his condition, David knows that God thinks about him. From past experience he knows that God will help him and deliver him from all his woes. As we stand at the end of another year, let us take stock of our spiritual financial condition. Do we have anything to offer to God? Or do we need God to help and deliver us from all our woes? Let us truly make the last part of this Psalm part of our prayer at the year's end. Make no tarrying, O God, deliver Thy people from this vale of tears and take us to our eternal home in heaven. Sing Psalters 110:3 and 112:4.

[Y]—Youth

Prayer Candy

by Tom Bergman

“Let’s pray,” began the preacher. All eyes were softly shut and all heads were bowed in reverence to God, but one child was enough to break the stillness. He blared out his signal that all was not right. His father quickly arose to take the youngster to the back of church. He sobbed all the way out of the cool sanctuary.

“Glorious Lord and Father in heaven,” the preacher addressed the Almighty.

All ears tried to shut out the child’s distracting cries like they might try to tune a radio dial to a precise frequency such that the desired broadcast comes in clearly while the interference is blocked out. Trying to concentrate on a worshipful prayer was a difficult task indeed. Leah noted to herself how distracting were the cries.

“We praise Thee for Thy name alone is great,” said the preacher.

Leah reached to her side and fumbled blindly for her purse. It was a small, emerald purse that had come with the summer dress that had set her back about fifty dollars. She reached into it now and found the roll of peppermints.

“Thou who caredst for Thy people with undeserved mercy...” the preacher continued.

Jeremy slipped his hand into his pocket. Besides the wadded dollar bills and a fuzzy lintball, he located a couple of Jolly Ranchers. Managing to rustle one out, he proceeded to open it.

Leah tore the paper from the top of her new roll of peppermints. She peeled enough paper back to loosen the first piece of candy and popped it into her other hand.

Back into her shiny, green purse went the rest of the roll. The fastener gave out a muffled snap as the purse cover closed.

Jeremy noisily wrinkled open the wrapper from his hard candy. After fussing with that sticky, crinkly nui-

sance, he jammed the wrapper back into his left pocket. He had to straighten out his leg to fit his hand into the pocket. In doing so, he mistakenly gave the pew ahead of him a muted kick.

Sometimes we are guilty of this. We make sure to get our prayer candy before joining the congregational prayer. Although the wrappers can be as distracting to others as a sobbing little one, we work on obtaining that piece of candy. Perhaps it can be done noiselessly if it is a roll of Mentos handled without a sound. No crinkling noises to disturb anyone. No whisper to the next person, “Want one?” It can be very quiet; but it can be very noisy, too.

In either case, we cheat ourselves of proper attention to the prayer. We dismiss ourselves from a very important segment of the worship service. We miss the opening words of praise and adoration to God! We miss the lauding of His great and worthy name. It becomes a willful attempt to postpone joining the prayer until a few moments into it.

Brushing aside the congregational prayer in order to first have some candy is similar to our lives as young people. In church, we know we should close our eyes and bow our heads, but we put off the important matters so that we can first enjoy the sweet pleasures of candy. Of course, we do not completely turn our backs on the worship. We fully intend to join the prayer- but not right away. In life, we know what is expected of the mature Christian. We intend to be obedient by a godly walk, but we feel as if we have to have some time to ourselves first. We can still be Christians even if we don’t make confession of faith right away. We can still be members of the Church even if we don’t give up all the fun things to be had. There is plenty of time to repent and be a

Christian. It will not hurt to have a little “candy” first. So go our minds by nature.

Prayer candy is dating solely for fun. We make ourselves believe that going out with questionable characters is not so bad. Dating becomes a game- for all the wrong reasons.

“It’s no big deal; it’s nothing serious.”

“So what if he’s ——? That does not make him a bad person.”

“We just went to a party with some friends.”

“There was nothing else to do. Besides, it is not like I’m going to marry her.

“I am just getting to know her a little. She is just so sweet- and hot!”

“It is too soon to talk about church. I hardly know her!”

A young man may intend to marry a good, Christian woman when the time is right, but presently just wants to have a good time. A young woman may desire a godly-minded husband, but may first seek out a few years of innocent fun and carefree dating. This is prayer candy. How many times do we justify unlawful pleasures to our consciences? We know what the Christian walk is about, but we reach for a little “candy” first.

