
Beacon

October
1997

Volume LVI
Number 9

Lights





The Perspicuity of the Bible

By Mike Feenstra

October is here again. The time of year when most of us are well back into the normal routine of school, work, and church life. For some of you, this means the demands of learning at the university level. The first few weeks of school are past, and you are starting to get deep into the material. Your classes may be in Philosophy, the Sciences, or Business. Right now, you are probably thinking that the teaching at the university is contrary to what you have learned in our Christian schools. Therefore, there may be questions arising in your mind about the material you are studying. Perhaps you were intimidated by the learned doctor who stood lecturing in front of you today, directly challenging the truths of Scripture. What should you think? What are we as Christians to think about the wisdom of this world as it is evident in the institutions of higher learning? Is it true wisdom? According to Scripture it is not. There God says that He destroys the wisdom of the wise and reveals true wisdom unto those who are the simple of this world. This true wisdom is the knowledge of God and His Son Jesus Christ, and the keeping of His will in all our lives (Prov. 9:10, Deut. 4:6).

The fact that God reveals His truth to the humble of this world implies that His Word is clear to even the simplest of minds. This is what we call the doctrine of the perspicuity of the Bible. God restored this truth to His church through the work of the men of the Reformation like Martin Luther and John Calvin. They stood over against Rome which taught that only the clergy could read and understand the Scriptures. About this teaching of Rome, Calvin comments on Psalm 119:130 with these words: "Let the Papists mock, as they are accustomed to do, because we would have the Scriptures to be read by all men without exception; yet it is no falsehood which God utters by the mouth of David, when He affirms that the light of His truth is exhibited to fools (that is, to the "simple" of vs. 130, MPF)."

The Reformers were not content only to speak against Rome on this issue, but to act by translating the Scriptures into the languages of the common people. Just think of the persecutions men like William Tyndale and John Wycliffe endured because they translated and distributed the Bible. Are we as zealous for this truth today when men of higher learning cast doubt upon the perspicuity, infallibility and sufficiency of the Holy Scriptures?

This is exactly what these men do when they teach the vain philosophy of higher criticism! Man attempts to explain the Scriptures through Science so that the miracles are denied and ultimately the whole gospel. The schools of higher learning also cast doubt on the Holy Scriptures when they openly contradict God's Word by promoting both materialism and the pursuit of honor in

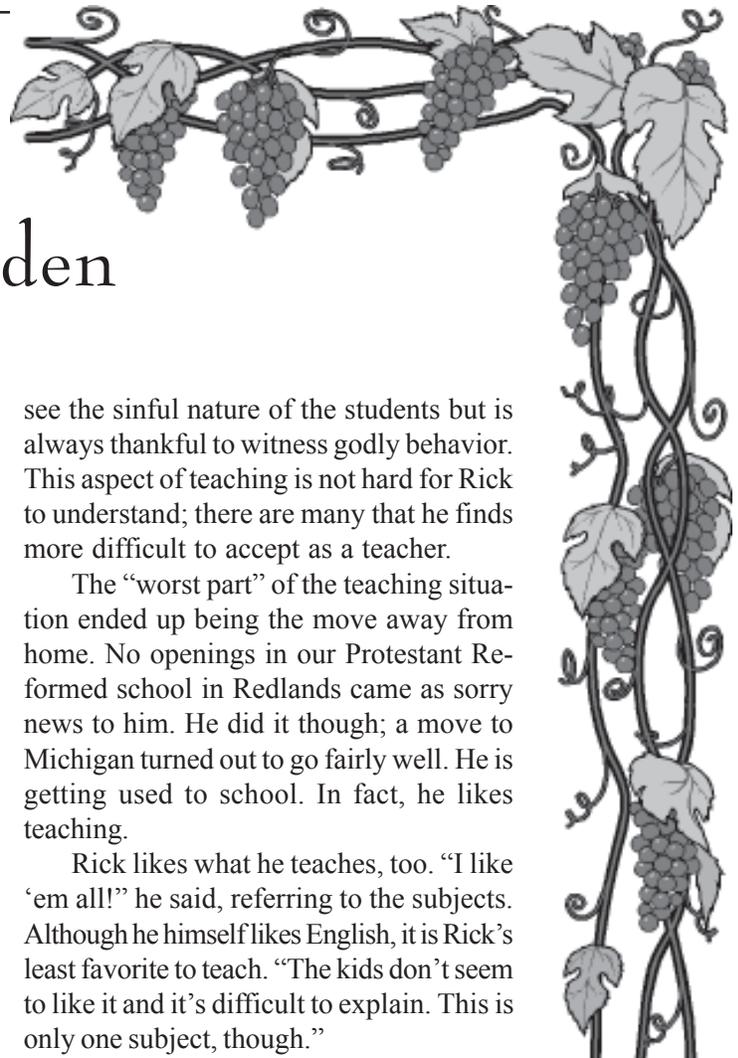
this world. These philosophies are very real temptations for us, especially our young people. Therefore, we all must be awake and ready to do battle with them because in many colleges these greedy philosophies are promoted vigorously. They tell us that we must have confidence in our own strength until we achieve our dreams. To the world this is wise. Therefore, the men of this world busy themselves with many years of study so that they can be great men, the “teachers” of this world.

Over against these false teachings the Word of God says that, “the testimony of the LORD is sure, making wise the simple” (Psalm 19:7b), so that even the smallest child or simple person who has faith in Jesus Christ can say, “I have more understanding than all my teachers: for Thy testimonies are my meditation” (Psalm 119:99). Against this truth the world can only stand and mock saying, “The simple are most wise?” They are like the Pharisees of Jesus day who mocked the man born blind. After Christ healed this man, he manifested his faith in thanksgiving to God. Upon hearing this confession, the Pharisees proudly responded, “Thou wast altogether born in sins, and dost thou teach us?” (John 9:30- 34). This response of the Pharisees was pure unbelief, and those who repeat the same words today do the same. They want nothing to do with Christ because they don’t want to give God all the glory. Christ’s suffering on the cross is foolishness to them because they refuse to heed the command of Jesus in Matt. 18:3 where He says, “Verily I say unto you, Except ye be converted and become as little children, ye shall not enter into the kingdom of heaven.” They will not obey the gospel’s command to repent and confess that they are blind. Their pride will not allow it, for God hardens them by the preaching of His Word.

On the other hand God uses this same preaching to open the eyes of His elect. He does this by making them realize that by nature they see not. Our Lord teaches us this truth when He says, “For judgment I am come into this world, that they which see not might see; and that they which see might be made blind” (John 9:39). Christ came into this world to blind those who seem to be “wise” in this world, the “teachers” in the universities who teach contrary to God’s law. And Christ also comes to reveal Himself to those who are the “blind” of this world. In God’s school of wisdom the only pupils are “little children.”¹ He reveals Himself to them because then at the Judgment Day He will receive all the glory for the salvation of His people, and the “wise” of this world who think they prosper by their own hand will be exposed as fools.

He reveals Himself to His children in the way of their meditation upon Him (Psalm 119:99b). His Word may be clear to all His people small and great, but only if it is studied. I fear that we often lose sight of this truth because we think that we know all that there is to know about the Scriptures. There must be development in wisdom through study but only in childlike dependence upon God. In this way Christ makes us, the simple, truly wise for He makes us to know God and Himself and this knowledge is eternal life (John 17:3). With this in mind, we need not be afraid of the learned university professor who may laugh at us for we rest on God’s Word in Psalm 19:7b, the versification of which is the familiar words of Psalter #40, stanza 1: “His truth makes the simple most wise the truth that is sure evermore.” ❖

¹*Calvin Commentaries*, I Cor. 1:17



A Teacher's Burden

by Curt Gritters

Awake every night. Climbing out of bunk-bed to a new day's work...and its problems. Another 22-year-old struggling with life's questions. Three years of college are over, but their use in his life is yet unknown. More questions, 10 years old, yet remaining unanswered: "Who will I be? What career is right for me?" These were the questions facing my Uncle Rick Gritters.

Taking business, just as many other fellow students unsure of their life's calling, Rick went through college hoping more work would bring an answer. "I didn't know what I wanted to do!" He has chosen a state college only because it was cheaper than the private ones. Since college was only a short drive away, he could come home each night, still pondering the question that stuck as a burr in his mind. Three years of college finally brought a decision to Rick.

It was then that the burr began loosening. A part-time job in Hope Protestant Reformed School in Redlands, California became a great opportunity for an answer to his question. It was there that he saw he "liked being around kids." A short phone message from my dad (Rick's brother) was the encouragement that he needed. "I wanted to use my life to glorify God."

The importance of teaching in a Christian school meant a lot to him. "Teaching is rearing covenant children and they are the children of the future church." Teaching is not a Christian's calling if that teaching is done as it is in the public schools. Teaching young children the truths of being a Christian is important and that's what Rick want to do.

"I just like younger students," Rick said with a chuckle when he tried to explain why he chose the lower grades to teach. The younger kids seem to like school more. Plus, in junior high one has to teach one or two subjects as opposed to the variety of the elementary curriculum. More discipline for older students also became a determining factor. "Behavior?" Rick said, "It's hard to say generally, but it's okay for the most part." He can

see the sinful nature of the students but is always thankful to witness godly behavior. This aspect of teaching is not hard for Rick to understand; there are many that he finds more difficult to accept as a teacher.

The "worst part" of the teaching situation ended up being the move away from home. No openings in our Protestant Reformed school in Redlands came as sorry news to him. He did it though; a move to Michigan turned out to go fairly well. He is getting used to school. In fact, he likes teaching.

Rick likes what he teaches, too. "I like 'em all!" he said, referring to the subjects. Although he himself likes English, it is Rick's least favorite to teach. "The kids don't seem to like it and it's difficult to explain. This is only one subject, though."

