
Beacon

September
1997

*Volume LVI
Number 8*

Lights





Pathfinder ... Pathfollowers

By John Huizenga

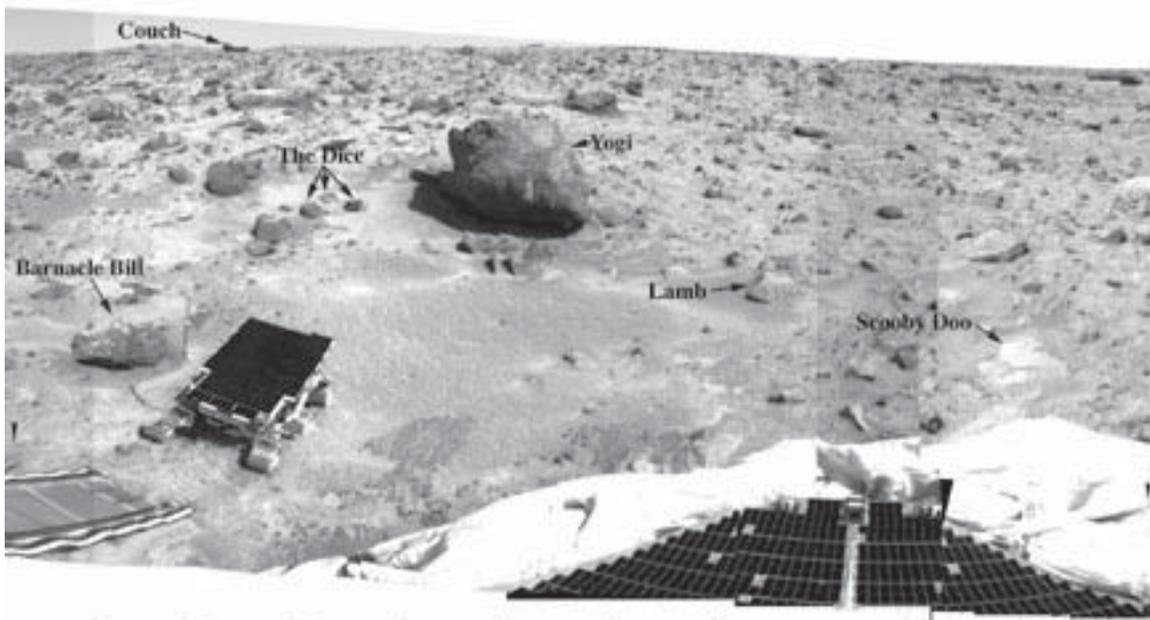
In December of 1996 a Delta II rocket roared from the Cape Canaveral Air Station carrying a spacecraft called "Pathfinder." Once the rocket had carried Pathfinder beyond the clutches of earth's gravity, it was released and sent on its mission to the planet Mars. Traveling at great speed, and watched closely by scientists with giant dish radio antennas, Pathfinder arrived at Mars in July of 1997. July 4 it fell toward the surface of Mars, its parachutes opened to slow its decent, and giant airbags filled up to cushion its landing on the alien landscape. Having come to its final destination after months of travel scientists instructed it to take a panoramic picture of its surroundings and sent out "Rover," a little car designed to drive around and investigate the soil and rocks of Mars. Since landing, Pathfinder has sent many pictures and loads of scientific data back to earth via radio signals.

What sort of path is Pathfinder trying to find? To where does the path lead? According to NASA, the immediate purpose of Pathfinder is to "demonstrate a simple, low-cost system, at fixed price for placing a science payload on the surface of Mars at 1/15 the Viking price tag." (Viking was a spacecraft sent to Mars 20 years ago.) Pathfinder's mission to Mars is only a part of the broader program of space exploration. The broader purpose of space exploration is to expand man's knowledge of the creation and discover ways to enhance human life. The path sought is a path of knowledge that will lead to a better life for man.

At bottom, Pathfinder is looking for a path that leads to a higher exaltation of man and final dominion over all. The knowledge and planning required to send a machine millions of miles and land safely on another planet is astounding. Newspapers reporting on the mission raised applause from millions around the world. What can be compared to the achievements of space explorers? The imaginations are further excited with ideas of sending man to Mars, creating an atmosphere suitable for sustaining life, and colonization of Mars. In pride, fallen man can only use the good gift of his mind to serve his



Photograph of Martian landscape taken by Pathfinder.



Photograph on Mars showing Rover going out to explore.

own desires. Under the control of Satan, man hopes to find the path to dominion over the universe, a path upon which antichrist hopes to ride to victory.

There is nothing wrong with a desire to explore and learn. Space exploration flashes new wonders of God's creation before the eyes of man every day, but deep in the heart of so much space exploration today is the glory of man. Thus, as it has been since the fall of Adam, we find man robbing the glory of God and boasting in himself. Instead of saying "look at the wonders of creation" they say, "look at what we are able to find." God's manifestation of Himself is turned into man's revelation of his own knowledge and skill. Though it is impossible to shield ones eyes from the manifestation of God in creation, sinful man has mastered the art of diverting his attention toward the satisfaction of his own desires. Space exploration has succeeded in gaining the admiration of multitudes because the technology needed to explore space is used in goods such as computers and faster cars. Natural man loves earthly riches.

Though hoards flock down the paths found by man, let us not be distracted from the Path revealed to us by God. Two thousand years ago God unveiled the Way to eternal life of fellowship with God. God, in sovereign control of all creation, moved a star of the heavens to guide the wisemen to a child Who is the very being of God with man. He revealed Himself as the Word of God. He conquered death, cleansed our sins to make us righteous before God, showed us the Path, and leads us every day by the preaching of His word and the power of His Spirit. The Path revealed by God is the way to eternal life with God. What foolishness it is to be distracted by the paths of men which lead to eternal destruction.

The Path revealed by God remains strong and pure today under the guidance of the Holy Spirit. God continues to move men who devote their lives to study the Path, develop the truths found in the Path, and lead God's people as the under-shepherds of Christ on the Path toward heaven. There are no secret detours to be discovered by man. God does not leave man to find the Path on his own. God does not require a fee to enter the Path. God sends out His messengers to find His people and lead them to the Path. They come because God frees them from the bondage of sin and gives them the desire and sight to walk in His Path by faith alone.

As we watch man explore and boast in himself, let us not forget that Christ reigns from the right hand of God. He has determined every move and achievement of man. God sent Pathfinder to Mars so that the world would see close up just one of the other worlds which He has created. The millions of dollars and hours spent by the most learned men in the world were spent to further the kingdom of Christ. The wonders being discovered by Pathfinder place praise in the lips of God's people for the Creator and make the ungodly even more without excuse.

Man in his foolishness refuses to follow the Path revealed by God. In foolishness he looks for his own paths. We are not pathfinders. The Path has been revealed. God has placed us on the Path. Be followers of the Path that leads to eternal life. Do not be distracted by the achievements of man as they seek their own paths. Be assured that Christ reigns over all things for you and for me. Christ makes the rockets and computers of man into the mere gravel upon which we walk on this earth toward our eternal reward in heaven. ❖

Fruitful Branches

Sophomore Role Model Interviews



Now and Then

by Kirk Karsemeyer

Many people can imagine what it was like a hundred years ago but how many can actually say, "I can tell you exactly what it was like a hundred years ago." Among the few that can is Jessica Grassmid who turned 100 on February 29, 1997.

Jessica was born of Peter and Susie Feenstra who were the first people of her family line, along with her grandpa, Pieter Feenstra, to immigrate from Arundem, Netherlands to America.

In America her parents bought a farm in Grand Rapids where they raised eleven children. "I grew up in a good christian home where we all worked together to make ends meet," said Jessica.

Growing up on the farm wasn't easy for Jessica and her family. "America at that time wasn't like it is today. We had no modern convenience like today. We made everything we owned and we raised everything we ate," said Jessica.

Today technology has made the world easier and more powerful in every aspect of life. "Through the hundred years I have been on this earth, I have seen the world change considerably in its inventions and technology. The world is slowly advancing its way to its own destruction," says Jessica.

There is something that Jessica has seen through her hundred years on the earth that amazes her more that the magnificent power of the world and its technology. "I have seen God's glory and power manifested on the earth throughout time, and this is the most magnificent thing anyone will ever see." ❖

Kirk is a student at Covenant Christian High School in Grand Rapids, Michigan.

Would Elsie Become a Model?

By J.P. de Klerk



She pushed the button of the electric doorbell next to the marble slain with the words Rinus van Diemen, fashion designer. She hoped her visit would not come at an inopportune moment. It was summer. A slant of wind from the seaside played with her hairs. The beautiful mansion was the third in the street that began at the esplanade.

The door swung open and a friendly smiling gentleman with white hair said, "Good afternoon, young lady. What can I do for you?"

Elsie Bennema swallowed her shyness away and said softly, "Mister van Diemen, I would like to become a model and I thought you could perhaps..."