Prayer candy is underage drinking and drunkenness. Call them what you will, but drinking parties are drinking parties and should be listed under “pleasures of sin for a season.” Participating (even in the smallest way) in this unlawful, dangerous entertainment is similar to dating-for-fun. We justify it in our minds for a number of reasons. First of all, many others drink. Secondly, lots of teenagers drink. Perhaps the silent voice in the background tells us, “I’m not drunk. I am not going to hell because of one drink. It doesn’t hurt anything.” The most infectious line of reasoning is knowing that drinking is wrong, but cleverly suppressing that twinge of conscience. All in all, it is the same story. We know how we should live, but we have that prayer candy first. We even go so far as to tell ourselves that when we are older, we will not do these things. When it comes time to assume roles in the church, we will put away these pleasures. But now is the time of innocence, a time to be merry. Prayer candy first.

Prayer candy is what happens on the couch when your boyfriend or girlfriend is over and the parents are gone. We know what a godly walk requires. We know. No one has to ask, “How far is too far?” We know. And yet the temptations are there. The temptations are strong, the couch is comfortable, the embrace better still, and

we are all too willing to postpone the godly life for a little piece of prayer candy.

The Lord Jesus has timely words of instruction for us. Instead of arguing that this is normal teenage behavior, we are to obey His command, “Follow me” (Luke 9:59). Instead of replying, “Lord, I will follow thee, but let me first go”...and do this or do that, we take in His instruction, “No man, having put his hand to the plough, and looking back, is fit for the kingdom of God.”

Prayer candy is bad for two reasons. First of all, it rots your teeth. The more candy you have, the more permanent damage you do to your teeth. The more teenage evils you indulge in, the more permanent damage you do to yourself. Do not think that you will set these aside with ease someday.

Secondly, prayer candy is distracting- not only for you, but for those around you. The way you live is an example to all who observe. Your friends may see you drinking and do it themselves. Your friends may see you dating carelessly and test the waters themselves.

Now is not the time for the pleasures of sin. Now is the time for repentance. *Later is too late.* Do not always reach impulsively for that candy. The time to serve Him is now. The time to be sanctified in Him is now. Follow Him now.

“...And above all these things, we thank Thee for the sacrifice of Thine only begotten Son,” the preacher was still praying.

Leah placed the peppermint on her tongue. She picked up the prayer at this point and settled in to join with the other hearts in congregational prayer.

“...Be with all those who are distracted by the sinful pleasures of this world,” the preacher requested.

Jeremy tossed the sweet watermelon candy into his mouth and bent forward to rest his elbows on his knees. He too joined in. ❖

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

He Spake As A Dragon

by Jay Martz

Great Iron teeth which rip and devour. A fearsome beast which knows no mercy. Who can stand before this creature. The dead lay strewn in the wake of him. What makes the creature so frightening is that it looks like a lamb. Its deceptive nature is most fearful, for who would be afraid of a lamb? Was not our Savior called the Lamb of God? Yes, this beast is so awful because no one suspects that it is capable of such mayhem. Do we look like a lamb but speak

If we are honest with
ourselves we all are
guilty of Dragon
speech at times.

as a dragon? Do our tongues roam about the earth, seeking whom they may devour?

If we are honest with ourselves, we all are guilty of dragon speech at times. Who of us has not used our mouth for cruelty? I know that I have. The Psalmist said “Behold they belch out with their mouth: swords are in their lips: for who say they, doth hear?” How often have we spoken maliciously about a brother when he was not around? Do we not say in our heart, who doth hear? Do we forget that we are called to love our brother? Must

we be reminded that the Lord is at hand? When we seek to portray our neighbor in a poor light, we sin. An hypocrite with his mouth destroyeth his neighbor: but through knowledge shall the just be delivered. Let us not be called hypocrites. How grievous it is to take the name of Christ in vain. We do that when we say “I am a Christian”, and then speak evil of our neighbor.

We also speak as a dragon when we use vulgar language. Paul tells us; let no filthy communication proceed out of your mouths. I can not help but believe that the apostle refers to (among other things) speech that is not of an upright character, primarily the use of four letter words and remarks which degrade God’s gift of marital sexual intimacy, or enflame others to lust. Some may disagree with the inclusion of all four letter words under filthy communication. Perhaps if we examine what Paul said to the Ephesians about foolish talking not to be named among the saints, we can see that four letter words are at best foolish talking. Is there not any other word that could describe the meaning of one of the cherished four letter words? Of course there is. Far more importantly, these words are viewed by Christian and infidel alike to be something Christ and His people do not speak. These words offend others, which should keep us from their use if for no other reason. Do we use words that we would never say in the presence of our mother? Would we fear to use certain terms in a conversation with a minister? Jesus said: “O generation of vipers, how can ye, being evil, speak good things? For out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaketh.” If we dare testify before God and men that Christ has begun a work of purity in our lives, then let our speech be pure.