Parental encouragement helps boost his spirits, when he is thinking about English. The greatest encouragement comes through parents in their support and appreciation. Yet the most difficult times come from their calls also. "They sometimes make it hard for teachers." Another tough part is "when kids don't behave as you want them to, and then you have to decide how to handle it wisely." Teachers always seem to be given advice on how they should teach. But they give advice too.

Rick says that the only reason that we're on this earth is to live separate from the world. "We must watch how we live and act. Living a life different than students at other schools" is very important for the Christian.

The burr of choosing a job has long fallen away, but many more have stuck hard. Rick has been in Michigan for a few years now, and he's learning to ignore the burrs in the field of teaching. "I guess that's just the life of a teacher!" ❖

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

Head Coverings for Women

By Rev. R. G. Moore

From a questioner in Michigan:

In Corinthians 11:5 reads “But every woman that prayeth or prophesieth with {her} head uncovered dishonoureth her head: for that is even all one as if she were shaven.”

Why don't the women in the Protestant Reformed Churches keep their heads covered? Maybe the obvious answer is because this was simply the custom in Paul's time. But that seems to me to be a dangerous position to take, because using this line of thinking, you could tolerate homosexuality in the church, women in church office, etc. Please let me know what you think.

Answer

In the first place it does not really matter what I think. It does matter what the Word of God teaches. You are correct when you express a displeasure with the idea of using the customs of the day as a reason why we do something different today. We believe that the Word of God, the Scripture is not in any way time conditioned, or socially conditioned so that it teaches something different today than it did when it was written. It is true that times change, but the teaching of the Word of God does not. For it is the Word of the living God, which is infallibly inspired by God to direct His people of all ages in His perfect wisdom. God does not change, (Malachi 3:6) then certainly neither does His word.

This leaves us with the question of why our women do not keep their heads covered? Your question is based upon a wrong assumption, and that is that our women worship God with their heads uncovered. This is not true, our women do worship God with their heads covered as required by this Word of God. In order to understand this we must take a little time to look at the context of the text that you quote. In I Corinthians 11:3-4 “But I would have you know, that the head of every man is Christ; and the head of the woman {is} the man; and the head of Christ {is} God. Every man praying or prophesying, having {his} head covered, dishonoureth his head.” It is obvious that Paul is teaching the church that it is necessary that the Headship of Christ be maintained also in the

church as it is manifest in the earth. Further the church is ruled by the Lord of His Church, and it pleases Christ to exercise that headship through the man. Therefore in our churches according to the Spirit in another place, the women remain silent in church and may not take up or be given the offices of Christ. For the head of the woman is man.

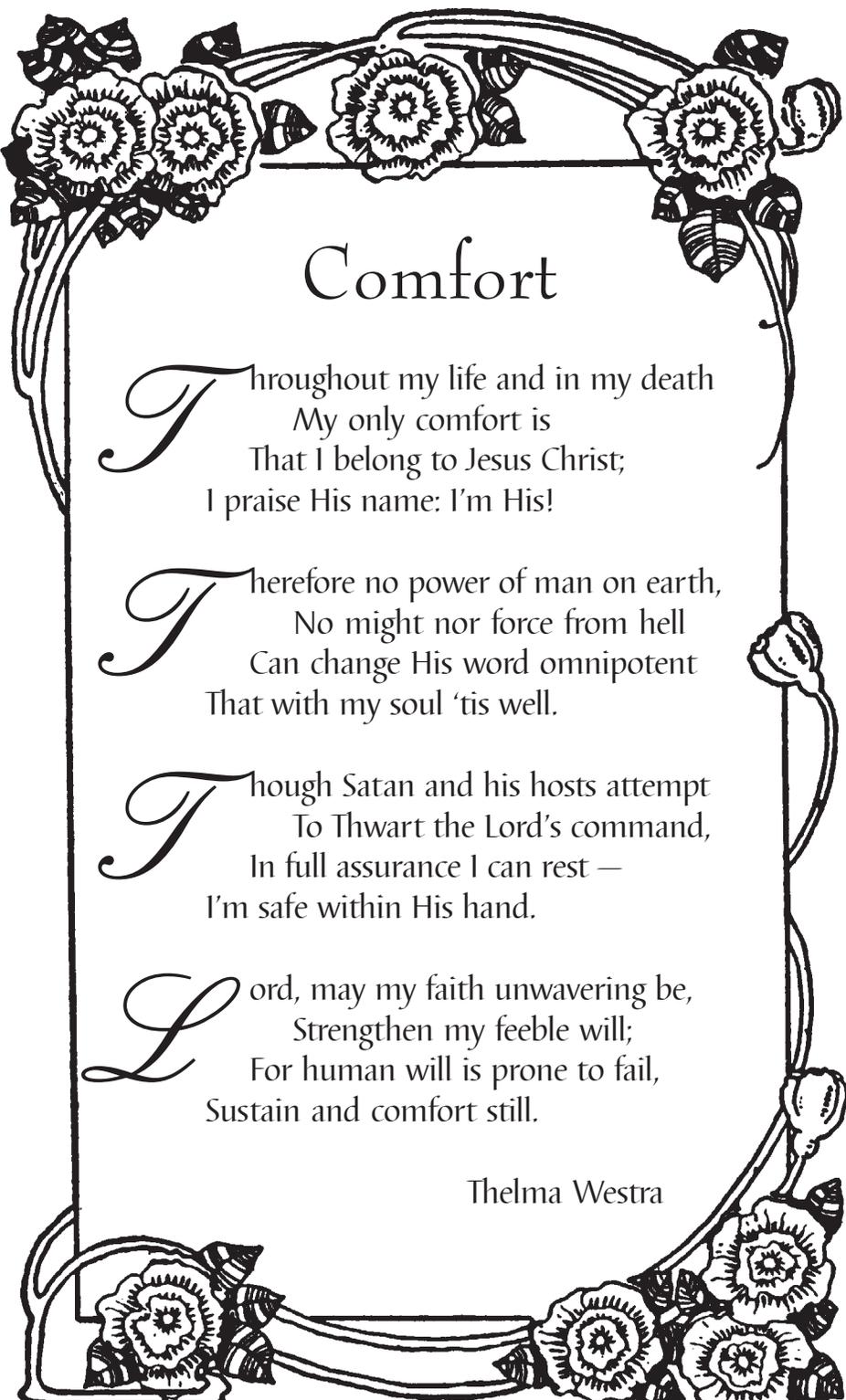
Thus for a man to have his head covered, that is, by a woman taking the place of headship it is a shame, and his office is dishonored, and really Christ is dishonored. On the other hand for a woman to attempt to worship without her head covered, without submitting to the rule of Christ through man, it is a shame and dishonors Christ Who has placed her under the headship of her husband, father, or elder. This passage condemns the usurpation of the offices of Christ in the church by women.

This is also symbolically seen in that the woman has her head covered, but the covering of the woman is her luxuriant hair, “But if a woman have long hair, it is a glory to her: for {her} hair is given her for a covering,” (vs. 15) it is a shame to be shaven for this was done to those that were found in sin.

On the other hand for a man to worship with his head covered, placing himself under a woman in his worship or family it is an abomination. This is the deceitful work of satan in our day that men give up to women the office of Christ they are to carry. It opposes the Word of God. This is also seen symbolically, if the man in the church takes on himself the appearance of a woman and wears his hair long, Paul teaches that nature says this is a shame (vs. 14).

Yet Paul warns with respect to long hair or short hair, while this may be a symbol from nature, the church has no such custom (vs. 16). Paul teaches it is the principle that is necessary for the church to hear. The headship of Christ must be properly exercised in the midst of God's people. ❖

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



Comfort

*T*hroughout my life and in my death
My only comfort is
That I belong to Jesus Christ;
I praise His name: I'm His!

*T*herefore no power of man on earth,
No might nor force from hell
Can change His word omnipotent
That with my soul 'tis well.

*T*hough Satan and his hosts attempt
To Thwart the Lord's command,
In full assurance I can rest —
I'm safe within His hand.

*L*ord, may my faith unwavering be,
Strengthen my feeble will;
For human will is prone to fail,
Sustain and comfort still.

Thelma Westra

Be Ye Separate

by Aaron J. Cleveland

An ever present danger to the church of God in this world is that of world-conformity. World-conformity afflicts all of God's people from one degree to another. Younger saints must especially struggle with this weakness. It is a sin which reveals itself in the lack of living a spiritually separate life from this world and a desire to make a friendship with this world, imitate it, and to conform to its lifestyle. Many passages in the Bible remind us of the impossibility of loving God and serving Him on the one hand, and loving the world and conforming to the world on the other. I John 2:15,16 reads, "Love not the world, neither the things that are in the world. If any man love the world, the love of the Father is not in him. For all that is in the world, the lust of the flesh, and the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life, is not of the Father, but is of the world." From these verses and many others (including Romans 12:2, Col. 3:2,3, Matt. 6:24), we are reminded of this impossibility and are called to examine our lives and to live a spiritually separate life in this godless world.

World-conformity is a sin that takes many different shapes and forms. It is not something that confronts us in only one area of life. It attacks from all angles and tempts us in every sphere of life. It is a desire for earthly riches and wealth. It is the acceptance and practice of worldly philosophy and thinking. It is fellowship with the wicked.

The desire to accumulate earthly wealth and obtain that high-paying job is one facet of world-conformity that we as young people must struggle with, especially those who are in college. When we look at the world, there seems to be great contentment and enjoyment among those who are rich. They seem to have no worries. They appear to be secure. "But they that will be rich," as it is inspired in I Timothy 6:9, "fall into temptation and snare, and into many foolish and hurtful lusts." One cannot seek after God and the things of His kingdom, and at the same time seek after the wealth to be had in this world. Rather, we are admonished to "godliness with contentment." Then do we truly have "great gain" (I Tim. 6:6).