"Ah! I recognize you! You are my neighbor's daughter from opposite the street. I saw you growing up over the years. You ran once almost under my car. Come in and follow your nose to the garden. We are busy with photographing a new collection; quite a few nice dresses."

"But, I only wanted..."

"No, the talking comes later, young lady. This is my business."

Elsie came in a big garden with many beautiful trees, shrubs and flowers. In the middle a shell-path, to a pond with brent-geese.

"Look, at my right hand Samuel Meijer with his camera on a tripod. That big white silk screen is filtering the sunlight. At my left hand Tina van Tricht, who is a good needlewoman; she takes care of it that everything fits exactly. Now, opposite us you see four girls in costume coats for the winter. We must always work half a year in advance. There are three other girls inside trying on other clothes," explained Mr. van Diemen.

Sam spoke to two models in front of some spruce-firs, "Lucy, put your right foot a bit forward. Yes, very good. Wilma, take that purse in your other hand. Fine. Now, pretend you have a gentle conversation with each other. I am going to make three pictures, one after the other."

"It is like this, that since two years I do not design much more myself, but I have agreements with others and make here a choice. This collection comes from Paris, tomorrow I have one from Vienna. Fashion still offers a brilliant career to talented people, but flooding of the market with cheap imports threatens to erode the

industry's capital base. At the end of the day all designers hope the public will be happy with what they see and buy a new winter wardrobe. Classic, timeless clothing has become desirable," told Mr. van Diemen.

"Do you sometimes make travels with the girls?" asked Elsie.

"Yes, but it depends how much the principals want me to spend. Besides professional models are not always available. They have contracts, binding them to certain dates. Some are booked long in advance."

It took an hour before the last pictures of that day were made and Mr. Van Diemen could go with Elsie to his studio. In the corridor she met Mrs. van Diemen, who shook hands with her. Elsie admired her long blue dress. In the studio Mr. van Diemen and she sat face to face in leather armchairs.

"Well, Miss Bennema, tell me, what do your parents think about becoming a model?"

Elsie hesitated a moment, gave herself a shake and said, "Well, now, my mother said it was up to me. My own father died when I was twelve years old. My mother remarried, but I have no contact with that man; we avoid each other.... I go to the Academy of design, learning how to make drawings for fashion magazines, but I don't feel at ease there, because you meet sometimes very strange people. I am disappointed, a bit confused."

"I know what you mean, Miss Bennema. That is a problem that models often complain about nowadays. Strange people spoil the fun even for models who have reached the top in their profession. They get offers, which they have to refuse, from nightclubs, and so much more. There is a world out there full of sin and tinsel, attractive girls are lured to; they have to be sure-footed. Elsie Bennema, to put it bluntly, take my advice, do not go further in this direction. I believe it would be irresponsible of me to help you to become a model. You would soon play with fire. But, if you are good in making fashion-drawings, right on the spot, during a show, yes, I would like to make use of your knowledge and pay you for it. That would be twice a year during a couple of weeks. Do you think, you know also enough of some foreign languages?"

Elsie looked surprised and nodded. "Yes, Mister van Diemen. They were my favorites at school."

"Excellent. My wife has been a teacher in languages and I am sure she is willing to help you if you want to freshen up your skills or fluency, before we make journeys abroad."

"That is very kind of you, Mister van Diemen... But don't you have a fulltime job for me?"

"Sorry, no, not at the moment. But, as always, the Lord knows what is good for us, what fits in His plans. You know that, don't you?"

"Yes, I do, but how... Are you a Christian?"

Mr. van Diemen laughed. "Elsie Bennema, from the day you were baptized I saw you often coming into the church. I watch upstairs from behind the organ, a bit further than the pulpit, but you never look in my direction."

"Oh, forgive me, I never thought about that."

"Don't worry. You probably also were unaware of the fact that a daughter of mine was with you at high school, but one class higher than you. She told me that you have once made a fine drawing of a wedding dress on a blackboard, and all the girls went to see it the following morning. You remember?"

"Yes, it is true. I was punished with cleaning up the classroom and when I was ready, I made that drawing and left the building."

Mr. van Diemen nodded thoughtful and said, "I wonder how it will go with you from here on, Elsie Bennema."

He got up, and so did Elsie.

"Sorry, I forgot to offer you tea. I have to improve my manners."

They walked to the door. At the doorstep he said, "I would like to see your drawings. Could you come on Monday and make some here in the garden?"

"Yes, Mister van Diemen. I will gladly do that."

Elsie fell in love with the young bookkeeper of Mr. van Diemen. They married the following year and started to live in a flat at the seaside. No, Elsie never became a model, but a happy mother of twins. ❖

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

All Things for Good?

By Curt Gritters

“Hello?”

“Hi, this is Chad, is Ryan there?”

“Yeah, just a minute please.”

After a halfway short conversation, Ryan Lang was convinced to jog over to Chad’s house a couple hundred yards down the road. Chad was the Reeves’ second son in a family of five. He just finished the first marking period of tenth grade, and was rather pleased at how high school was going. Although Ryan was yet a ninth grader, the two had been good friends for years. One strong bond between them was soccer. When they were old enough to play in the city’s AYSO league, soccer became an everyday event. When a practice or a game was not going on, the best friends were always in the back yard with a ball.

Now breathing hard, Ryan turned into the driveway of Chad’s house. Three minutes later, the black and white ball bounced from foot to foot. With each pass of the ball, the cleats, or rather the feet inside them, gained skill and experience. Their mouths drying out, a quick stop in the house refreshed them with a drink of cold apple cider and a doughnut. Returning outside to the fresh wind of the autumn day, piles of crisp leaves built up as rakes flew across the lawn.

The friends had a lot of fun with each other, and a winter passed without much notice. Coming home from work that summer, soccer once again prevailed as the number one thing to do. Now two high school students, the long time friends joined the school team. Struggling together through conditioning, Chad and Ryan developed their teamwork, and soon became high school level players. Chad’s license helped the pair to and from practices, and the much anticipated first game made the days go quite slowly. Three rows on the calendar later, Chad found himself in warm-up. Stretching out, passing, shooting, and drilling in pre-game warm-up was a familiar moment.

He loved the feel of it, and now Ryan was the figure his passes were aimed at.

Only after a hard workout did the team put a one on the scoreboard. Ryan’s practiced pass let Chad score the first of the season.

Entering the game once more with high hopes, Chad smiled at Ryan, as if he knew the game would turn out with similar results. The referee’s whistle was as sharp as a train’s, and the ball began moving. With 10:15 left in the 40 minute half, Ryan received the ball. What a chance! Chad sprinted down the field, but was surprised at the disturbing peacefulness. Expecting a pass, Chad turned to see his best friend on the ground. Suspecting severe heart problems, a helicopter was called to the scene. Ryan’s conditioned worsened and now his life became a concern. Chad’s fast car brought him to the hospital. Once he got there, he wished he hadn’t.

Chad cried...cried hard that rainy Saturday afternoon as he walked past the casket. He wasn’t too old to cry, Ryan died! The short speech at the funeral service was on Romans “And we know that all things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are the called according to His purpose.”

In bed that night Chad kept trying to find a comfortable position, and his mind kept white-water rafting through the past day’s events. Why did that have to happen so suddenly? And why to Ryan? Why would God take my best friend? Chad’s thoughts questioned himself. After a night of twisting and turning, and very little sleep, Chad’s good nose guided his half awake body to the breakfast table. Hungry, Chad’s stomach was filled, but his mind needed an answer.

The questions of the previous night, Chad challenged his parents too. Answering immediately, Mrs. Reeves related the pastor’s speech of the night before, to another day in Chad’s elementary years when he ques-

tioned why a difficult thing had to happen. His mother sympathetically reminded Chad of the time they had raised ducks. Quick to become parents, the Reeves' had adopted nine, rather large, white spheres. After hatching, the ducklings followed the children around as if they were their parents. Mrs. Reeves sipped a cup of nearly boiling coffee as more thoughts were recalled. "Remember when the duck fell down the drain pipe?" Oh yes, Chad remembered vividly how the poor duckling was stuck at the bottom. Since the pipe was clogged, they had to dump water on him to fill the pipe making the screeching little creature come to the top. His mind wandered farther on to when a fox ate five, and only two were left. That was a hard event to overcome, but when the remaining two had to say good-bye...Chad smiled to himself as he remembered how his little first grade body let the tears wash his dust stained cheeks. His mother's words jerked him back to the present discussion. "The ducks were wild and we had to let them go! Do you see how this all fits in with what happened a few days ago? The duck didn't like the water poured on him in the drain pipe, but that brought him to the top and saved his life! We didn't want to let the ducks go either, but that was best for them. God always has it in His plan that whatever He makes happen, is for our good. Ryan's death obviously doesn't seem very nice for us, but it was in God's will, and that's best."

For the next few days Chad wrestled with what his mother had said. He would definitely remember that week of September 7 for the rest of his life. Getting to sleep became easier night by night because each night Chad recited in his mind, "And we know that all things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are the called according to His purpose." ❖

Curt is a student at Covenant Christian High School in Grand Rapids, Michigan.