How are we to use our tongues, that we may speak not as a dragon, but as a lamb? Lord’s Day 40, Answer

107 states that God forbids envy, hatred, and anger, he commands us to love our neighbor as ourselves; to show patience, peace, meekness, mercy, and all kindness, towards him, and prevent his hurt as much as in us lies; and that we do good, even to our enemies. Notice we are to prevent the hurt of our neighbor, which would cause us to help him, not hurt him. We should not expose the weaknesses of our neighbor, but rather to seek to help him. If we can give good counsel to him, we must love him by doing this. If we do not feel that we can help him, we surely have no reason to add to his burden. I feel that we often tell ourselves that we speak about our neighbor, because we are concerned about him. This may be true, sometimes even necessary, but most of the time we do not aid him by sharing information about him with others. Far too often what happens is, we bring him down in the eyes of those whom we speak to. This is not showing love to our brother. Is it not your experience, that you hear something negative about a person, and when you meet the person, you already have made judgements about him. We must be extremely careful in this area.

It is very important that we not only do not speak evil of our neighbor, but that we speak well of him. Our calling is to love our neighbor, and we show we love him by speaking kindly of him. We should see strong points in our neighbor rather than always seeing his weaknesses. Let us encourage our brothers when they do well. We ought to see the good in our brothers, seeing them as bearers of the Holy Spirit. Who would be so foolish as to speak evil of a child of God? Who shall lay anything to the charge of God's elect? Even if our neighbor is not a brother in Christ, we must still apply this principle. We should be careful that we do not look down with pride on our unbelieving neighbor, "for who maketh thee to differ from another? And what hast thou that thou didst not receive?" As God's people we must love even our own enemies, and one way we do this is by speaking well of them.

Not only must we speak well of our neighbor, but we are also called to defend his name. Yes, when we are in the presence of others we may not sit by quietly, and passively partake of their sins. We must stop such hurtful talk, because we are to love our neighbor, but also because we love those who are sinning by speaking evil. Open rebuke is better than secret love. We are called to defend the names of others. Would we not want others to defend ours? Have no fellowship with the unfruitful works of darkness, but rather reprove them. This is the

word of God, partake not in the sins of others, but rather speak words of righteousness.

Finally, let us speak words that are pure and true. We should speak more of our wonderful and merciful Savior that we serve. It is He that has destroyed the Dragon. It is He that has sent His Holy Spirit into our hearts, that we might crucify those fleshly lusts, those desires to speak after the manner of the Dragon. We must let our light shine forth, and how better than to have our Redeemers name upon our lips. Our words should be as the balm of Gilead, healing and soothing. We should be in the habit of saying the Lord willing when we make plans to do something. We often get caught up in the world, and forget that it is God that will decide what we do and when we will do it. Using this phrase will help us remember God in our busy daily lives. We should speak words of edification, words that encourage our brother. We should also be mindful of our idle words that tend to grumbling, and murmuring. These are not good, for we should rejoice in all things. Let us make a heroic effort to use language that we would not be afraid to use in the presence of Jesus Christ our Lord. "Know ye not that ye are the temple of God, and that the Spirit of God dwelleth in you?"

May God give us grace to honor Him with our speech. ❖

Jay is a member of Peace Protestant Reformed Church in Lansing, Illinois.

Interview with Rev. C. Hanko

Part #3: First Church in the 1950's

Question:

You had been warned that there were some problems at First Church. How did you find things when you arrived?

C. Hanko:

I found that it wasn't too bad among the Elders, but especially among the Deacons there was a lot of opposition. The Deacons were simply fed up with being Protestant Reformed. It wasn't because of the doctrine so much. It was that they were fed up with Hoeksema. They wanted to get rid of Hoeksema. That was the main thing. This was all prior to the issue of conditional theology.

Question:

How did the events of 1953 unfold?

C. Hanko:

Rev. DeWolf came to me on a Thursday morning, and he asked if I thought he could say, "God promises to every one of you that if you believe you will be saved."

I said, "No, you can't say that. It's not Reformed."

"I think it is," he said. "I think I can defend that."

I said, "You can try to defend it but it's not Reformed."

On Sunday night he was talking about our carrying Protestant Reformed on our coat lapel and thinking because we were Protestant Reformed we were going to heaven. "But I tell you," he said, "that God promises to everyone of you that if you believe you will be saved."