World-conformity also manifests itself in the acceptance and practice of the thinking and philosophy of this world. It is worldly science that is taught in so-called Christian colleges that seeks to deny God's six day creation. It is worldly science that seeks to deny the Flood, the virgin birth, and the miracle of the falling of the walls of Jericho. As we read in I Corinthians 3:19, it is the "foolish" wisdom of this world. "For the wisdom of this world is foolishness with God. For it is written, He taketh the wise in their own craftiness."

The world has no wisdom to offer that is of any value to the Reformed young person. There is no line of thinking that this world has that is superior to God's. Worldly wisdom cannot be used in the service of God. All the wisdom that the child of God needs is found in His word. That is why we, as reformed young people, must be discriminating with the material that we read in the world's magazines, the philosophies we hear from worldly instructors, and the words and music we hear over the airwaves. "Beware lest any man spoil you through philosophy and vain deceit, after the tradition of men, after the rudiments of the world, and not after Christ" (Col. 2:8). There are many who would have us think that New Age thinking is preferable to God's wisdom; that happiness is found in ourselves and apart from God. There are many who would have us think that there is no difference in believing a six-day creation or a creation set into motion by God and casually watched over by Him for billions of years. There are even those who claim to be our friends who would have us believe that the preaching that we hear twice every Sunday is foolishness. They may even laugh and say that there are much better and more exciting ways in which God feeds our souls. To them our answer must be, "Hath not God made foolish the wisdom of this world? For after that in the wisdom of God the world by wisdom knew not God, it pleased God by the foolishness of preaching to save them that believe" (I Cor. 1:20, 21).

The desire to conform to this world also manifests itself in the music we listen to, where we seek our entertainment, in our relationships with parents, teachers, and friends, and even in the way we dress. Romans 12:2 serves as good instruction in this regard. “And be not conformed to this world: but be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind, that ye may prove what is that good, and acceptable, and perfect, will of God.” Living an acceptable life before God requires that we live spiritually separate from this world in all aspects of our lives. It means that we do not listen to and sing the songs of this world. It means that we do not seek to imitate the world in its dress. It means that we do not immerse ourselves in worldly entertainment. It means that we do not live a life of rebellion to those God has placed in authority over us. Rather, it means that we listen to and sing songs worthy to be sung. It means dressing in a manner that is modest and as God has instructed. It means seeking God and the things of His kingdom. It means obedience to parents, employers, and those in government positions. We must not harmonize our lifestyle after that of this world, but our lifestyle must be one of spiritual separation unto God.

Fellowship with those of this world can also be included in world-conformity. In the last half of Romans 1 we read of the ungodly men of this world and their unrighteousness. These are men, who in their heart of hearts know the truth about God and are without excuse. However, these men “glorified Him not as God, neither were thankful; but became vain in their imagination, and their foolish heart was darkened” (vs. 21). These worldly men are using every bit of energy they have in the disservice of God. They have “changed the truth of God into a lie.” They commit every sin under the sun in direct contradiction to the law of God. Not only do they take pleasure in corruption, but also they take pleasure in those who join together with them in their sin (vs. 32). There can be no fellowship with this world. There is no basis for fellowship. The world hates God and His law. Fellowship with the world is enmity with God.

Finally, not conforming to this world means that we do not envy the world. Both Psalm 37 and 73 are good Psalms to read whenever envious thoughts about the world enter our minds. It is true that when we look at the world from a distance, there seems to be prosperity, security, and happiness. They seem to have no worries. Psalm 73:5 reads: “They are not in trouble as other men; neither are they plagued like other men.” It can be quite

easy to become envious of the world and the carefree lifestyle that they seem to enjoy.

But do not be deceived. They are not to be envied. “How are they brought into desolation, as in a moment! They are utterly consumed with terrors” (vs. 19). Asaph, in a moment of weakness was envious of the wicked, but by God’s grace realized the foolishness of his thoughts. The wicked have nothing to be envied. Their prosperity is short-lived and their end is destruction.

Rather, we ought to set our affections on things above. “Set your affections on things above, not on things on the earth.” This is the calling that we as God’s people have. This is our calling as Reformed young people who live spiritually separate from this world. If our affections are on things above, they cannot be on the things of this world. This does not mean that we must live physically separate from the world around us. This is an impossibility. It is necessary to live in the world. However, we must not become a part of that world and live its lifestyle.

The young person who has his affections on the things above lives a life of sobriety. Those who are drunk with this world, are not living in sobriety. Titus 2:12 exhorts us to a live “soberly, righteously, and godly, in this present world.” Only in sobriety can we be “looking for that blessed hope.”

Living soberly in the service of God means that we will face opposition from the world. The world is not indifferent to those who live in the service of God. They hate God and those who serve God. Everything in their power to oppose God’s people they will do. “Yea, and all that will live godly in Christ Jesus shall suffer persecution,” we read in II Timothy 3:12. Whether that persecution is mild or severe, we can be assured that there “shall” be persecution.

But we must not be discouraged by this certain opposition and persecution. It is God’s means to strengthen His people. God’s reward for those who live in service of Him is far greater than the persecution that any of us might face in this life. “Wait on the Lord, and keep His way, and he shall exalt thee to inherit the land,” Psalm 37:34. ❖

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

Psalter 134—Praise and Trust

by Beth DeVries

Many of us have favorite Psalter numbers; they become our favorite for one reason or another. Often times a certain number brings back memories - some happy and some sad. I have grown very attached to #134 for reasons I'm not even sure about. However, I always find a comfort in the last half of the 3rd stanza, "For God as our own God; Forever will abide; and till life's journey close in death; will be our faithful guide." We are strengthened by this truth when we lose a loved one but also as we struggle to sort out our way in this life. In this Psalter number we are often reminded what a joy it is to go to church - the temple and Zion and to proclaim God's faithfulness to all peoples of the earth without fear for God will always

134 Praise and Trust
PSALM 48 S. M. DIADEMATA George J. Elvey

1. With - in Thy tem - ple, Lord, In that most ho - ly place,
2. Let Zi - on now re - joice, And all her chil - dren sing;
3. Ob - serve her pal - a - ces, Mark her de - fens - es well,

We on Thy lov - ing - kind - ness dwell, The won - ders of Thy grace.
Let them with thank - ful - ness pro - claim The judg - ments of their King.
That to the sons that fol - low you Her glo - ries you may tell;

Men sing Thy praise, O God, Wher - e'er Thy Name is known;
Mount Zi - on's walls be - hold. A - bout her ram - parts go,
For God as our own God For - ev - er will a - bide,

By ev - 'ry deed Thy hand hath wrought Thy right - eous - ness is shown.
And num - ber ye the loft - y tow'rs That guard her from the foe.
And till life's jour - ney close in death Will be our faith - ful guide.

114 [Selected Stanzas]

protect us. We are encouraged to sing the praises of God. Men everywhere are called to sing praise to God as demonstrated in the first stanza when it says "Men sing thy praise, O God, where'er Thy Name is known."

May our hearts fill with joy as we sing the versifications of our beloved Psalms. The truths of God are ever proclaimed within them. Let the words of our mouth in speech or singing give praise to God, and what better way than by singing the Psalms written for this purpose. There is comfort and encouragement for the Christian as we sing the words of the Psalter from our heart. ❖

Beth is a member of Grace Protestant Reformed Church in Standale, Michigan.



The Song of Zion

by John Huizenga

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

Psalm 34 - 36 Psalter Numbers 90 - 94

Note: Psalm 34 is an acrostic Psalm, meaning that each verse in the Hebrew language began with the next letter of the alphabet. This made it easier to memorize the psalm.

October 1 Read Psalm 34;1 Samuel 21:10 - 22:2 and the titles of Psalters 88-91

Each day we do foolish things in the weakness of our faith; each day the grace of God toward us is revealed even more. David wrote Psalm 34 after the terrifying experience of being taken before Abimelech ("Father King") Achish. He had put his trust in the strength of a wicked king instead of God and nearly perished because of it. David escaped by his quick thinking and willingness to degrade himself, but in the Psalm he acknowledges God as his sole deliverer. He knew he had been foolish, but he does not parade his sins before others. Rather, he dwells on the grace and power of God to deliver him and instructs us to put our trust in God always. Pray for the grace which strengthens us to flee from the use of our own wisdom for our glory, and may we seek to give God all the glory. Sing the Psalter.

October 2 Read Psalm 34:1,2; Psalter 90:1; II Cor 10:12-18; I Cor. 1:28-31; Jer. 9:23,24

Sinful man loves more than anything to boast about himself. Listen to children on the playground, listen to the poor, listen to the wealthy businessmen making new acquaintances, they are all ready to "one up" the other. Repentance and conversion by the grace of God turns us around to face the other direction. The new man in Christ seeks to boast not in himself, but in another, i.e. God. To boast in another is not at all what we want to do by nature. Do you boast in the LORD? It does not mean that we boast about how well we memorize Scripture, understand intricate doctrine, or all the happiness and material success God gives to us. Proper boasting in the LORD is always a very humbling experience. When we boast in the LORD, we confess we are saved by grace alone. We boast in our knowledge of God - a knowledge of our salvation from death by "the LORD which exercise lovingkindness, judgment, and righteousness in the earth." Sing the Psalter.