To Live is Christ

*T*o me to live is Christ"
O what a lofty goal—
To bring each thought, each word and deed
Beneath my Lord's control.

*W*ithin each thought I think
My impulse first must be—
What does my Savior teach?
Lord, give me grace to see.

*B*efore each word I speak
Cleanse Thou my lips, O Lord,
That each pronouncement of my mouth
Be based upon Thy word.

*A*lso my actions guard:
My feet must never stray
Along enticing paths of sin,
But choose the narrow way.

*T*hen when my race is run,
By sin no more oppressed
My Savior's voice will speak: Well done,
Come now, enjoy My rest.

Thelma Westra

Situation Ethics

By Rev. R. G. Moore

Question #25

I have had an ongoing debate with one of my teachers, about this one. If it is 2:00 am and your friend is lying bleeding on the street, and the only way to save him is to break into a nearby drug store and steal bandages, is this considered stealing? I thought so but my teacher says it isn't because his motive is good. I'm kind of against this whole situation ethics deal. Such as, if you are hiding Jews in your attic during WWII, and a Nazi asks you, "Are there any Jews in your house," and you answer "No," you have sinned by lying. Perhaps you could remain silent, but my teacher takes the position that it is not a sin to lie in this situation. He claims that nothing is so black and white, and sinning is not a question of what the action was, but what the motive in the heart when the action was committed. If you have the time, perhaps you can tell me what you think about this too.

Answer # 25

Again not what I think, but what the Word teaches! In the first place on the lighter side, and yet not so light, you should not be out with your friend at two in the morning. The time after midnight is really a time of darkness where no good comes to pass. O! I know there are exceptions, for instance returning home from a night shift at the factory, or some such. But covenant young people or old saints do not need to be out to all hours of night, and ought not to be.

But let us get to your question, in the case of the drug store, works of necessity or of mercy are possible to perform even on the Lord's Day, although they have to be truly this. Jesus would probably say that it is legalism to suggest breaking into the drug store for material to save a life is stealing, and surely so would I. The question really tries to put one in a trap. I am sure if the druggist thought it necessary that his window be paid for as well as, the materials, if you broke in to save your friend's life you would boldly and gladly tell the druggist that you did it, and would even offer to reimburse him for damage and materials. Surely you did not deceive nor take to better yourself, nor in coveting in other words you did not steal, but made use of the means to save the

brother. The loss of the store keeper can rightly be replaced. I think this is a poor example to test the question.

On the other hand, the question of hiding the Jews in the attack or the spies in Jericho is another question. For in this case you have a plain breaking of the commandment of God. There is never a time when lying is right. Satan is a liar and the father of it, John 8:44. And satan's devices may never be rightly used by the Christian. Not for any reason. Not to save a neighbor's life, nor to save our own. We indeed may be too weak to stand in faith in such a situation, but it does not change the fact that to lie is sin. To lie with a woman not your wife is adultery no matter any supposed love that you may have for her, or any provocation that your wife has caused you, etc. The Scripture does never make exception for sin, nor may we. It is necessary to seek forgiveness often for our lack of faith. By the way in the example above, it would be much better to tell the Nazi's that I will not cooperate with any thing that you require of me that is contrary to the will of God. But you probably could have been shot, but then you would the more quickly have gone to be with your Lord.

In the third place, not only ought you have "some against situation ethics," but should be totally against situation ethics, which I really assume you are. Sin is not determined by what we think, or by the situation in which we are found, but by the objective word of God which He is pleased to reveal unto us. Things are so black and white. It is just that we do not want to conform to the will of God, and we desire the same thing as satan and Adam did when they fell. They did not want to have God determine for them what was good or evil, but wanted instead to be in the place of God to determine for themselves what is good and evil. May God deliver us from this sin that so plagues us in this life.

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

Rev. Moore is pastor of Hull Protestant Reformed Church in Hull, Iowa.



The Song of Zion

by John Huizenga

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

Psalm 31—“This song of mingled measures and alternate strains of grief and woe was intended for public singing, and thus a death-blow is given to the notion that nothing but praise should be sung.” Spurgeon

September 1 Read Psalm 31:1 & Psalter 80:1

We can not know the great power and love of our sovereign covenant God if we don't know the greatness of our sins and miseries. Once again we find David in the troubles and distresses of this life which lead to God through Christ. Are you distressed with family troubles, great loss, money problems, or discontent with your lot in life? Do these things weaken your faith and leave you miserable? Does it seem as though the ungodly neighbor is more happy and content than you? May God so work in your heart by the Spirit that you turn to God with these words of David every day as you walk as a child of God with your Creator and Redeemer. Shame is experienced when we are found wandering away from God in pursuit of our own self fulfillment and lust. God delivers His people from shame in “His righteousness,” i.e. His covenant faithfulness in which He never departs from His eternal plan to save. Sing the Psalter.

September 2 Read Psalm 31:2 & Psalter 80:2; 82:1

David uses language that demonstrates familiarity with God. He knows God as a Friend. He knows God is exalted infinitely above him, yet he does not hesitate to request that God as it were, stoop down and listen to his plea like a child to his father. He prays that God would be to him a rock and a house. God is often called a rock in the Psalms, but we need to experience what this means. David wants to experience security and contentment in God. Fear has taken hold of him, he is weak and unable to go on. Every one of us has reason for such distress when we realize how far short we fall in our love and obedience to God. Meditate today upon your sins and pray this prayer of David. Sing the Psalter.

September 3 Read Psalm 31:3,4 & Psalter 80:3; 82:2

Notice the titles of the two Psalters from which we are singing: “God Our Resort in Trouble” & “Security in God.” These titles reflect the theme of the first 18 verses of Psalm 31 and our devotions through the next week. We will see how David's persistent request in time of need is turned into praise of God's goodness. While seeking security in God, David brings before God various details and truths about his covenant life with God. In the verses we consider today David recalls the truth that God is his rock and fortress. There are many things that we know about God also, but that does not mean our feelings and life reflect this knowledge. We

need to pray to God as we know Him, and seek the work of God in our heart to open our eyes to Him. God is pleased to use the meditations of His people to work assurance of salvation and covenant fellowship. Sing the Psalter.

September 4 Read Psalm 31:5 & Psalter 80:4

Do you give over your life to Jehovah? This is something you must do continually. By nature we easily imagine that success in school, work, dating, friends, or marriage depends upon our own abilities, and we have no need of help from the outside. Though one may prosper in earthly things, one really has not begun to live until he commends his life to God in all things. It is not enough to depend upon our own abilities until we fail, and then, as a last resort, hand over our messed-up life to God. It is sometimes easier to commit our life to God after we have utterly failed and can do nothing else, but a godly walk requires that we learn to commend our lives each moment of the day. Knowing that God has washed away our sins, we know that the afflictions we face will draw us near to God, we know that God will bring a suitable marriage partner, too, in the time appointed or give grace to live as a single. Above all when we commend our lives daily, we will be ready to commend our life to God in death. Sing the Psalter.

September 5 Read Psalm 31:6,7 & Psalter 80:5

Ungodly men thrive on lies as they seek to advance themselves in life. We all face the great temptation to present a false image of ourselves to gain attention and friends. Are you attracted to the popular people who in reality are putting on a big show? Many will say they want to be friends with people who are honest and true, but they will not seek God and friends who love God in whom alone is truth. These people love the false. The child of God hates those who love lying vanities. Separate yourselves from the crowd that hovers around the deadly fumes of lying vanities and put your trust in the Lord. Meditate upon His word. Have fellowship with His people. Stamp out the fires of lying when it appears in your life and friends. In God and His mercy you will find happiness and joy. Sing the Psalter.

September 6 Read Psalm 31:7,8 & Psalter 80:6

Did you find happiness and joy in God's mercy yesterday? By nature each one of us has been wooed by Satan, forsaken God, and boarded the train headed for the concentration camp of Satan—hell. By nature our pride lifts us up so that we are willing to forsake the good purpose of God for us in favor of our own idea of happiness in the thrills of this world. An enemy has never had better hold of his

captives than the devil with man. Man has no hope of escaping by himself, because he does not want to escape and is even dead in sin and powerless to escape should he want to. Neither does God have any obligation to rescue man. God is perfectly just in sending us with haste to eternal damnation. This truth is gloomy and terrifying indeed. The only hope is God's mercy; His desire to deliver and reveal His glory and power in doing so. He comes in the power of His Spirit to open our eyes and make us alive to see our plight. Do you see? Sing the Psalter.

September 7 Psalm 31:9,10 and Psalter 80:7

Who is God? We must all have a ready and accurate answer. So many people who may even call themselves Christians think of God as a being who is more powerful than the individual man and influences man, but does not have sovereign control and leaves the destiny of man in a large degree to man himself. The role of Jesus in salvation is minimized to his being a good example. Their concept of salvation is based on man's ability to direct the affairs of the world. But God Himself makes very clear what He wants man to know. God is the one who has eternally decreed that man fall into the rebellion and death from which He would save. Who is God? He is the Creator of all things, and known by the children of God from day to day as the One who is constantly delivering us from our guilt and shame. He is our Savior. Sing the Psalter "God Our Resort in Trouble."