Well I was quite upset by it. In fact, it came like a thunderbolt. I didn't expect that. I had talked to him about *Concordia*,¹ that the men who wrote in it were talking about conditions; and he had said, "I want nothing to do with conditions, except the way they explain them. As long as they don't make faith a condition I'm with them."

Then these men came along with an article which said that faith is a condition, and he said, "Yes, I can go along with that too." That's really the only time I realized he was going in that direction.



Rev. Hoeksema called me. He wasn't at the service that night. He said, "I hear that Rev. DeWolf had a bad sermon." I said, "Well, let's call it borderline. Let's not call it bad right away." But the thing came to the consistory. We had a whole stack of protests at consistory. Rev. Hoeksema asked me to serve on the committee that would go over those protests.

Afterward he said to me, "Go easy won't you. I don't think it's as bad as some make it. Spare him." He really wanted to think the best of DeWolf. He did not want to think that DeWolf was going in a wrong direction.

We worked on the matter for a whole year and then while Rev. Hoeksema and I were both on vacation - we should never have taken vacation together—Rev. DeWolf managed to talk the consistory into dropping the whole business. So that was the end of the first statement, for the time being. We came back and we were quite surprised, of course, that that had happened. But he had a majority of the consistory so he could do that at the time.

Question:

What happened next?

C. Hanko:

Two weeks later he made the second statement, “Your act of conversion is a prerequisite to enter into the kingdom.” Then Rev. Hoeksema came up to me and said, “Now that’s it. I didn’t want to believe it, but now I have to.” There were all kinds of protests again, of course, but then we agreed with the protests, more than we did the first time. We wanted him to explain his first statement in a way that would take care of it. He never did, really. But then when the second statement came we knew that he was determined to go the wrong way.

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That’s when the matter went to Classis. In May of 1953 the case was before Classis and there was a majority report in favor of Rev. DeWolf and a minority report against him. Three ministers were the authors of the majority report and one said on the floor of Classis, “I can explain both of these statements of Rev. DeWolf in a Reformed way.”

While he was saying this, I was ready to get up and say that that wasn’t what Rev. DeWolf meant. But I didn’t have to do this because Rev. DeWolf himself got up and said, “You know very well that I don’t mean that.” That solved the problem. Then Classis immediately advised that he should apologize or be deposed.

The Consistory of First Church asked for an apology, but DeWolf asked for time to consider. What we should have done then was give him time but not allow him to preach, but we were too lenient. We allowed him the pulpit. And when he made an apology, he made it by saying that if the people didn’t understand him that was their fault, not his fault. I went home more disgusted than ever. That’s when the split came, too.

That was a bad time, a hard time. When you’re working with people that are strangers it’s not so bad, but when you are working with colleagues, your own brothers in the Lord, that’s hard. When they turn against you, you realize more how Jesus felt when everybody turned against Him.

Question:

How do you explain that all those ministers who had been trained by Rev. Hoeksema were willing to accept conditional theology?

C. Hanko:

The real problem with them was that the churches didn’t grow. We stayed small. These men had all anticipated that when they got out into the congregations that the congregations would grow, and that didn’t happen. First Church was big and a few others were growing, but for the main part the churches weren’t growing much, and they were quite disappointed, I think that had a lot to do with it. Then they saw an opportunity to take in these Liberated and they wanted to receive them with open arms.

Question:

What was the real issue of 1953, and in looking back some forty years later, do you think the split could have been avoided?

C. Hanko:

If we had not had a split in 1953 our churches would not be in existence today. Or if they would be, we would not have a right to our name. We would not be Protestant Reformed. Those men were determined not only to grow, but to grow at any cost. And they were going to sacrifice the truth to grow. I don’t think that was true of them all. But some were willing to sacrifice the truth for the sake of numbers. And I’m sure that if they had gotten their way, we would not be Protestant Reformed anymore. I’m sure too that if they had stayed in the church they would have deprived us of our heritage. I’m convinced to the depth of my soul that 1953 was necessary, and that if it hadn’t happened we wouldn’t have a right of existence and maybe we wouldn’t even exist.