October 3 Read Psalm 34: 1-4; Psalter 88:1 & 90:2

Boasting in yourself will drive friends away; boasting in God brings unity among believers. After being delivered from Achish,

David fled to the cave of Adullam and all who were in distress came unto him and David became a captain over them. As they gathered around him in the dark cave, David met their downcast eyes with a wonderful call to praise and magnify God together. We are united together in Christ. Christ suffered the wrath of God under the burden of our sins, He cried unto Jehovah and God delivered Him from all His fears. Each day we must read God's Word and hear the gospel. We must hear Christ say "O magnify Jehovah with me." Pray that God may show you the wonder of His grace each day so that you desire to be with God's people in Church to sing praises to God. Sing the Psalter

October 4 Read Psalm 34:5-6 & Psalter 90:3; Isa. 60:1-5

You can be sure that the tired men listening to David in the cave had gloom in their face. David's face was beaming, and God would use him to make the faces of his men shine too. All hope must be found in God alone. Men of old looked unto God and His glory was reflected in them. Isaiah points us to Christ who brings light that never fades to every believer. Did you wake up this morning with gloom on your face? Are you distressed? Turn away from the troubles and trials of this life and look to God. He is working all things for your salvation and true knowledge of Him. By nature we are dead in sin and worthy of eternal hell, but God in his lovingkindness has chosen His people to eternal life. May the light of God's glory in Christ drive away the gloom from your face today. Sing the Psalter.

October 5 Read Psalm 34: 7,8 & Psalter 88:2, & 90:4; II Kings 6:15-17

David continues to encourage his men with the word of God as they hide with him in the cave. People of God, are you hiding in a cave from those who threaten you? Turn to God's Word. Don't gulp down sections without trying to understand and taste them. Savor God's Word. Distinguish its different flavors. Pray that your eyes may be enlightened as Jonathan was with a taste of honey. Pray that you may see the Angel of Jehovah encamped round about you. Elisha and his servant saw the Angel of Jehovah in the form of flaming chariots all around. Christ sends His Spirit to surround us with His protecting presence. As a shepherd He protects every one of His sheep and will bring them to glory. Pray to God that you might taste and see the goodness of God and be strengthened in courage for today. Sing the Psalter.

October 6 Read Psalm 34:9,10 & Psalter 90:5 & 88:3; Isa. 55

If you seek money, you will never have enough. If you seek health, you will never be healthy enough. If you seek an attractive appearance, you will never be attractive enough. If you seek fast cars, you will never find one fast enough. But, “they that seek the LORD shall not want any good thing.” When you seek to love Jehovah with all your heart, soul, mind and strength, you will always be satisfied with the abundance of His grace. Only in God can any man or woman be content. Are you content, or do you pine away for the many things which you think you need but can not have? God knows what is good for you and gives these things in abundance. Pray for contentment for “godliness with contentment is great gain.” Sing the Psalter.

October 7 Read Psalm 34:11-12 & Psalter 90:6; Job 27

The fear of Jehovah is at the heart of godly contentment. But how do we fear Jehovah? David comes as a teacher to children with clear and easy to understand instruction. He comes with the tender love of a father. He catches their attention with the rhetorical question “who wants to live in the enjoyment of happiness?” All men seek happiness, but why is it then, that so few find it? It is because they seek every way to happiness except obedience to God. The fear of Jehovah is happiness and contentment in this life. Are you attentive to this Word of God? Does the title of Psalter 89 catch your attention? Pray for the faith of a child that you may sit at the edge of your chair eager to hear the words of Christ our Teacher. Sing the Psalter.

October 8 Read Psalm 34:13,14 & Psalter 89:2; 90:7;**I Peter 3:8-12**

Will lying relieve you of distress and trouble? Will selfish love for yourself at the expense of others bring happiness? Lying and doing evil lead further into despair and misery. Watch what you say. Tell the truth. Let your tongue be a powerful instrument to build one up, not cut someone down. Guile is subtle and tricky talk. If you speak what is good, you have no need to use subtle language. Do you sense an evil situation developing in your conversation with others or in the thoughts of your mind? Depart from it. Walk away, pray to God for strength. Spend your energy seeking peace. Make peace your goal and pursue it without looking to either side or backwards to see what others are thinking or saying about you. Don't mind your hurt ego, mind your own business, the business of the believer, the pursuit of peace. All this we can do by faith alone in Christ. Sing the Psalter.

October 9 Read Psalm 34:15,16 & Psalter 89:3, 91:1;**Luke 12:1-12**

Psalter 91 picks up on a section of David's instruction which speaks of the safety of believers under the watchful eye of God. Knowing that God protects us is also important for us to understand if we are to have happiness in this life. God watches you as if you were the only one in the world to watch. He preserves you in the path of righteousness. When the way appears to be dark and you see danger all around, God is near to hear your prayers as well. When it seems as though the wicked enjoy their life of wickedness and receive no punishment of God, we must remember that God's face is against them. Though they set up monuments in their name, death will overcome them and they will be forgotten in this earth and forever. But God will not forget even a sparrow which falls to the ground, and even more so will he remember His people. Sing the Psalter.

October 10 Read Psalm 34:17-18; Psaltr 89:3; 91:2; Luke 15

God is near unto us at the times when we feel like He is far away. When our boasting heart is crushed, when our zest for life is gone; when we fall into sin and try to cover things up; when we begin to search for life and happiness in the world outside the fold of Christ and find ourselves alone and miserable like the prodigal son, God is very near watching and is in the process of turning us back. God brings us low because the high road we want to travel by nature leads to hell. In guilt we do not want to lift our eyes to God, but God will have us know His love and mercy. Thank God and praise Him for His lovingkindness and steadfast covenant faithfulness. Sing the Psalter.

October 11 Read Psalm 34:19-20; Psalter 89:4, 91:3;**II Timothy 3**

If we think that the doctrine of God's providence means that God will shield us from every danger and temptation, we are mistaken. The Christian must face head on the fact that the afflictions of the righteous are many. The men who came to David at the cave of Adullam must understand that the way to his God ordained place on the throne of Israel would not be easy. No matter how many afflictions there are, however, God will deliver from every last one. Not one bone will be broken. This does not mean we will never suffer broken bones physically. It means that the new man in Christ will never be destroyed. The body of Christ never suffered a broken bone, even so, the strength of Church will never be broken. Not one of her members will be lost. Sing the Psalter.

October 12 Read Psalm 34:21; Psalter 89:5; 91:4; Esther 7

In contrast to the righteous who are protected by the righteousness of Christ, the wicked are destroyed by their own wickedness. This truth is made graphically clear in the story of Esther. Haman hated the righteous. He loved schemes of treachery. But God in His wisdom and power turned all his schemes against him for his own destruction. So it is on a grand scale with Satan. He was lifted up in pride against God and determined to take the whole creation with him, but his actions were only part of God's eternal counsel to bring His people into heaven. We need not fret over the terrible things which wicked man does. Let us wait on Jehovah and see how He delivers His people. Sing the Psalter.

October 13 Read Psalm 34:22; Psalter 89:5; 91:5; Heidel-**berg Catechism LD 5**

Jehovah redeems His servants. Redemption is that aspect of our salvation and preservation that reminds us of our guilt and worthiness to be punished. In ourselves, we are not innocent. God would do us no injustice to leave us in the hand of the enemy. Before God we are guilty. Redemption means that someone pays the price which would set us free and make us innocent and righteous before God. Only Christ is able to pay the price of death and hell. Knowing our redemption, we are assured of his favor, go into the world as His willing servants, and trust in Him for our every need. Pray that God will increase your faith to know God our Redeemer, and go forth today as His willing servant. Sing the Psalter.

October 14 Read Psalm 35:1-3; Psalter 92:1; Luke 18:1-8

We begin a new psalm today in which God reveals to us how David came to Him while he was being afflicted. He came before God as he would come to a judge for help. David knew the law of God and he wanted God to enforce it. Men were fighting against

David and trying to kill him without a cause. As we meditate upon this psalm we must understand that David calls for God's judgment upon his enemies out of holy zeal for God's honor, and not out of proud contempt for those who did not like him. Those who were persecuting David were doing so because God was with David, and they hated God. Are you afflicted in your soul when you see and hear God's name taken in vain? Are you filled with zeal for God's honor when you are persecuted as a Christian? Then cry out to God for judgment. Pray without ceasing and do not faint. Sing the Psalter.

October 15 Read Ps. 35:4-8; Psalter 92:2; II Tim. 4:14-18; Rom. 11:7-10

Christ tells us to love our enemies; was it right then, for David to pray for shame, treachery, and destruction upon his enemies? Let us notice first of all that David did love his enemies. Remember how David refused to kill Saul when he had the chance? David was not one to lash out in passion to avenge his own dishonor. Yet he prays for the destruction of his enemies because in their persecution of him, they slander and blaspheme God. David's enemies manifest themselves to be wicked reprobates worthy of death. God alone knows who are the elect and who are the reprobate, so David calls on God to render swift judgment. Christ also could do nothing but bring all the sins of the elect to the cross to be destroyed. Pray that God's grace may rest upon you to give you discernment zeal for God's honor. Sing the Psalter.

October 16 Read Ps. 35:9,10; Psalter 92:3; Exo. 15:1-21

Verses 9 and 10 complete the first of three sections within this Psalm. Each section has the same pattern of "complaint, prayer, and a promise of praise." David will praise God with every bone of his body, bones which were sore under the oppression of the enemy. This is a praise for the triumph of righteousness over unrighteousness. It is the praise which welled up in the saints throughout the Old Testament as they waited for the seed of the woman to crush the head of the serpent and witnessed the pictures and types of the fulfillment in Christ. God will be glorified in the way of saving dead sinners and bringing them into joyous fellowship with Himself. Pray for a clear knowledge of your personal salvation and a heart filled with joy and praise for God. Sing the Psalter.

October 17 Read Ps. 35:11-16; Psaltr 92:4; Matt. 26:48-56

The way of salvation and true knowledge of God is a way of deep and painful wounds to the heart and soul. Nothing is worse than to be viscerally attacked for no reason by those whom you once regarded as good friends. We are easily hurt even by an unintentional comment by a friend which strikes a raw nerve within us. Have you ever experienced a vicious attack upon your person by one in whom you at one time held dear? David experienced it from Saul and others. Christ experienced it from Judas. We in Adam committed the most heinous act of rewarding evil for good when we rebelled against God in Eden. There is no sorrow on this earth unexperienced by Christ. Turn to Him in your every distress. Sing the Psalter.