September 8 Read Psalm 31:11-13 and Psalter 80:8

The way in which we walk in covenant friendship with God is not bustling with friends who want to include you in their fun all the time. God often makes our way lonely from an earthly point of view in order to impress upon us the richness of friendship with God. David is crushed under the burden of his sin and afflictions and human companions have forsaken him. Jesus experienced dismay of friends who turned away when the disciples fled and Peter denied him. Job's friends turned against him when they came with their criticisms. Though earthly friends are important, God uses hard times to separate us from ungodly friends and strengthen our bond with Christ who never forsakes His own. Sing the Psalter.

September 9 Read Psalm 31:14,15 and Psalter 80:9

"My times are in thy hand" sang David. These words are a most beautiful expression of God's providence, a doctrine cherished by every believer and strongly defended by the Reformers in the Canon's of Dort, Fifth Head of Doctrine. God upholds every sparrow. He sends hurricanes and tornadoes. He maintains life of every form, and every believer confesses that every aspect of his or her life is in the hand of God. There are no "accidents" that just happen by cold chance. Statistics may determine your chance of getting hit by lightning or living to be 100, but statistics only reveal the constant work of God in and through the means He has established to work out His eternal plan. God is intently playing the instrument of your life in the grand orchestra of the universe for His glory and your salvation. Submit to God and pray that He will show you the joy of salvation. Sing the Psalter.

September 10 Read Psalm 31:15,16 and Psalter 80:10

"Make thy face to shine upon thy servant," sang David, another beautiful desire placed by God in the hearts of His children. This desire and its fulfillment is the fruit of "serious repentance" as we read in the Canons, Fifth Head article 5. Speaking of the times when the saints fall into sin, we read in the Canons "By such enormous

sins, however, they very highly offend God, incur a deadly guilt, grieve the Holy Spirit, interrupt the exercise of faith, very grievously wound their consciences, and sometimes lose the sense of God's favor, for a time, until on their returning into the right way of serious repentance, the light of God's fatherly countenance again shines upon them." Take the time now or sometime today to meditate upon the Fifth Head of the Canons and Rejection of Errors in the back of your Psalter. Sing the Psalter.

September 11 Read Psalm 31:17 and Psalter 80:11

Shame overwhelms when the hope which we defend and upon which we govern our actions and words and direct our entire life, is shattered, and we stand exposed and naked to all who laugh at our foolishness. We hope in God who has revealed Himself and the way of salvation in His Word. We struggle our whole life to flee the life of sin which God forbids but the world enjoys. We strive to crucify our pride and give God all the glory. We believe God's promise of life with Him in heavenly glory after death. The world laughs and says "this life is all there is, get all you can now or you will forever miss out on life." God gives us a taste of heavenly bliss now through the preaching of His Word and a life of obedience, but when times of doubt and sin overwhelm, the fear of shame may be strong. The world's trust in science often challenges our hope in order to bring us to shame. We can be certain that God's work will never come to naught. May we ever call upon God that we may never be ashamed. Sing the Psalter.

September 12 Read Psalm 31:18 and Psalter 80:12

Lying lips surrounded David with their incessant blather, they surrounded Christ as he taught in the cities and died on the cross, and they surround us today. The discontented factory worker spews forth vulgarities in every sentence, the scientist relentlessly scours God from every discovery, the "theologians" never give up trying to make myths of God's Word. God speaks in all creation and from the pulpit "I AM" and man responds "He is not, I am." Lying lips; do you hear them and cry out to God that He silence them, or are you listening to them with indifference or even interest? Listen for lying lips today and pray each time you hear them "Let the lying lips be put to silence." Watch your own lips too that they join not in the grievous speech against the righteous. Sing the Psalter.

September 13 Read Psalm 31:19 and Psalter 81:1

The new Psalter number sets forth the tones of praise which always follow the cries of God's people in distress. God answered David's prayer in such a way that David saw the riches of God's goodness. Sin - Deliverance - Gratitude. This is the pattern of the Heidelberg Catechism. This is the pattern of the Psalms. This is the pattern of life. The better we know this pattern, the closer will be our walk with God. God is pleased to show us the riches of His goodness in the way of the troubles and distress of life which He sends. When you find yourself walking the valley of the shadow of death, you know what to do: pour out your heart to God, read His word, listen to His word in church. He will reveal to you something that is not revealed to the ungodly. He will reveal not only that He is good in himself, but also the effect of His goodness, i.e. the salvation wrought by Christ and tasted here on earth. Sing the Psalter.

September 14 Read Psalm 31:20 and Psalter 81:2

What are the riches of God's goodness? He hides us in the secret of His presence. The idea here is that He gives His people a share in His own hidden life. He brings them into covenant friendship; into

the sphere of His fellowship, a region where the brightness of His glory shines from His face in Christ, a region into which the ungodly are unable to go. Presently we find this secret sphere of God's presence in the hearing of God's Word which is wisdom to God's people but foolishness to the ungodly. In this sphere we have peace which can never be quenched by the pride of man and the strife of tongues. Do you long for the day when we enter into eternal life with God, being forever in His presence? Seek the shelter of God's grace whenever the pride of man and the strife of tongues penetrate your life. Sing the Psalter.

September 15 Read Psalm 31:21,22 and Psalter 81:3

These verses tell us about another of God's riches - His marvelous kindness. In the Psalter we sing "His love beyond compare." David came to know the Love of God through the experience of distress. God's love is at the heart of all the riches of His goodness. When David thought about the goodness of God, he was reminded of his weakness. Even though he had felt that he had failed and was cut off from before God's eyes, God did not forsake him. God loves his elect people and will never forsake them. Though we often speak words of foolishness in our haste and weak faith, God hears us in Christ. Let us also bless Jehovah for his steadfast covenant love. Sing the Psalter.

September 16 Read Psalm 31:23,24 and Psalter 81:4

At the close of this Psalm, David exhorts the saints to love Jehovah and be of good courage. What a marvelous conclusion to a Psalm which began with sorrow and shame. God sovereignly works this love in our heart by means of sin and deliverance. We do not love God blindly, we love in faith knowing all that God has done for us. We read in I John 4:19 "We love him, because He first loved us." David recognizes the love of God in the doctrine of God's providence. God preserves those whom He has cleansed in Christ. In preserving His people, God rewards the proud doers with their just destruction. Thus a clear knowledge of the doctrine of reprobation which serves the doctrines of election and preservation is necessary for our love for God. May you also find courage in the wonderful works of God. Sing the Psalter.

September 17 Read Psalm 32:1,2 and Psalter 83:1

Psalm 1 speaks of blessedness in a godly walk, and the Psalm we begin testifies of a blessedness that comes after being forgiven an ungodly walk. The sin of David which was covered was his sin with Bathsheba and killing Uriah. David wrote Psalm 51 *before* he confesses his sin and experienced terrible guilt, but he wrote this Psalm after the heavy burden was lifted from his shoulders. God uses this Psalm in Romans 4:6-7 to teach us that the great blessedness experienced by David comes to the child of God in the way of knowing the doctrine of justification by faith alone and not of our own works. This was a favorite Psalm for Augustine who also was delivered of great sin. Martin Luther also expressed his great delight and peace found in the doctrine of justification by faith alone. May you also know the happiness of forgiveness by God in this day. Sing the Psalter.

September 18 Read Psalm 32:3-5 and Psalter 83:2

Guilty silence, what a miserable condition. We sin against someone, we know it, but we are too proud to admit it. We feign joy and peace, we may even speak and talk freely with the one against whom we have sinned, but a wall stands between and true fellowship is virtually silent. Meanwhile inside we are being ripped vio-

lently apart. Though outwardly silent about his guilt, David roared inside and his strength was wasted; all because he was proud and wanted to live in his sin. Left to ourselves, our pride would bring us to death. In grace God sent Nathan the prophet to bring the sharp word of God which cut his festering sore and let the poison of his unconfessed sin drain out. Confession of sin is the only way to experiencing the blessed forgiveness of God. Pray that God would crush our pride and open our hearts to confession of sin. Sing the Psalter.

September 19 Read Psalm 32:6,7 and Psalter 83:3

The child of God who desires covenant fellowship with God must never procrastinate to enter into that fellowship in all its fullness. David's misery only increased when he refrained from seeking God's forgiveness. It is very foolish to seek your own pleasure while you are healthy and strong and wait until you are in desperate need before seeking God. God is near right now as you meditate upon this portion of God's word. He is near in the preaching. May God open our eyes to see the great blessedness we receive when we confess our sins immediately. God saves His people by means of His presence in the preaching of His Word. Woe is he from whom God removes the preaching of His Word. Seek Him diligently now while He may be found. Sing the Psalter.