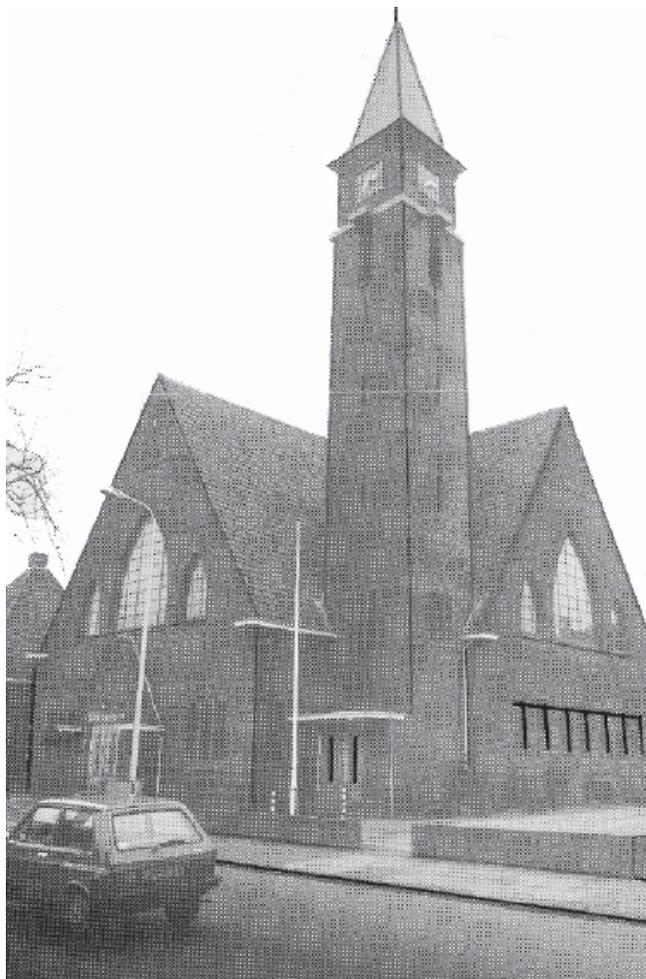
¹A second church paper, similar to the *Standard Bearer*, initiated during this period by the Protestant Reformed congregations in western United States; with writings predominantly by ministers who favored the idea of conditions in God’s Covenant with His people. ❖

Liberated Reformed Church in Ede

by J.P. de Klerk

The city of Ede, in The Netherlands (province Gelderland) is one of the biggest in the country. There are several Reformed Churches of different denominations. Amongst them, in the Northern part, this church of the Liberated Reformed Churches. There are many well preserved woods (a lot of tourism during the summer months), but also a lot of factories, farms with cattle, and a center for military training. Ede has a quiet past; there have never been fights about it. The city has in fact grown out of several villages, namely Bennekom, Ederveen, Harskamp, de Klomp, Lunteren, Otterlo, Veenendaal, Wekerom and several smaller settlements and castles. The first inhabitants in this area seem to have arrived in 1300. ❖

J.P. de Klerk is an author and journalist from the Protestant Reformed Church in New Zealand.



Minding Missions

Missions in Wales

by Daniel Kleyn

Toward the end of the three months that my wife and I recently spent in Covenant Protestant Reformed Church in Northern Ireland, we had the opportunity to accompany Rev. Ron Hanko on one of his missionary trips to Wales. As most of you know, Rev. Hanko has been making regular visits to Wales in order to pursue contacts with various individuals who are interested in the truths of God's Word as we have come to understand them in our Protestant Re-

formed Churches. These visits involve preaching, lecturing, leading Bible studies, and visiting with the interested individuals and families.

In writing about our recent visit to Wales, it is my hope that all of you will be able, first of all, to understand more clearly the nature of the work that is being done in Wales. This is important. Since the missionary labors being done in Wales are a work which we are doing as churches, it is good for each of us to be aware

of and to show an interest in what is being done. Then, too, we can pray more meaningfully for God's blessing on His people and on the work there.

Secondly, I hope that you all will appreciate more what God has given us as churches. While God's people in lands such as Wales are starving to receive sound, Reformed preaching and teaching, it seems at times that we can easily take for granted the heritage of the truth that God has given us and preserved for us.

The country of Wales is a part of what is known as Great Britain. Located to the west of England, Wales borders England on its north, south and east. The west coast of Wales borders the Irish Sea. It is a land which has a beauty of its own — being rugged and mountainous, and receiving a good quantity of rain which keeps things beautifully green.

Concerning our mission work there, there are especially two small groups of saints with whom Rev. Hanko has contact. The one group is in the north of Wales, near the city of Bangor. This group consists of one or two families, and a few individuals. Recently a few others have also shown interest and have attended the worship services, lectures, and Bible studies when Rev. Hanko is there. This group worships together every Sunday in the home of one of the families.