October 18 Read Ps. 35:17-20; Psalter 92:5; Rom. 15:1-13

"I will give thee thanks in the great congregation." David promised to praise God among much people when God delivered him from his enemies. The deliverance which David experienced was a picture of the deliverance from sin and death promised in Christ. We read in Romans 15 that Christ came to confirm that promise so that the mercy of God might be proclaimed among the Gentiles. Christ

confronted the great enemy Satan and death on the cross and conquered him delivering all the children of God from death. The gospel quickly spread to the Gentiles and continues to go out in the pure preaching of the Word. Do you know the mercy of God? Do you display your thankfulness for salvation to those around you? Sing the Psalter in faith and pray for the strength to do what you sing.

October 19 Read Ps. 35:21-23; Psalter 92:6; Luke 1:45-54

The devil and those who hate God love to see the saints fall into sin. Do we not see the horror of our own sinful nature when we are so eager to gossip when one falls into gross sin? "He who rejoices in another's fall rejoices in the devil's victory" (Ambrose). When Jesus walked this earth, the enemies of God faced something they had never had to face before: a sinless man. They were never given the opportunity to rejoice in sin committed by Jesus. Even so, they tried to make Him fall and rejoiced when He "transgressed" their own laws which they pretended were the laws of God. We must come to the cross when others take pleasure in our falls, for in Christ we are righteous. Pray that the power of God's grace may give you the assurance of forgiveness and righteousness before God in Christ. Sing the Psalter.

October 20 Read Ps. 35:24-27a; Psaltr 92:7; I Cor. 12:18-31

"But those who in the good delight. Let them be glad and shout for joy." Unlike the wicked who hate the righteous cause of God's people and rejoice in their falls, the people of God as the one body of Christ rejoice when one member rejoices and suffer when one member suffers. By ourselves we are easily crushed by the cruel attacks of sinful men. Our faith seems all but to disappear. We need to be an active member of the church of Christ in order to remain strong spiritually. When we stand in Christ our enemies are brought to shame. Pray that God will make you an active member in the body of Christ: ready to give to the needy brother or sister, and humble to receive the mercies of Christ. Sing the Psalter.

October 21 Read Psalm 35:27b; Psalter 92:8; Mark 1

The servants of Jehovah are the instruments of God to accomplish the will of God in the earth. They know the will of God, and they willingly obey. God's will is perfect and holy, and therefore Jehovah has pleasure in the prosperity of His servants. David was a type of Christ Who is The Servant of Jehovah. Christ obeyed God perfectly and made us to be the servants of God also. Do you live each day knowing you are a servant of God? Our duty as servants is to magnify the LORD and speak of His righteousness and praise all the day long. Pray for the grace of God to be faithful servants today. Sing the Psalter.

October 22 Read Psalm 36; Psalter 93:1; Matt. 7:15-29

A sharp contrast divides Psalm 36 into a vivid description of the wicked and a vivid description of the goodness of God. The first verse may seem somewhat confusing at first. How does the transgression of the wicked speak within David's heart? Jesus makes this plain in Matthew 7. David sees around him the abundance of wicked fruits and these testify within his heart, made new by God's grace and able to judge rightly, that these fruits come from corrupt trees. Corrupt trees are men in whose heart there is no fear of God. Let us each look at his own fruits, are they good? Those who fear God know their works are corrupt also except they be done in Christ. Pray that your new man in Christ may bear fruits pleasing to God. Sing the Psalter.

October 23 Read Ps. 36:2; Psalter 93:2; I Sam. 15:10-23

Do you have the discernment of one who fears the Lord to recognize wickedness? David points out some chief characteristics of the wicked. One characteristic is that they persistently deny that what they are doing is wrong. This sin is prevalent among those who call themselves Christians and yet refuse to obey God's Word. Do not be fooled by those who cheerfully clamor about the greatness of God but do not worship God in church faithfully, insist that God leaves salvation up to man, or live in unrepentant sin. Samuel tells Saul that stubbornness is as iniquity and idolatry. By nature we hate God's Word and instruction. Pray for grace to submit humbly to the Word of God. Sing the Psalter.

October 24 Read Psalm 36:3; Psalter 93:3; Matt. 22:15-33

We daily fall into sin, but by the grace of God, we are willing to hear instruction. The wicked develop in sin until they devote their lives to evil and will have nothing to do with wisdom. David knew such, and we know in detail how the Pharisees made such wickedness manifest in the days Jesus walked on this earth. Often the most subtle lies come from leaders in the Church who would lead the flock astray. Despite their plots, yes even using them, God executes His counsel. He provides faithful ministers and elders who discern the truth. Let us thank God for the faithful ministers which He gives unto us and the gift of His Spirit which gives us spiritual wisdom to search the Scriptures. Sing the Psalter.

October 25 Read Psalm 36:4; Psalter 93:4; Matt. 27:1-18

Christ commands us to enter into our chamber and shut the door to pray. What a contrast that is to the wicked who deviseth mischief upon his bed! All night Judas not only meditated upon his wicked plan to kill Jesus, he carried it out under the cover of darkness as well. He set himself in a way that was not good. He did not hesitate to murder the Righteous One. His end was a horrible death and eternal hell. By nature we also are wicked and worthy of hell. Tomorrow we see the sharp contrast of man with God. The righteous can but render Him praise for so great a salvation. May your meditations each night be the mercies of God, and not mischief. Sing the Psalter.

October 26 Read Psalm 36:5-6a; Psalter 94:1; Eph. 3:8-21

Though we see among men terrible sin and confusion, the world is full of God's goodness and righteousness. God's mercy is seen in the sky: the vast ocean of the blue firmament tells us that God will never forget us; His faithfulness in the clouds: the rainbow reminds us of His covenant faithfulness; His righteousness is like a mountain: stable, unmoveable, and towering for all to see; His judgments are like the ocean: a great deep which no man can fathom. The wonders of the earth speak of the wonder of salvation in the way of the cross. May we look into the blue expanse of the sky and all the wonders of creation when overwhelmed by men of the world, to be reminded of God's mercy, faithfulness, righteousness, and judgments. May we go to His Word to know the great love of Christ. Sing the Psalter.

October 27 Read Psalm 36:6b-7; Psalter 94:2; I John 4

Yes, when the child of God contemplates the mercy, faithfulness, righteousness and judgments of God he can only exclaim "How excellent is thy lovingkindness, O God!" There is no greater love for man or comfort greater than the love of God revealed in Christ. God graciously opens the eyes of His elect so that they see the love of God and seek the shadow of His wings: the protection of His love

which shelters us from the confusion and wickedness of this world. And how must we live in this world knowing the love of God? We are admonished "Beloved, if God so loved us, we ought also to love one another." Do you have ill feelings toward a brother or sister in the Lord? Seek in prayer the grace of God to live in love with one another. Sing the Psalter.

October 28 Read Psalm 36:8; Psalter 94:8; Revelation 22

The ungodly blindly search the world for pleasure and satisfaction of corrupt desires without ever finding satisfaction. Man was originally created to be satisfied only with covenant fellowship with His creator and therefore he can never be satisfied with earthly pleasures. He can only be satisfied when he enters into covenant friendship with God. God in sovereign grace and mercy takes us into that friendship through the blood of Christ. When we get to heaven we will enter into the very house of God and dine as His children round about a table filled with that food which gives everlasting joy and happiness. Already we taste and our thirst is quenched by the pure preaching of God's Word. Thank God for the riches of His mercy and grace. Sing the Psalter.

October 29 Read Psalm 36:9; Psalter 94:4; Revelation 21

God Himself is the source of the ever-flowing fountain of life. Sometimes we are deluded into thinking that certain pleasures of this world are "the life," but life is in God alone. He breathed life into every living creature at the time of creation. He breathed into man life which brought him into life with God. He puts a new and living heart into the sinner cleansed in Christ. Apart from God there is no life. Fallen man lives in continual death and darkness. God Himself is the source of the light which enables the elect to see and desire the fountain of God's life. In heaven we will be forever bathed in the light, the glory of God. David hoped to see that light revealed in Christ. We hope for His second coming. Pray for faith to endure and live in the light of God. Sing the Psalter.

October 30 Read Psalm 36:10; Psalter 94:5; I Peter 1:1-16

Knowing God is essential for the Christian life. The means whereby God comforts His people and reveals His lovingkindness is in the way of knowing Him. We are preserved in this life "by the power of God through faith." Faith is a certain knowledge and a confidence worked by God through His Word. Do not imagine that you can know God without ever sitting down to study God's Word or listening carefully to the preaching of His Word. David's prayer that God continue His lovingkindness and righteousness is a prayer for the strengthening of his faith by which He clings to the promises of God. He knows his sinful nature and acknowledges his complete dependence upon God. Make David's prayer yours. Sing the Psalter.

October 31 Read Ps. 36:11,12; Psalter 94:6; Rom. 8:35-39

David was persuaded that the work of salvation would be accomplished. With the eye of faith he sees the enemies of God defeated. He knows that the seed of the woman would crush the head of the serpent. The destruction of death was accomplished in history when Christ died and arose in victory. Paul also repeats the confidence of David with a new zeal knowing the love of God in Christ. May you also live in the confidence that this life of sin and misery has in principle come to an end in Christ. Continue in your prayers that God preserve His people and their children to the end. Sing the Psalter.

Healthy (Humble) Esteem of Self

by Rev. Charles J. Terpstra

What do you think of yourself, beloved young people? What is your estimation of yourself? What worth do you believe you have? Do you have a high or low view of yourself? Do you believe you have great worth or little worth? Do you love or hate yourself? Are you satisfied and happy or dissatisfied and unhappy with who and what you are?