September 20 Read Psalm 32:8,9 and Psalter 84:1

The doctrines of sovereign grace are often criticized as doctrines which force men to obey God so that men become machines and not willing joyful followers of Christ. God's sovereign power over us, however, works in such a way that we are given a new heart and made willing followers of Christ. Yet the old man of sin remains to make us sluggish and ignorant. Except God constantly and graciously guide and teach us, we would become ignorant and stubborn like a mule. Let us be diligent to study God's word that we might not be ignorant of God's marvelous grace. We can not expect to be found in heaven when we wander in beastly ignorance and indifference to the preaching of God's word. Sing the Psalter.

September 21 Read Psalm 32:10,11 and Psalter 84:2

Under God's gracious guidance, His mercy shall compass us about. This means that when we walk in obedience to God through the trials in our lives, God will always be present and ready to lift us out of our miseries. Don't imagine that a godly walk, due to the demands of God which are contrary to our sinful nature, is a way of greater sorrow than a walk in our own sinful desires. We have sorrow because we know our sin, but when we strive to walk in obedience, we will always be near unto God's word, and the consciousness of God's mercy will quickly restore the joy of our heart when we fall. The ungodly try to cover up sorrow with more pleasure. They may appear happy, but it is only a mask. Those who are cleansed in the blood of Christ have every reason to rejoice. May this be a day of joy for you. Sing the Psalter.

September 22 Read Psalm 33:1-3 and Psalter 85:1

Praise is comely, i.e. beautiful and suitable for the righteous. You and I could do nothing better than praise Jehovah. How must we praise God? With our voice moved by our love for God. Musical instruments in themselves do not praise God except they help train your voice to lift up the best music possible. Our love for God, not music, must inspire us to sing. Highest praise comes from the lips of the godly saint who sings from the heart without the aid of musical instruments. Sing as loudly as you can without distorting the qual-

ity of your voice. Sing a new song. A new song does not mean a different song, but it is a song sung with zeal that is newly inspired by a deeper knowledge of God. Take the time to learn the music of this Psalter and so meditate upon the words that you can sing it joyfully from the heart without musical accompaniment.

September 23 Read Psalm 33:4,5 and Psalter 85:2

We sing praises to Jehovah because His goodness fills the earth. The word of Jehovah is in the Bible, and also includes the entire decree of God's counsel according to which He created all things and governs them for the salvation of His people. In all of His words and works, God is good. We live in a world in which lying, pain, hate, and distress bring sadness and death, but God loves truth and lives in eternal bliss. All the scientific wonders and history of the earth reveal His goodness. Even sin and its terrible effects on the world reveal God's goodness because it is the means whereby God reveals the fullness of His grace to His people. We have much reason to praise God. Show forth His praise as you sing the Psalter.

September 24 Read Psalm 33:6,7 and Psalter 85:3

We sing praise to Jehovah because He has created all the wonders of this world and the universe. The Word of God is Christ (John 1) and His Breath often refers to the Holy Spirit. Thus we praise the triune God. The very existence of every atom and the energy and life within the living creature is upheld each moment by God. He spoke and the massive stars and galaxies of the universe came into existence. If you stand by an ocean you can see the curve of the earth and it appears as though the water is in a big pile. God holds the water in place by the mysterious force of gravity which He has created and upholds every moment of the day. We must remember that God continues to uphold the creation which He created, for this, too, is a reason to sing praise to our God. Sing the Psalter.

September 25 Read Psalm 33:8-9 and Psalter 86:1

This Psalm of praise began with an exhortation to praise God and gave reason for praise in the goodness of God and the wonder of creation and preservation of that creation. In the section covered by Psalter 86 everyone in the world is exhorted to stand in awe of and fear God for His providence and grace toward His people. The God who gathers His people to be with Him in heaven has created the world to accomplish this purpose. Because the ungodly hate this fact and seek ever to erase it from their minds, God declares it in His word so that they are unable to hide from God. The doctrine of providence causes the ungodly to tremble, but makes the godly lift up their hearts in praise. Do you find peace and joy in the doctrine of God's providence? Meditate upon this doctrine today and sing the Psalm.

September 26 Read Psalm 33:10,11 and Psalter 86:2

It is very common today to find people who confess faith in God and His salvation in Christ, but deny that His will and plan for them and the world never changes. They do this because they want man to have some control. Some who see the clear language of God's sovereignty in Scripture say God sovereignly decided in His counsel to give man a will that is free to choose Christ if he wants. But God makes it plain that even though man has a will and nations make counsel to do this or that, it means nothing as far as the goal and purpose of man is concerned. God's plan, His eternal and sovereign good pleasure, His counsel according to which He has created all things and governs them, stands certain forever. Nothing which He

has created will interfere and change it. Blessed are we who belong to God! Sing the Psalter.

September 27 Read Psalm 33:12 and Psalter 86:3

Indeed the eternal counsel of God is reason for praise! We can be at peace knowing that everything is in God's hands. The world is so big and so many things are happening every day. We watch developments in the nations and peoples of the world, stand helpless when denominations of churches slip into apostasy, and fear the power of the world will influence our churches and persecute the faithful. But God is in control of every event and heart of man in the world. Woe is he whose God is not Jehovah, whose god is evolution and the "forces of nature," whose god is man. But we belong to the God who created all things and governs all things for our salvation and to His glory. Blessed indeed are we when we remain near unto Him. Sing the Psalter.

September 28 Read Psalm 33:13-15 and Psalter 87:1

The psalmist sets forth yet another reason to praise God: His omniscience and omnipresence, doctrines which comfort God's people in the midst of an ungodly world. Jehovah is exalted above all that is created and looks down upon man which he has placed on earth to care for the earth and live in obedience to Him in love. He gave to man a mind and body suited for His service. But what does He see? We know that God is angry with man who has forsaken Jehovah and serves himself in pride and rebellion. Remember, God is also watching your every move. What does God see when he looks at you and considers your works? Does he see a humble and repentant sinner who hates his sin? Does he see one who seeks a refuge in Christ? Do not look to man for your salvation, come to Christ alone that your works may be seen in Him. Sing the Psalter.

September 29 Read Psalm 33:16-19 and Psalter 87:2

Does not a king depend upon his army to deliver the kingdom from the invading enemy? Does not a man depend upon his strength to fight off the foe? Would not a horse be invaluable to escape from danger? Human strength and physical power may preserve earthly life for a time, but the preservation of life in time itself only brings every man closer to death. Forget earthly strength. Behold, look over here, look at Jehovah who rules over all. His eye is on those that fear Him and hope in His mercy. His goal and His aim in all things is His glory in their salvation. Devote all your attention to that which is important: a right knowledge of God and His counsel. He is gathering His church. Are you busy in that work? Go to God in prayer and ask how He might use you and show you His great salvation. Sing the Psalter.

September 30 Read Psalm 33:20-22 and Psalter 87:3

Above all things, the child of God seeks God's mercy. All the virtues and truths about God's glory, righteousness, power, and providence bring fear to the sinner apart from the assurance of God's mercy revealed in Christ. It is important that we know God as our help and shield. It is important to know God and put our trust in Him. In all our spiritual growing and hearing God's word, we must always pray "Let thy mercy, O LORD, be upon us, according as we hope in thee." Our hope is rooted in our faith which is given to us by God. Our hope grows as we grow in our knowledge of God. We must seek to know God's mercy revealed to us in Christ with every particle of hope that we have. When we live in peace, our heart shall rejoice, and we will render the praise due unto Him. Sing the Psalter.

Bountifully, Thoughtfully, Cheerfully

by Aaron J. Cleveland

From the title on the top of this page, it should be apparent to the believer that the topic of this article is “Christian Giving.” Giving is a necessary part of the Christian life. It proceeds from a heart thankful to God who is rich in mercy towards His people. Giving characterizes the life of those who are saved by the blood of Jesus.

**Giving is cheerful, only
if it is done bountifully
and purposefully.**

In the third part of the Catechism, we read in Question and Answer 111: “But what doth God require in this commandment?” (the eighth commandment). “That I promote the advantage of my neighbor in every instance I can or may; and deal with him as I desire to be dealt with by others: further also that I faithfully labor, so that I may be able to relieve the needy.”

It is apparent that if the fear of God rules in our hearts, it will manifest itself in thankful acts. One of these acts of thankfulness is giving to relieve those in need. Like all good works that we perform, by the grace of God, they must be performed as God has commanded. On the work of giving, the Bible is very clear on how we ought to give.

II Corinthians 9 gives us very thorough instruction on how we ought to give, especially verses 5-7. After reading through these verses several times, three different aspects of giving become apparent. First of all, our giving must be bountiful (vs. 5,6). The opposite of this is

sparing (vs. 6). Secondly, our giving must be done purposefully (7). In other words, it must be done deliberately and thoughtfully. Finally, our giving must be done cheerfully (vs. 7). The opposite of cheerfully is grudgingly.