One interesting aspect of the work in North Wales is that the people, in many ways, have retained their Welsh identity and culture. They have done so especially through keeping the Welsh language. In fact, in many schools the children are educated in Welsh. Most people, however, are able to speak both Welsh and English, but this is not always the case. Because of this it may be profitable for a missionary to know this language.

The other group with whom Rev. Hanko has been working is in South Wales, in the area of the city of Swansea. There are in this area especially two families with whom Rev. Hanko has had contact for a number of years. During the recent visits of Rev. Hanko, others have also been coming along and showing interest in the truth. An example of this interest is the fact that one man, who recently attended one of the lectures, took with him close to half of the pamphlets and literature that Rev. Hanko had brought along for distribution. This man lived in one of the valleys just north of Swansea and was eager to pass the literature around to other members of the church of which he is a member.

Perhaps you are wondering whether these two groups, the one in the north and the other in the south of Wales, could get together, or at least meet together. What

makes this difficult is that it takes around six to seven hours to cover this distance on the small and often overcrowded roads.

It is important for us to remember a few things about the character of the work in Wales. One thing we must note is that the saints there feel rather isolated. The reason for this is not only the distances in miles from each other, but also the fact that religion (and especially a love for the Reformed faith) is all but dead and gone in Wales. There is barely any concern shown for the truth. This means that those with whom we have contact find it extremely difficult to find others who are of like faith—even within the few “conservative” churches of which they are members. Our work, therefore, involves bringing the Word, not to large groups of people, but to various individuals and families who are unhappy (and understandably so) with the state of things within the churches in Wales and are seriously considering leaving these churches. In many cases these people feel “cheated,” for now that they hear the faithful exposition of the truths of Scripture, they sense that in all their years they have been taught very little.

This has to be taken into account in the preaching and teaching that is done there. While we ourselves have been privileged to be taught the truths of the Reformed faith from childhood up, many of the saints within Wales have just begun, in the last few years, to hear of and to come to grips with these truths. And yet they show a keen interest which we often lack. It is obvious that they love the truth and have grown in their knowledge, not only through the preaching and teaching they have received through the missionary work we have been doing, but also through their own diligent study of the Word of God, and their own interest in reading Reformed literature.

One must not forget either the work that has been done in Wales (as also in other parts of the British Isles, including Northern Ireland) by the British Reformed Fellowship. This organization, not only through its publishing “The British Reformed Journal,” but also through its organizing conferences and lectures, has helped much in the spread of the Reformed faith in the British Isles. It has often been through the work of this organization that individuals have initially heard of the Protestant Reformed Churches and their labors in the British Isles.

It seems clear that the Lord has a work for us to do in both these areas of Wales. Although at this point the numbers in each area are still small, there is definitely a hunger after the truth by those with whom we have had

contact. It is certainly a great privilege to have this opportunity to bring the blessed gospel to God's people in this part of the world.

Through our contacts with and knowledge of such scattered saints in the British Isles, let us learn to appreciate more the fact that from week to week God has given and continues to give us the sound preaching of His Word and the blessing of fellowship with like-minded believers. May we thank Him for His faithful-

ness as we see that in the work of the seminary and in the blessings that we have in our churches. And may we never forget to pray for, and to help as much as the Lord enables us, those who do not have such blessings. ❖

Daniel is a member of Hope Protestant Reformed Church in Grand Rapids, Michigan and is a candidate for the ministry in the Protestant Reformed Churches.

Where We Stand

The Marks of the True Church (2)

by Aaron Cleveland

Knowing what the marks of the true Church are, the believer is "in duty bound" to join himself to this "holy congregation." This is the language of our Confession Of Faith as found in Article 28 where we read: We believe, since this holy congregation is an assembly of those who are saved, and that out of it there is no salvation, that no person of whatsoever state or condition he may be, ought to withdraw himself, to live in a separate state from it; but that all men are in duty bound to join and unite themselves with it. Upon reading this first section of Article 28, it is important to notice that the believer is to join himself to the true Church because apart from the Church and the preaching "there is no salvation." When we read further into the article, we find that the believer who joins himself to the true Church must submit himself to "the doctrine and discipline thereof"; the doctrine being the preaching, and the discipline being church discipline. The true Church will possess true doctrine and discipline.

It is evident that the believer joins himself to the true Church for one reason, the true preaching. Because the preaching of the Word of God is the "power of God unto salvation to every one that believeth," (Romans 1:16) he cannot separate himself from the preaching. Because it pleases God to save his people through the preaching (I Cor. 1:21), the believer must submit himself to the preaching.