And along with these questions, answer these: From where do you get your view of self? On what do you base your worth and value? Do you get your self-image from yourself? your peers? your parents? from the world? Or from the Lord? Do you base your worth and value on your popularity, intelligence, athleticism, or other abilities? on what you have done or will do? on what you hope to be? Or on what God says about you in His Word? on what you are in Jesus Christ?

The answers you give to these questions are truly important. Your self-esteem (healthy or sick) affects what goes on inside your soul and what goes on in your whole outward life. It affects the way you work and how you handle your studies; it affects your decision concerning whom to date and whom eventually to marry; it affects your choice of friends and recreational activities; it affects your life in the church, how you relate to others and what activities you get involved in.

With this in view we want to examine this matter together in a couple of articles (I will try to keep them short so as not to lose your interest and attention!). Follow along as we learn about healthy and unhealthy esteem of ourselves. Since it is critical that we contrast true self-esteem with false self-esteem, in this article we will spend some time on *unhealthy* esteem of ourselves.

There is an unhealthy esteem we can have of ourselves. It takes on various forms. The unbelieving world is sick and dying with one form of it. It is called “NARCISSISM”, excessive love and admiration of self. Narcissus was the young man in Greek mythology who was so in love with himself that he refused to return Echo’s

love and caused her to die. Following that Nemesis caused Narcissus to become so infatuated by his own image in a pool of water that he pined away and changed into the flower that now bears his name. The wicked in our day are narcissistic, obsessed with self. Their self-esteem is also called “EGOTISM,” the idea that everything and everyone ought to serve “the big I” (Man’s trinity of “me, myself, and I”). The world has deified self; it’s philosophy is “I am god”. Just witness its advertising; it caters to this evil esteem of self (“Have it your way! You deserve a break today! Grab all the gusto you can!”). There’s even a magazine for young people entitled *Self*. This ungodly self-esteem is at bottom nothing but devilish PRIDE, the exalted esteeming of self above everyone else, including God.

We ought not be surprised that this proud estimation of self exists in the world. It is, after all, rooted in the Fall. When our first parents fell into sin, they did so because they believed the devil’s proud lie that they could become as God! Ever since man’s heart is filled with this wicked over-estimation of himself. In addition, the Holy Spirit has given us a prophetic description of our egotistic times in 2 Tim.3:1, 2: “This know also, that in the last days perilous times shall come. For men shall be lovers of their own selves, covetous, boasters, proud....”

I trust that you young people know the evil and error of this view of self. I know you do, because we have within ourselves a sinful nature that is narcissistic and egotistic and proud. We have experienced firsthand this worship of self and have suffered from its evil fruits. We ourselves have been burned by this idol and we have hurt other people by it. I also believe that you know the error and evil of this view of self because the grace of God dwells in you. That has taught you how wicked this unbelieving self-esteem is and has delivered you principally from it. It has taught you and given you the healthy way of self-esteem—seeing yourself in Christ as loved, forgiven, and accepted by God.

In order for you to be lifted up in self-worth, you must humble yourself under God's almighty hand! In order for you to love yourself, you must love God! Another form of unhealthy self-esteem in the world consists of an estimation of self that is based on how much money and material things one has, on one's fame and popularity, on one's worldly success and promotion, on one's mental abilities, athletic skills, and physical attractiveness. This too is prominent. The worldly person has a high view of himself because he is rich, famous, popular, successful, athletic, and good-looking. And the rest of the world feeds this mentality by fawning over those who have these qualities. They idolize the wealthy real-estate magnates, the prominent sports figures, the glamorous movie stars and beautiful models, and the powerful politicians.

Sad to say, this wrongly-based self-esteem is prevalent among us too. How many of us think highly of ourselves because of these things? How often have we not based our judgment of others on these external things?

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But what then is the person to think of himself who is not rich, not popular, not gifted intellectually, not successful, not athletic, and not good-looking?! That he is utterly worthless?! What if *you* are not rich, etc.? Does that make you a no-good-for-nothing?! You see how flimsy a basis these things are for our estimation of self? We must recall what grace has taught us, that our view of self is not founded on such things but on our standing in Christ. If we are in Him, we are rich and beautiful and gifted, no matter what we look like to the world.

Because also worldly people recognize that not all are rich, famous, successful, athletic, and good-looking, they try to find their estimation of self in still other things. They want to feel good about themselves in some way and to some degree, so they turn to other solutions to the "problem" of self-worth. Perhaps they base their worth on their work and so engross themselves in it. Or they turn to other people's estimation of them and so strive to become men-pleasers. Or, because they cannot find self-esteem in any of these things, they turn to drugs and alcohol, over-eating and sex, thinking that these things will make them feel good about themselves.

Have you too sought to find self-worth in these ways? Would you too try to gain self-esteem by your work, by pleasing others, by indulging in drugs, drinking, food, and sexual promiscuity? How would you judge your worth if you did? Did you really feel good about yourself? You know, don't you, that this is not the answer. You know, don't you, that this is not how healthy self-esteem is gained. How could these be the way when they are contrary to God's Word and to every principle and precept of Christian living?!

Which points to yet another unhealthy estimation of self in the world. As strange as this may seem, it is actually such a wicked self-love that it is *hatred* of self. Even those who have a high (proud) esteem of themselves are haters of themselves. If the carnal mind is enmity against God as Romans 8:7 teaches, then the unbeliever is also a hater of himself. If he does not love God, how can he love himself as a creature of God? He cannot! And that is why there are many in the world who have such low self-esteem. They hate what they are, hate what they have, hate what they look like, hate the work they do, hate everything about their lives. They are depressed over everything and unhappy with everything because they have no love of God and no true love of self. And that self-hate leads them to do what they do to their bodies and souls, namely, destroy them with drug and alcohol abuse, with fornications and rock music.

What about you, reader? Are you suffering from low self-esteem because you hate yourself? Are you abusing your body and soul because you despise yourself? You must know that such self-enmity is enmity against God! Do you hate the way you look? You are walking in hatred toward the God Who gave you your looks! Do you hate yourself because your mental or physical abilities are limited? You are hating the God Who gave you

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the gifts He willed for you! Do you hate yourself because you are "stuck" in a low-profile, low-paying job? You must know that you are rebelling against God's providential hand in your life! In order for you to be lifted up in

self-worth, you must humble yourself under God's almighty hand! In order for you to love yourself, you must love God!

One other unhealthy form of self-esteem we must mention. It is promoted not only in the world but also in the church-world. It is rooted in a denial of man's inherent sinfulness and makes much of his natural goodness. It despises the traditional Christian view of man as a wretched sinner worthy of eternal condemnation. It con-

Any view of man (self) which does not reckon with sin is bound to lead to a false and destructive esteem of self.

demns the Biblical confessions of Job ("I abhor myself.") and of Paul ("O wretched man that I am."). It talks proudly of human potential and possibility thinking, such that man can do what he wants to do and overcome

what he needs to. This high estimation of man and self is taught in the secular universities and schools of our land; it is advanced in the counselling rooms of worldly psychologists; and it is preached in the modernistic pulpits of churches, even in some Reformed pulpits.

But it is a rejection of God's revealed truth and must therefore be rejected by us as well. Any view of man (self) which does not reckon with sin is bound to lead to a false and destructive esteem of self. Any self-estimation which does not begin with confession of sin and therefore with self-abasement cannot give healthy self-esteem. In our own view of self and in our own esteem of self we must start with this: I am a wicked sinner before God, whose worth before Him is such that I deserve to be punished everlastingly in hell. Only when we begin with this can we go on to see our true worth in Christ and thus be led to true self-esteem. Healthy self-esteem is always humble. Have you learned that too? ❖

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Church History

Interview with Rev. C. Hanko

Part 1: The Student

Introduction by Jeff Kalsbeek

An interview with Rev. Cornelius Hanko, concluded a few years ago, has resurfaced. The *Beacon Lights* plans to publish this intriguing, informative meeting in four successive segments.

Upon completion of the fourth segment, an account of the beginnings of our Protestant Reformed Churches which Rev. Hanko has consented to rewrite, will follow. This history, with Rev. Hanko's experiences along the way, relates many of the events and positions taken during this turbulent time. This, in turn, serves to create a picture of circumstances in Grand Rapids, Michigan in the early 1920's.

Born in 1907, Rev. Hanko began to attend Calvin Seminary in 1924 during the height of the controversy. The years following he studied under the Reverends Hoeksema and Ophoff in the new Protestant Reformed denomination. In 1929 Rev. Hanko accepted a call to the Hull, Iowa congregation, starting 50 years of active ministry. Other congregations he served were Oaklawn, Illinois (1935-1945), Manhattan, Montana (1945-1948), First Church in Grand Rapids (1948-1964), Redlands, California (1964-1971), and Hudsonville, Michigan (1971-1978).

REV. C. HANKO: THE STUDENT

QUESTION:

Could you tell us a bit about your background; your parents and your early life in the church?

ANSWER:

My parents had come from the Netherlands in the late 1800's. My dad came from the State church (Hervormd). My mother came from the Reformed church of the Secession of 1834. My mother came from a very poor family; the father was an ordinary farm hand who went to work for a farmer for meager wages. In fact, they were brought up in poverty. So much so, that my mother often said that she went to bed hungry. When she was 11 years old, her parents couldn't feed her anymore, so she had to go out to work. But she did have Christian instruction up to the time that she went to work. Which is quite amazing; if you figure that they hardly had any money, yet they did insist on Christian instruction. And, you can tell, too, in her whole life that she had had a very strong religious background. As to my dad, it was the opposite. He came from a family that went to church but wasn't strong in doctrine.