First of all, our giving must be bountiful and “not as of covetousness.” This is very difficult to do. It is so very easy to put our “church money” on the bottom of the budget and give only our leftover dimes and quarters. It seems that the gas tank always runs dry on the weekend and by the time Sunday morning rolls around, we are left with a dollar or two we would rather not part with. We are quick to come up with excuse after excuse why we should keep the money and let someone else do the giving. After all, we say, “He has a better job than I do, and can afford to give. I’m in college. Let him give. I’ll give later.” We can be very sparing. In Proverbs 21:26 we read that the “righteous giveth and spareth not.”

Giving can only be bountiful if it is done purposefully, from the heart. Giving must be a thoughtfully planned action and not a last minute, impulse decision. Money for church collections, Christian school tuition and drives must



be at the top of the budget. It must be the highest priority. Our giving must be characterized by thoughtfulness. It must not be careless or haphazard, but done regularly and deliberately as God has blessed us.

The third component of giving is cheerfulness. One who gives cheerfully, is one who gives gladly of what God has given him. Giving is cheerful, only if it is done bountifully and purposefully. The opposite of a cheerful giver is one who gives “grudgingly, or of necessity.” Cheerful giving arises from a thankful heart, whereas giving done grudgingly or out of necessity comes from an unthankful heart.

All our giving must be characterized by these three commands found in Scripture. Giving performed in any other way, is not pleasing in the eyes of God. Bountiful giving is dependent upon thoughtfulness and cheerfulness. Thoughtfulness is only possible when bountifulness and cheerfulness are present.

God’s people are repeatedly instructed in the Bible to be givers. In Psalm 112, we read that the man who fears the Lord is blessed. In verse 9 of that Psalm we read, “He hath dispersed, he hath given to the poor.” The man who fears God, gives as God has blessed him. Not just to one cause or object of need, but his giving is dispersed. He gives to every need that he sees, always as God as blessed him. Likewise, our giving must be dispersed. There are many worthy needs to which we must give. There are the poor. There is the cause of Christian education. There are several funds which each church maintains to support the minister, maintain the church property, and contribute to the endeavors of the denomination. There is the cause of mission work. The list goes on.

In Acts 10:2 we read of Cornelius, “a devout man, and one that feared God with all his house, which gave much alms to the people, and prayed to God alway.” It is remarkable that the phrase “gave much alms to the people” is used to describe Cornelius. Obviously, giving

is an important part of the Christian’s duty of thankfulness.

In Acts 20:35, Paul reminds us of our responsibility to work, so that we are able to “support the weak.” Then he goes on to remind us of the words of Jesus when He said, “It is more blessed to give than to receive.” These are just three of many passages which set forth our responsibility to give.

The Bible is also very clear when it comes to the sin of greediness and giving sparingly. Proverbs 28:27 is crystal clear regarding the consequences of those who hide their eyes. “He that giveth unto the poor shall not lack: but he that hideth his eyes shall have many a curse.” There is no clearer language than that. In Acts chapter 5 we read of Ananias and Sapphira, who lied about the price of a possession which they had sold. When they brought the money from the sale of the possession, they told the apostles that they were giving all of the proceeds from the sale. In reality, they had conspired to withhold some of the money. God’s judgment upon them for this sin was instant death. After reading this passage, it is impossible not to be pricked in the heart. How easily we can be found committing similar sins.

But rather, we must be cheerful givers. In order to give, it is necessary that we work. Ephesians 4:28 is one of many passages which instructs us to work. And our labors must always be with an eye to giving. We must not labor to fill our own pockets or to heap to ourselves as many possessions as possible. Rather, as Ephesians 4:28 states, “Let him that stole steal no more: but rather let him labor, working with his hands the thing which is good, that he may have to give to him that needeth.”

Verses 8 and 9 of I Peter 4 also remind us of our duty of thankfulness to give. In these verses we read, “And above all things have fervent charity among yourselves: for charity shall cover the multitude of sins. Use hospitality one to another without grudging.”

In giving, there is blessing from God. We have only to look at II Corinthians 9 again. God sees to it that those who sow bountifully will reap bountifully. Proverbs 22:9 also speaks of this blessing. “He that hath a bountiful eye shall be blessed.” However, before pride grabs hold of us, we must remember, it is only by God’s grace that we can give. There is no good work performed apart from the work of God in our hearts. Thanks be to God. ❖



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A Christian View Of Sports

Part 2

by Allan Baird

In this article I wish to deal with some individual issues to which we can apply the general principles written about in the last issue.

Firstly, women and sport. Some argue that women should not be permitted to play sports, because it might compromise their modesty, cause unfeminine traits of personality, and the like. Besides, the virtuous woman in Proverbs 31 is too busy working with her hands, buying fields, and feeding the needy to have time for mere games. But women have equality in the area with men, as they are just as much under obligation to keep the sixth commandment as men. Furthermore, the Bible mentions both sexes playing together (Zech. 8:5). As women work just as worthily and strenuously as men, so their recreational activity is just as valid and necessary.

Secondly, violence and sport. Such violence can be of two sorts, either involving animals or humans. With regard to violence against animals, Herman Hoeksema suggests two reasons why animals should not be mistreated for any reason, including mere recreation. Firstly, as king of creation under God, man's lordship over the earth does not involve tyranny and abuse but care and nurture. Secondly, animals were, like man, created as living souls, and are related by creation (not evolution) to man in having the powers of sensation and instinct, as well as freedom of action.

With regard to violence against humans, most physical sport involves some sort of bodily contact as a secondary effect of the game. But there are some sports which have bodily contact of violent nature as their primary objective, such as martial arts. I believe that such activity can be justified within a Christian context for the following reasons. Firstly, the sixth commandment requires us to protect and preserve our own life, and the life of our neighbour, and self-defense teaching may enable us under certain circumstances to do this. Secondly,

Paul uses an analogy from fighting—commentators say wrestling or boxing—as having a valid parallel with the Christian life in I Corinthians 9:26.

Thirdly, professionalism in sport. There are many problems with this concept. It mixes labour and rest or recreation, which ought to be kept distinct, after the creation pattern of God working six days and resting on the seventh. The context in which a Christian would have to work if he or she was a professional sports person would be unchristian, with unbiblical views of fairness and aims in playing. Often it would involve working on the Lord's Day, which would be an intolerable scenario for any Christian. Consistent membership in a local visible church would be ruled out because of the amount of travel involved. Besides all this, professionalism is simply unnecessary. People can get the same amount of pleasure playing and watching a sport if it is amateur in status.

Finally, there are the abuses of sport. Within certain modern church circles it is popular to believe that sport can be a tool for evangelism ("sports ministry") as it provides a way of contacting the local community and setting forth moral role models. All this is contrary to the biblical principle that only *preaching the gospel* saves sinners. (See Romans 10:13-15 and I Corinthians 1:17-18.) The church has no mandate to do anything else. But, of course, the largest abuse of sport is the blatant idolatry it occasions. Sport is the religion of the masses. Somebody's "god" is their chief priority in life, what they cling to for life and death, that on which they spend their time, money, and energy. For many modern nonchristians, their "god" is certainly sport. For, Christians, everything else comes in a poor second place. ❖

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Psalter 160—Confidence In God

by Mindy DeMeester

160 Confidence in God

PSALM 61 C. M. HAVEN Thomas Hastings

1. O God, give ear un - to my cry, And to my voice at - tend;
 2. When troub - les o - ver - whelm my heart, Then Thou wilt hear my cry,
 3. A ref - uge Thou hast been for me When storms of troub - le low'r;
 4. With - in Thy ho - ly tem - ple, Lord, I ev - er will a - bide;

Though far from home and from Thy house, To Thee my prayers as - cend.
 For safe - ty lead me to the Rock That high - er is than I.
 When foes as - sail, then Thou hast been My strong de - fense and tow'r.
 Be - neath the cov - ert of Thy wings In con - fi - dence I hide.

[Selected Stanzas]

One of my favorite Psalter numbers is #160 which is entitled “Confidence in God”. In this life our only confidence is God. All the earthly joys and pacifiers of this world will not last. They shall all one day fade away. With this in mind, how can we find comfort in them?? Our trust is in our heavenly Father. If we didn’t have anything or anyone in this life, we would still have our Lord. He alone hears our cries. Man cannot truly help or comfort us. Yes, he can encourage and talk with us but God alone brings true comfort. God will hear our voices and prayers no matter where we are, or what circumstances we are in. We can be miles from home and far from anything familiar to us and yet, our only Foundation is always with us! What a comforting thought. This is especially comforting when we are in trouble or amidst trail. It is a blessing to know that

in the midst of troubles and trials God will hear us and in Christ we will find refuge. We must also find peace in the fact that even in these troubles and trials, the Lord will use them for our profit. Our trust is in God alone for He knows what is best for us, His children. Christ will be our strength in times of hardship. Nothing earthly can provide us with peace in our souls. When others rise up against us, He will keep us in the hollow of His hand. In this we may be confident, that He shall keep His children in His tender care. Trust in our Sovereign Lord! ❖

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The Blessing of the Preaching of the Heidelberg Catechism

by Rev. Richard Moore

According to the church order of our Protestant Reformed Churches we are required in our church worship services to preach the Heidelberg Catechism each Sunday. In article 68 of the Church Order we read, “The ministers shall on Sunday explain briefly the sum of Christian doctrine comprehended in the Heidelberg Catechism so that as much as possible the explanation shall be annually completed, according to the division of the Catechism itself for that purpose.”