The preaching of the Word of God is also referred to as the chief means of grace. By means of grace, we are referring to the means by which Christ bestows His grace upon His church. The chief means, preaching, serves to work and strengthen our faith. The sacraments, also means of grace, strengthen our faith as we hear the Word

Joining a different church or remaining a member in one's present church is decision which many would have us make, not on the basis of where the truth is found, but on the basis of where we may feel the most comfortable.

preached. When we separate ourselves from the preaching and sacraments, we separate ourselves from the means of grace.

There are two ways in which one can neglect the means of grace. First, these means can be ignored by not attending church at all. Secondly, the means can be ne-

glected by the attendance of a false or apostatizing church where the preaching is no longer pure and the sacraments are no longer properly administered. Both of these errors must be avoided by the sincere child of God.

Rather, the child of God must join himself to the true Church, which is “easily known and distinguished” (Article 29, Belgic Confession), and separate himself from the false and apostatizing churches. Joining a different church or remaining a member in one’s present church is decision which many would have us make, not on the basis of where the truth is found, but on the basis of where we may feel the most comfortable.

Most church-goers today do not choose a church based upon the marks of the true church. In fact, these marks are rather low on the list of considerations, if on the list at all. Sadly enough, many so-called Reformed adults and young people have chosen churches where “excitement, innovation, and activities” are found, rather than the “preaching, sacraments, and discipline.” A service devoted entirely to singing and special numbers is preferred to the preaching. Instead of sound catechism instruction and meaningful Bible studies, young people are encouraged to debate relevant current events, create drama skits, and participate in unedifying activities.

In fact, we ourselves may be tempted to join a church for these wrong reasons. Wouldn’t it be nice to have a worship service every now and again where we didn’t have to listen to a forty-five minute or hour long sermon? After all, what is wrong with one song service a month? They are very uplifting and exciting, and they take away from the monotony of the preaching twice every Sunday, month after month. Besides, it gives everyone in the congregation an opportunity to participate when normally they may not be able to. The children can present their number, and the young people their skit, and the choir can perform what they have practiced. The minister can have the night off.

Wouldn’t it also be nice if we didn’t have to go through that stuffy catechism instruction. There are so many better ways to learn. Isn’t the debate of issues much more exciting and practical? There is so much to learn through interaction with our peers. Besides, how does all that stale 400 year old doctrine help me live in today’s world anyway? The more entertaining activities, the better.

The justifications are endless, but all of them fail to reckon with God’s Word. “For whosoever shall call upon the name of the Lord shall be saved. How then shall they call on him in whom they have not believed? and how shall they believe in him (of) whom they have not heard?

and how shall they hear without a preacher?” (Romans 10:13, 14). God’s Word leaves no room for these silly excuses. We need the preaching of sound doctrine. We cannot do without it. We need thorough catechism instruction, which is a form of the preaching. We cannot forsake them for the shallow instruction that is so prevalent today and not be harmed spiritually.

If we do submit ourselves to sound preaching, which can only be found in the true Church, we will grow spiritually, for the gospel is the “food of the soul” for those who believe (Canons, Third & Fourth Heads, Art. 17). Through the preaching we are instructed, comforted, admonished, and warned. Through admonition, God’s grace is bestowed upon us (Art. 17).

If then, we are nourished through the preaching of the gospel, is it not extremely important to be found in a church where sound doctrine is preached? And if our nourishment is found in the preaching, does it not become apparent that every activity which replaces the preaching brings about nothing but spiritual starvation? That is why we are to seek the true Church, where we will be fed, and avoid and separate from the false and apostatizing churches, where stones are given instead of bread.

We must not become quick to make excuses for neglecting the preaching and discipline. Neither must we be deceived into thinking that God uses any other means than the preaching as His power unto salvation. It is the true preaching of the cross of Christ, and nothing less, which we must seek.

It is the true preaching which we must seek in the church we attend. If the truth is not found in the preaching of the church we attend, we are in duty bound to leave that church and join ourselves to a church where the truth is found. If we do attend a church where the truth is found, we must submit ourselves to the preaching and discipline of that church. When we “the more readily...perform our duty,” as the Canons puts it, “the more eminent usually is this blessing of God (His grace), working in us, and the more directly is His work advanced; to whom alone all the glory both of means, and of their saving fruit and efficacy is forever due. Amen.”