I belonged to the Eastern Avenue Christian Reformed Church. That's where I was baptized. In fact, I was baptized by Rev. Groen, when he was still minister there. Rev. Hoeksema came in 1920.

QUESTION:

What impression did Rev. Hoeksema make on you when he came to Eastern Ave. Church in 1920?

ANSWER:

I was quite young, but my parents certainly saw the difference. Rev. Groen was really a Janssen man¹, very liberal. In fact, Eastern Ave. Church was often referred to as "Groen's Opera House" because in comparison with the other churches it was quite modern.

When Rev. Hoeksema came, there was a radical change. Especially my dad was very strongly influenced by Rev. Hoeksema. I think I could say the Rev. Hoeksema brought a radical change in his life. He was never happy under Groen. Of course, my mother went along with that, although she had been raised as an infralapsarian, and it was a little hard for her at first to accept the strong supralapsarian² influence of Rev. Hoeksema.

I was going to high school at the time, and the high school was strongly opposed to Rev. Hoeksema. At first,

I was inclined to think, well, Rev. Hoeksema must be wrong. We had some pretty warm discussions at home. I was trying to defend common grace in my way. My dad wouldn't hear of it. We had reached a point where my dad said, "Why don't you just go to Sherman St. Church!"³. Well, then I thought; if I'm going to change churches I'd better know what I'm talking about. So after catechism class I went up to Rev. Hoeksema and said, "May I ask you some questions that bother me?". "Sure", he said. So we got to talking, and the more I talked with him the more I was convinced that I was all wrong and that the high school was all wrong. So that brought about quite a change in me, and I decided that if Rev. Hoeksema was going to be put out, instead of becoming a minister in the Christian Reformed Church, which I had in mind then already, I'd surely go along with him.

QUESTION:

What events led up to the controversy over common grace which erupted in 1924?

ANSWER:

The Janssen case. There were four professors at Calvin that were opposing Prof. Janssen, and rightly so. Janssen was thoroughly modern. He would fit in better today than he did then. He denied the inspiration of Scripture, and its infallibility. He denied the miracles. The 10 plagues were all natural happenings, he said. The walls of Jericho fell by an earthquake. Samson was no real person, only a myth. There was really no doubt about it that he was all wrong. The professors never talked to Janssen about it, but went directly to the Synod of 1920. Well, the Synod said, you can't do that, and the professors should have known that too. They should have talked to Janssen first. So at the Synod of 1920, Synod did nothing. Later, the Theological School Committee appointed a study committee because four professors were not satisfied. Rev. Hoeksema was on that study committee.

I don't know what would have come of it if Rev. Hoeksema hadn't taken it up. Realizing what was happening at Calvin Seminary, he began to write about it in the "Banner". He was quite influential in having Janssen put out in 1922. That's why the Janssen men turned against him and decided to attack him. They used the issue of common grace to do it.

QUESTION:

Was common grace the topic of a lot of discussion among the people in general, in those days?

ANSWER:

It was, especially in Grand Rapids, and I think pretty well throughout the whole country. There were a lot of pamphlets written and read, and I think people pretty much knew what was going on and what was being debated. But it was really a big thing in Grand Rapids. If you saw a group of men standing together on a street corner, you didn't have to ask what they were talking about. Or in the grocery store, or on a Sunday evening in the summer when the windows were open. If you were walking along the streets you'd hear debate everywhere. It was interesting just to walk along the streets and hear people arguing, because everyone was talking about common grace.

In fact, we did so much talking about common grace at Calvin College, that they announced from the platform at chapel that there might be no more discussion about common grace within the walls of the school.

Women came to the Classis meetings already at eight o'clock in the morning. Some of them would take their sewing, knitting, or crocheting along, and sit there all day. Then they would go home around four or five o'clock, and after supper, the men would be there. You could go there any time of day or night, and there was always a crowd of people. I would go with the sons of Prof. Berkhof and Prof. Volbeda. It was something that everyone was talking about all the time. It was the issue of the day. In fact, I have clippings from the Grand Rapids Press, right off the front page, of what was going on.

QUESTION:

After the split you attended the Protestant Reformed Seminary?

ANSWER:

Yes. In fact, that was one of the first things Rev. Hoeksema talked about after the split. He said, "You're coming to our seminary aren't you?" (I was going to Calvin College at the time). So I said "Sure, that's what I have in mind". So I was one of the first students in our seminary. He was suspended in December 1924, deposed in January of 1925, and our seminary started in June of 1925. We started with 10 students, five continued and five dropped out.

QUESTION:

In addition to Rev. Hoeksema, the Revs. Danhof and Ophoff were also deposed for opposing common grace. Can you tell us about those men, beginning with Danhof?

ANSWER:

Theologically the three men were in agreement. Rev. Danhof was the oldest of the three. Really, Rev. Hoeksema was a disciple of Rev. Danhof. Rev. Danhof had been a minister at the Dennis Ave. Christian Reformed Church, right off Fulton Ave. We use to call that the Brickyard. Hoeksema, as a student, used to go to hear him, because Rev. Danhof had opposed common grace for quite a while already. And at a 1918 ministers conference he had given a paper that concerned the covenant, and there he expressed that idea of the covenant was a relationship of friendship. Hoeksema really thought a lot of Danhof.

But Rev. Hoeksema was the younger man and a far more powerful speaker, and much clearer in his presentation. When the Protestant Reformed Churches started, Hoeksema received invitations from different parts of the country to speak.

We started school in June, right after Calvin was finished. Rev. Hoeksema had four subjects on Monday afternoon. On Wednesday afternoon, Rev. Ophoff had four subjects. On Friday, Rev. Danhof came from Kalamazoo. Danhof said, "I'm not coming for a half day. If I'm going to come in from Kalamazoo, I'm going to make a day of it". So he started school at nine o'clock in the morning and continued till five o'clock in the afternoon.

Because we had so many hours, he had eight subjects. We were taking notes as fast as we could, one subject after another. So on Saturday, we would have to type up these notes. If we didn't they were gone. They were written in long hand, with lines to express this or that, the way you take notes when you're in a hurry. We spent practically all day Saturday on Danhof's lectures.

On Monday afternoon, we would say to Rev. Hoeksema, "We didn't have much time to prepare because Danhof loaded us with work." "Never mind," he would say, "I have four subjects and you're responsible for those four subjects." When we complained to Danhof, he would say, "I don't care. You fellows have to preach after awhile, and I've got to get you trained."

Immediately, there was friction, and that didn't improve, especially not when Rev. Hoeksema was getting invitations to speak out West and Rev. Danhof wasn't. Eventually, Rev. Danhof quit. The school never finished that year. That was the end of the school year. But I was always glad I had that year with Danhof because he had a unique way of presenting things.

QUESTION:

The other minister deposed for opposing common grace was Rev. Ophoff. Could you tell us about him?

ANSWER:

Yes. If you start by John Ball Park and go along the river as far as Riverbend, at the corner of Riverbend and Kenowa there was a little church. That isn't there anymore. That was a Christian Reformed Church. That's where Rev. Ophoff was minister. That was his first church. He immediately stood with Rev. Hoeksema, no doubt about that. Rev. Hoeksema admired him. He was true blue, all the way through. He took a stand and that was it. He was not like Hoeksema, but he knew what he was talking about.

When he got into the school, that was something new for him, and it took awhile for him to get his feet on the ground. He'd had some Hebrew at Calvin, but to teach it, that was something else. During the first year it was quite a struggle because he didn't know Hebrew much

better than we did. But he gradually worked into it, and in the later years, they would even say at Calvin, "If you want a good Hebrew course, you take it at the Protestant Reformed Seminary." He knew his Hebrew; but he learned it. He studied it.

During those years he was working day and night. One of his boys said to me one time, "The only way I knew my dad was the light under the study door. I'd get up at night to go to the bathroom, and the light would be on." That's what it took in those years. ❖

¹Maintaining a cooperation between the church and the world, rather than the antithesis; holding a critical approach to scripture as opposed to the approach of faith.

²Infralapsarianism: God's electing some men to salvation after the fall of man. Superlapsarianism: God's election of His people in eternity; before creation.

³A congregation where common grace found support.

IN WITTENBERG

by J.P. de Klerk



Here is the interior of the City Church of Wittenberg, after its restoration in 1929. At the right side is the Pulpit, which was already used by Dr. Martin Luther. There are still services every Sunday, and always more people come than there are seats available, so that many remain standing as far as the back wall. This happens especially during the summer months when there are quite a few tourists in Wittenberg.

When the Reformation came, only few alterations were made, except the breaking of a number of images (in 1522). There is a font, being a particular treasure cast in bronze by Herman Vischer

the Elder in 1457, that remained intact. A witness of early medieval piety is the sandstone relief of the Judge of the world, which has found its place in the sacristy. There are also the paintings of Lucas Cranach the Elder (1472-1553), representing the fundamentals of Evangelical communal life and the perception of the Reformation by the Church. It is a portrait collection of the Wittenberg Reformation, (1) Luther on the pulpit, (2) Luther dressed as

Junker Jorg when he had to flee, (3) his friend Melanchton at the christening, (4) Dr. Johannes Bugenhagen, who blessed Luther's marriage, and brought the Reformation on behalf of Luther to many cities in Germany and Denmark, (5) Katharina von Bora, the wife of Dr. Martin Luther.



STATUE OF DR. MARTIN LUTHER

by J.P. de Klerk

At the big marketplace of the German city of Wittenberg this frontal picture was made of the Reformer, Dr. Martin Luther, whose monument was carefully made and placed under an iron baldachin (to protect it against snow and rain). At the background you see a glimpse of the Town Hall, built in the years 1524-1542. The statue shows Luther in his gown as a professor of theology, with the open Bible in his hands, as he translated it out of Latin into German. The monument was probably made in 1865. ♦

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

Minding Missions

A City on the Hill

by Jay Martz

Ye are the light of the world. A city that is set on a hill cannot be hid. I would like to share with you how the grace of God can redeem a lost soul. A man I know was a fitness instructor work-

ing in a large health club in Indiana. He was raised Roman Catholic, though he did not practice it. He was a man who sought to please himself, though you may not have been able to tell it right away. To most he seemed

like a good enough guy, but that was the world's perspective. One could not tell how black his heart was. They did not know of the dungeon and the chains that bound his will. Had they known the vanity of his mind they may have shuddered. If they had been honest with themselves, they to for the most part shared in his lost state.