In the questions for Church Visitation that are set before each of our Councils once a year, the question is asked, “Is the Heidelberg Catechism regularly explained in the services for divine worship, so that no doctrine is left untreated? Thus we see that in our churches it is required that through the preaching the Heidelberg Catechism is to be explained on a regular basis. The result is that in our churches the content of the Catechism is proclaimed from Sabbath Day to Sabbath Day. This practice from time to time has been brought under question, if not brought under attack. However, at the outset we would contend that our fathers were very wise in requiring this preaching of the Heidelberg Catechism, and that if we were to lose this precious means of grace in our worship services we will begin the inevitable decline of apostasy that leads to the destruction of the church. We must not forsake this practice in our churches.

In the context of this article I will attempt to show why it is so important that we continue to hold to the practice of preaching of the Heidelberg Catechism. In order to do this it is important that we understand the way in which the church received this confession that has become one of the Standards of our churches. Briefly we shall recount some of the history of this Creed.

The Heidelberg Catechism sets forth the gospel of salvation in Christ Jesus our Lord as our only comfort in life and death. Indeed from its starting point in the first Lord’s Day this truth is expounded through out the Catechism. The Catechism is very personal as it calls us to confession of our faith in our Lord, Jesus, Christ. As our readers know the catechism in its three main divisions sets forth this truth in a very complete exposition of the Scripture. As each division (How great is our sin and misery, How we are redeemed from all of our sin and misery, and How we are to be thankful to God for this redemption) is set forth in question and answer form, the Scripture is set before us. Any that have studied the Catechism even for a short while, are able to see that it is rooted in and an exposition of many texts of the Holy Word. This is true because of the fact that this was the intent of the authors of the Catechism as they were called to write it, and it is true because God by His Spirit sustained them to write a Catechism that was faithful to the Scriptures.

Most of us have learned that Elector Prince Frederick III of the Palatinate turned to the University of Heidelberg and called upon two young professors who held the reformed faith precious to prepare a clear concise statement of the Scriptural faith in a catechetical form by which young and old alike could be built up in their understanding of the doctrines of salvation. He envisioned a catechism that could be used within his jurisdiction in the home, schools and church to establish his subjects in the truths of the Scripture, and thus in the Reformed faith. Frederick III was himself a man given to the study of the Scripture and a man of prayer and he made it mandatory in all the schools and churches of the Palatinate to teach the Catechism, and to read it from the pulpit every Sun-

day according to its divisions. Soon after the preaching and exposition of the Catechism was set as the basis for the sermon in the afternoon service. So that we find in the early years after 1563 that all education in the home, school and even the university was based upon the truths set forth in the Catechism.

The Heidelberg Catechism was adopted by the Anglican Church in England in 1567, as the standard expression of her faith; by the Dutch Synod of Wesel in 1568, and by the Synod of Dordt in 1571, by the Scottish Church in 1571, and of course by the Synod of Dordt of international representation in 1618-19. From this time on the Heidelberg Catechism has been a standard of faith in the Reformed Church world. The reason for such a universal appeal is undoubtedly its foundation in the Word of God. Without question the Heidelberg Catechism is a faithful exposition of the Scriptures, and sets forth all the basic tenets of the Scripture as it reveals the doctrine of our salvation.

God had raised up men in the time of the reformation to return His people to Word of God for their comfort and salvation. Kaspar Olevianus and Zacharias Ursinus were led by God to defend the reformed faith as young men, and were given the ability to set forth the faith clearly before the people. They were young men in their late twenties when Frederick III commissioned them to write the catechism.

But we understand that they were the means that God had chosen to give to his church during this time of trial and persecution (the Heidelberg Catechism and those that held to it teaching were despised and hated by the Roman Catholic authorities and there was great oppositions to the same by the Lutherans who held much sway in the land where the catechism was composed). The Elector Prince Frederick III himself was charged at the Diet of Augsburg in 1566 with innovations and the use of a catechism that agreed not with the Augsburg Confession. Therefore by decree it was demanded that he change or disown the Catechism, and if he refused he would be declared excluded from the Peace of the Empire, and that he and his province would suffer the consequences. Before the Emperor and the Diet, Frederick defended with the Scriptures his use of the catechism. He stated that he must obey God before men, and as for his Cat-

echism, he stated it all is in accord with the Scripture, and it is so well fortified with marginal proof texts, that it cannot be overthrown.¹ Further he professed that if any thing should be shown better from the Scriptures, that he would gladly yield himself to God's truth. And explained that the Bible is here for this purpose to lead us in the knowledge of our salvation. It is this truth that the catechism demands to be maintained. The Diet was convinced by his defense, the catechism was allowed to stand, and Frederick was declared yet a part of the Peace of the Empire.

The point that was made by the Elector Frederick III, was one that was recognized by the church, not only in the Palatinate, but in Zurich and in the Netherlands, as well as in England and Scotland and eventually in the United States. Namely, that the catechism set forth faithfully the doctrine of salvation in a way that serves also the instruction of God's people, and that in this serves

our understanding of the truth of God's Word. Further, our forefathers believed it necessary that the church remain well founded in this truth of the Scripture, knowing it to be essential to the very life of the church. Thus in wisdom, they determined that it is for the welfare of God's people and to maintain the glory of the God of our salvation that we ought to preach from the catechism every Sunday. By this blessed preaching of the Catechism, generation after generation are led in the faith, and kept in the

truth against all attempts to destroy our faith.

There are those that would lead us away from the preaching of the catechism. Many who would tempt us to depart from the faithful preaching of the catechism are those that would not be led by any of the Creeds. But we ought to understand that those who want not Creeds do not want to be bound by the Scripture. This is exactly what our three Standards of Unity (the Heidelberg Catechism, the Belgic Confession, and the Canons of Dordt) do. To hold to the Creeds is to be bound to the teaching of the Scripture. One cannot depart from the Word of God without the Creeds making it apparent that he embraces heresy. This is why the children of darkness hate the creeds. We must not take heed to their temptations no matter how piously they speak in their attempt to put them away.

**It is impossible to preach
man's word as bound by
the catechism, the
preacher is bound by the
catechism to expound
God's Word.**

Positively, the forefathers are right, to preach the Heidelberg catechism regularly means that no doctrine is left untreated. The whole counsel of God is proclaimed, and God is glorified. Now do not say to preach the catechism is to preach the word of man. If you so speak then you do not know the catechism. The catechism sets forth the Word of God, when one preaches the catechism he preaches the Word of God. It is impossible to preach man's word as bound by the catechism; the preacher is bound by the catechism to expound God's Word. This, too, is the blessedness of the catechism preaching. The minister that faithfully proclaims the truth set forth in the Heidelberg catechism must faithfully proclaim the Scripture, and that Scripture from the point of view of all of its truth. Thus is God glorified and we in all humility are led to know the testimony of our salvation as revealed to us in the God-given, God-inspired Scripture. Indeed the

preaching of the Heidelberg Catechism is blessed for the child of God for it reveals the fullness of the counsel of God with respect to our salvation, it means that from Lord's Day to Lord's Day we are given the assurance of God's word of our only comfort in life and in death, that is that we belong to our faithful Savior Jesus Christ our Lord. ❖

¹This remark and some historical facts obtained from the book Heidelberg Catechism, Reliance Publishing Company, Green Bay, Wisconsin, 1979.

Rev. Moore is pastor of Hull Protestant Reformed Church in Hull, Iowa.