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

"LITTLE LIGHTS"

... let it shine!

by Connie Meyer

Piano Lesson (5)

"I can't wait until tomorrow!" said Lydia when she came home from school. "I just know they'll choose me!" She hurriedly set down her books and took off her coat.

"Wait-a-minute," said Mother. "Choose you for what?"

"They need someone to play a piano piece for the program next week, and both Sharon and I said we would be willing to do it. Now they have to decide which one of us will play the piece."

Nathan hung his coat next to Lydia's and said, "I think Sharon plays the piano better than you do."

Lydia ignored her brother's remark and went on, "I've been taking piano lessons longer than Sharon has, so I'm sure they'll choose me."

When Father came home, Lydia told him about the program. "And I'm sure I'll play the piano!" she concluded.

Father noticed that neither Mother nor Nathan were as enthused as Lydia was about it. "Well, we better wait and see," he said simply.

The next day Lydia came home from school in silence. Mother looked questioningly at Lydia and then at Nathan. Nathan said dryly, "Pride goeth before the fall."

Mother consoled Lydia. "Well, it must have been hard for them to decide between you both. I hope you took the decision well, though."

Lydia sighed. "At first I felt bad, but later on somehow I was able to tell Sharon that I was glad for her and that I was sure she would do a good job."

Mother gave Lydia a hug. "And I'm sure of something too. I'm sure God is pleased with you—and so am I!"

Without realizing it, Lydia learned the truth of Jesus' parable in Luke 14:7-11. Look up this passage for yourself.

By grace must we follow Christ's example of humility!

By grace will He bid us to His Wedding Feast in heaven! ❖



Connie is the mother of 5 children and attends Hope Protestant Reformed Church in Walker, Michigan.

Unscramble the words of the following verse:

O r f s r o o h w e e v l a x t t e h e
 _ _ _ _ _
 m e s h f i l l a h l s e b d e a b s a ; n a d
 _ _ _ _ _ ; _ _ _ _ _
 e h h a t t t h e l m h u b l e s f i h m
 _ _ _ _ _
 h a l l s e b t a x l e e d .
 _ _ _ _ _ .

Luke 14:11

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Church News

BAPTISMS

"He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved."

Mark 16:16

The sacrament of Holy Baptism was administered to:

Caitryn Mari, daughter of Mr. & Mrs. Cal Hassevoort—Byron Center, MI
Karin Michelle, daughter of Mr. & Mrs. Joe VanGelderens—Edmonton, Alberta
Kristen Renee, daughter of Mr. & Mrs. Doug Holstege—Georgetown, MI
Joshua Michael, son of Mr. & Mrs. Mike Moelker—Georgetown, MI
Melanie Elizabeth, daughter of Mr. & Mrs. Jeff Terpstra—Hope, MI
Wesley Steven, son of Mr. & Mrs. Steven VanDyke—Randolph, WI
Faith Lauren, daughter of Mr. & Mrs. Dan Poppema—Hull, IA
Rochelle Joy, daughter of Mr. & Mrs. Kimmy Kooiker—Hull, IA
Deana Joy, daughter of Mr. & Mrs. Craig Hoksbergen—Hull, IA
Megi Laine, daughter of Mr. & Mrs. Todd DeMeester—Southeast, MI
Dylan Casey, son of Mr. & Mrs. Rob Lubbers—Southeast, MI
Emmet Jon, son of Mr. & Mrs. Jonathan Langerak—Southwest, MI
Ryan Mark, son of Mr. & Mrs. Gord Schipper—Southwest, MI

CONFESSIONS OF FAITH

"...and with the mouth confession is made unto salvation."

Romans 10:10

Public profession of faith in our Lord Jesus

Christ was made by:

Leah VandenTop—Doon, IA
Brendan Looyenga—Faith, MI
Rachel Bertsch—Grace, MI
Cathy Daling—Grace, MI
Brian Kalsbeek—Hope, MI
Robert McClaury—Redlands, CA
Tim Schulz—Redlands, CA
Tressa Boverhof—Southwest, MI
Michael Kuiper—Southwest, MI

MARRIAGES *"...and they twain shall be one flesh."*

Matthew 19:5

United in the bonds of Holy Matrimony were:

Mr. Dan Bylsma and Miss Jean Dykstra—Faith, MI
Mr. Eric Dykstra and Miss Cara Engelsma—First, MI
Mr. Mark Lenting and Miss Bethanne Overway—Holland, MI
Mr. Jim Schimmel and Miss Stacey Haan—Hope, MI
Mr. John Kamps and Miss Laura Feenstra—Southwest, MI