Poem

God's Cleansing Work

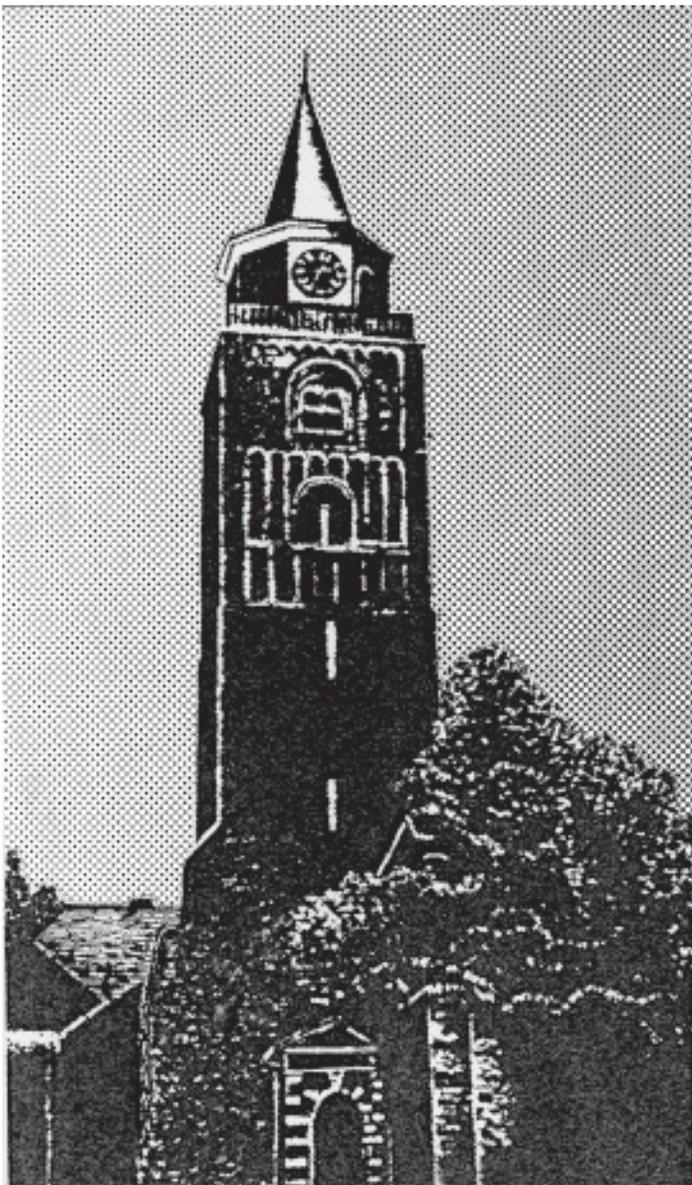
This morning I woke to a freshly washed world;
I pondered- just what does this mean?
It pictured to me how God takes sinners' hearts
And renews, makes them perfectly clean.
How great a Redeemer is needed for this-
Each day there's a mountain of guilt!
Each day there is mercy abundant in scope;
On this promise my faith has been built.

I thank Thee, dear Father, that Thou in Thy grace
Looked down upon sinners and saw
Not our sins, but the blood of the sacrificed Lamb;
The fulfillment complete of the law.
Give me eyes, Lord, to see, and a heart to rejoice
In the beauty surrounding this earth,
Knowing this merely is a portrayal of all
That Thy work of salvation brings forth.

Thelma Westra

The State-Reformed Church Of Rijnsburg

by J.P. de Klerk



The most interesting part of this old Dutch Church is the tower which was built in 1133 as part of a monastery. Rijnsburg was first named Rinasburg, founded in 600, not far from the fishers-village of Noordwijk at the North Sea. There were forests with many wild animals in those days, and a fortification against the Norsmen and Danish robbers, built by the Romans.

Duchess Sophia of Rheinech got a Church built next to the tower, in 1183. Since that date the tower has been restored several times. In 1530 the Reformation reached Rijnsburg, but the Roman-Catholics still had the Church-building, so that the first meetings had to be field conventicles.

In 1577 the Church got its first minister, Rev. Johannes Arcerius. In 1591 the next minister was Carolus Agricola, probably a relative of Rudolphus Agricola, but he travelled a lot through Europe and became more humanist than Reformed. Finding the names is difficult because they usually were replaced by Latin words, which is quite confusing.

I reconstructed the drawing from an old tile. ❖

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

The Garden (2)

The sun was warm and bright, but a light breeze made the afternoon comfortable. Not comfortable enough for Nathan, however, who was pulling weeds in his neighbor's garden to make some extra money. He was glad to get the job, but he was getting weary.

"Hi, Nathan," said his sister Lydia as she came into the garden. "Mr. Jones saw me outside and said I could join you. Wow, what a lot of weeds!" Lydia chose a row of carrots to begin in and started pulling.

"Yeah," answered Nathan, "this is a big job. I'm getting pretty hot and tired." His row of tomatoes was getting cleaned a bit more tiredly, too.

The two hadn't been working long together when Mr. Jones came out to the garden. "Nice work, kids, but that's enough for one day. I don't want you to get too hot. You can finish tomorrow." And with that he handed them both their pay.

"Thank you, Mr. Jones," said Nathan.

"Yes, thank you, Mr. Jones," added Lydia.

When they were home, Lydia set her money down and said, "I'm going to get my money jar and count how much I have saved up."

"Hey, that's not fair!" protested Nathan as he saw what she had set down. "You got the same amount of money that I got, and I worked longer!"

"What's the problem?" popped in Mother when she heard Nathan's raised voice.

Nathan explained the situation to her.

"Hm, this reminds me of one of those pictures we're watching for. Just wait 'til tonight."

At suppertime Father read one of Jesus' parables. Lydia and Nathan listened attentively to the story about the servants who were hired at different times of day. The ones who were hired earliest complained when they were all paid the same amount at the end of the day.

"Although I can guess, I don't know for sure why Mr. Jones gave Lydia the same wages as you, Nathan," began Father, "but I do know that the late-comers in this parable didn't deserve their wages. In the Judgement

"LITTLE LIGHTS"

... let it shine!

by Connie Meyer

Day, when God pays us who are His children, He won't reward us for our own works, but only for the perfect work that Christ has done in us. We *won't* get what we deserve, and that's the point. If we did, we would go to hell just like those complaining servants in the parable who got what they deserved and were sent away. This parable is a picture of God's grace for His elect children."

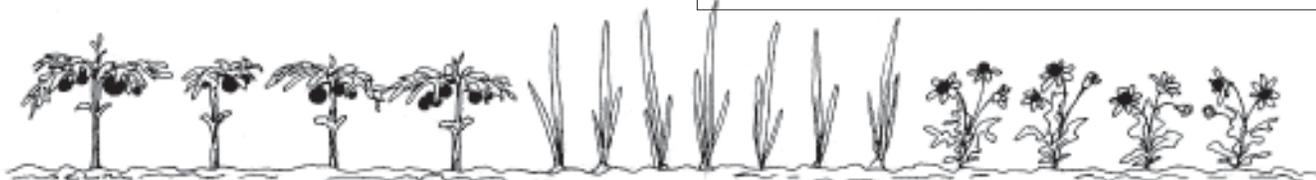
Look up Matthew 20:1-16 and "see" this picture for yourself! ❖

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

Puzzle: Can you find the following words from Matthew 20 in the puzzle below?

| | | | |
|---------|--------|-----------|----------|
| morning | hire | labourers | vineyard |
| penny | third | ninth | eleventh |
| hour | evil | good | last |
| many | called | few | chosen |

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



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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:

Laura Jane, daughter of Mr. & Mrs. Brad Dykstra—Byron Center, MI
Erika Carol, daughter of Mr. & Mrs. Jeff Hulst—Byron Center, MI
Abigail Renae, daughter of Mr. & Mrs. Cornelis Kleyn—Byron Center, MI
Tessa Elisabeth, daughter of Mr. & Mrs. Ron Hunderman—Byron Center, MI
John William, son of Rev. & Mrs. Rich Smit—Doon, IA
Jacob Scott, son of Mr. & Mrs. Dave Griffioen—Faith, MI
Michael Todd, son of Mr. & Mrs. Tim Talsma—Faith, MI
Jared Douglas & Amanda Marie, children of Mr. & Mrs. Doug Altena—Georgetown, MI
Benjamin David, son of Mr. & Mrs. Dave Steenwyk—Georgetown, MI

Jenna Lynae, daughter of Mr. & Mrs. Kurt VanOverloop—Grandville, MI
Levi Joel, son of Mr. & Mrs. Peter Faber—Grandville, MI
Brendan Alan, son of Mr. & Mrs. Brad Brower—Hudsonville, MI
Ryan Paul, son of Mr. & Mrs. Brain Kroese—Hull, IA
Kayla, daughter of Mr. & Mrs. Chris Sharlepp—Hull, IA
Elena Renae, daughter of Mr. & Mrs. Bob Bos—Loveland, CO
Leah Joy, daughter of Mr. & Mrs. Pete Medema—Peace, IL
Hailey Nicole, daughter of Mr. & Mrs. Paul Buteyn—Randolph, WI
Jacob Henry, son of Mr. & Mrs. Steve Hoving—Southwest, MI
Heidi Renae, daughter of Mr. & Mrs. Jeff Potjer—Southwest, MI
Mitchell James, son of Mr. & Mrs. Dan Kaiser—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:

Candice Boon, Tim Blankespoor, Melissa Hoogendoorn, & Kristi VanBemmel—Doon, IA
Daryl Brands, Carisa Bleyenberg, & Lisa Bleyenberg—Edgerton, MN
Kristin Kuiper and Michael Vander Veen—Hudsonville, MI
Robert & Joel Hoksbergen—Lynden, WA

MARRIAGES *“...and they twain shall be one flesh.”*

Matthew 19:5

UNITED IN THE BONDS OF HOLY MATRIMONY WERE:

Greg Holstege & Rhonda Gritters—Faith, MI
Chad VanOverloop & Lori Rozendall—Hudsonville, MI
Kevin Brummel & Kathy DeYoung—Hull, IA
Bradley Butgereit & Rebecca Kuiper—Grandville, MI
Ed Hoksbergen & Sarah Regnerus—Randolph, WI