By the gracious providence of God, a young lady with whom he worked began speaking about her church, and truths that it taught. She also told him of the three-hour journey she and her family made every week to church. The man could not understand how anyone would desire to ride three hours to church every week. He could not fathom the reason for traveling to a church, after all they lived in "the city of churches." Was there not a church in the area that would suit this girl and her family? This provoked some questions on his part, as one might imagine. What loyalty this young woman had. After asking some questions the girl shared her faith in God with him. She spoke of a sovereign God, who saved his people from their sins. A predestinating God who controls all that comes to pass. Wow, thought the man, this girl is crazy. She must be a Jehovah's Witness. Only a cultist would believe such things. After all, the man thought as long as one did not kill anyone, God would not cast him into hell. After much thought and discussion this man sought to prove her wrong. She provided him with her personal Bible, marked according to the five points of Calvinism, and he began to search the scriptures. After some study, he was content that he could not find any evidence that would indicate that she was correct. Being convinced that he was right, the study and the conversation about religion ceased. No doubt, this revealed the scales that covered his eyes and the hardness of his heart. After all, are not the truths of God's sovereignty on every page of his Word? He lost contact with this girl because she moved Michigan and got married soon after they had the aforementioned conversations.

Two years had past and the young woman, now a mother, called to see if she could get her Bible back from him. Amazingly he had been reading her Bible for the past two weeks. He had been convicted shortly before of his utter hopelessness. He had known all along that there was a God and He was the God of the Bible. Knowing that such a creator existed, he was moved to know what God's purpose for him was. He was compelled to read the Bible as he believed it to be God's Word. He began seeing things that the girl had told him of two years before. He did not know how to contact her, but God

moved her to call him at just the right time. This man is now a member of the Protestant Reformed Churches, along with his wonderful wife, whom God did regenerate approximately the same time as himself. How wonderful is the grace of our Lord.

The man of whom I speak is I, saved by God's grace. This woman's testimony was used by God in a wonderful way. She did not convince me with skilled apologetics. She did not plead with me to believe. She told me who God was and what he had done for her and left it at that. Her dedication to God and also her confidence in what she said struck me. This is being a good witness. God regenerates, not man. Only the omnipotence of God can raise a dead soul. Our Covenant God may use the witness of his people to draw people under the preaching. We show our faith by how we live. This is what impressed me about my dear friend. Her walk caused me to see that she was different, which provoked me to do some searching. She was an instrument of the Lord to bring my wife and myself under the chief means of grace. I cannot thank God enough for giving me such a friend as she. Her family opened their house to my wife and I for the year before our marriage, as we traveled the same three hours to church each week. We dearly love them for all that they have done for us.

We as Christians are not called to be preachers. It is not our goal to go out and win souls. The Word of God delivered by an ordained minister is Gods chosen vessel to spread the gospel. This is our Lords appointed means of gathering his church. We are to be ready to give an answer of the hope that is within us. We are to tell others what God has done for us. The sound gracious preaching that my friend received from week to week gave her the ability to stand for the truth. You may see fruit of your testimony years later. Remember you may tell someone of your faith and they may think you are crazy, yet God may in the future grant repentance unto them.

Be faithful in your calling and know that our Lord Jesus Christ will give the increase. May He receive all glory and honor both now and forever. ❖

Jay is a member of South Holland Protestant Reformed Church in South Holland, Illinois.

"LITTLE LIGHTS"

... let it shine!

by Connie Meyer

The Flower (3)

Little Anna was entertaining herself at the edge of the yard when finally she toddled over to where her mother, sister, and brother were raking leaves. Her face beamed as she presented her mother with a tiny wildflower.

"Oh Anna, what a beautiful flower," Mother said as she picked up the little girl and they examined the flower together.

Nathan glanced over his shoulder and remarked unenthusiastically, "It's a weed."

Lydia took a little more time in making her judgement, but finally could only say, "It's pretty small."

Still Anna and her mother "oohed" and "aahed" over the tiny bloom. "Anna, I'm going to go in and get a vase so you can pick a whole bouquet for me, okay?" Anna nodded vigorously.

When Mother returned, Nathan teased, "Does this mean we never have to pull another weed? They're all so beautiful!"

"Nice try," retorted Mother, "but only *this* one is beautiful. Look at the way the petals are arranged, and see here how these colors blend together? It's small, but it really is beautiful."

Nathan sighed and continued to rake.

"I guess 'beauty is in the eye of the beholder'," commented Lydia.

"Yes," said Mother, "sometimes that really is true, just like the merchant man who found the pearl of great price and saw its beauty and worth. He sold all that he had to be able to buy it. We must see heaven like that, too. We must see its priceless worth and value. It's worth *everything*."

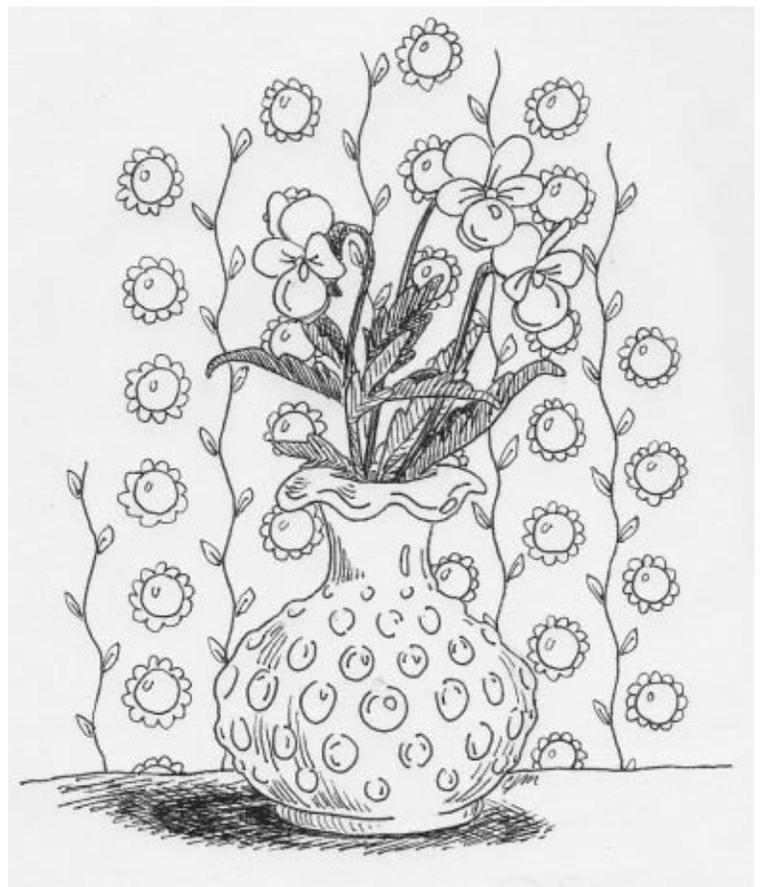
"Well, here comes your 'priceless' little bouquet now!" said Nathan as Anna brought the scraggly looking arrangement to her mother.

Mother heartily laughed. How true; how true!

Read Jesus' parables about the kingdom of heaven in Matthew 13:44-46. ❖

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

Can you find this pearl [☺] in the illustration below?



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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:

Grace Jennet, daughter of Mr. & Mrs. Matt Medema—Bethel, IL
Elisabeth Anne, daughter of Mr. & Mrs. Kevin Haan—Byron Center, MI
Arielle Marie, daughter of Mr. & Mrs. DJ Bultema—Byron Center, MI
Kyle William, son of Mr. & Mrs. Chuck Doezema—Holland, MI
Jason William, son of Mr. & Mrs. Bill Langerak—Hope, MI
Emily Joy, daughter of Mr. & Mrs. Jay Kuiper—Hudsonville, MI
Hayley Marie, daughter of Kristin Kuiper—Hudsonville, MI
Daniel James, son of Mr. & Mrs. Eric DeVries—Randolph, WI
Sydney Jo, daughter of Mr. & Mrs. Don Hauck—Southeast, MI
Melissa Lynn, daughter of Mr. & Mrs. Jerry VanBaren—Southeast, MI

Katrina Jo, daughter of Mr. & Mrs. Dave Regnerus—South Holland, IL
Benjamin Jeffrey, son of Mr. & Mrs. Ted Andringa—South Holland, IL
Courtney Elaine, daughter of Mr. & Mrs. Ryan Zandstra—South Holland, IL

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:

DJ & Sue Bultema—Byron Center, MI
Grant Zeutenhorst—Doon, IA
Jennifer Overway—Holland, MI
Chris Dykstra and Laura Kamps—Hope, MI
Jason Holstege—Hudsonville, MI
Becky Poortinga—Peace, IL
Jason Brand and Wanda Bekkering—Pella, IA
Randy Lunsford—Pella, IA
Sarah Barrett—Southeast, MI

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

Matthew 19:5

UNITED IN THE BONDS OF HOLY MATRIMONY WERE:

Mr. Mike Poortinga & Miss Heidi Dykstra—Hope, MI
Mr. Jason Brand & Miss Wanda Bekkering—Pella, IA
Mr. Tim Block & Miss Robyn Kuiper—Southeast, MI
Mr. Nathan Brummel & Miss Paula Faber—Southeast, MI
Mr. Kerwen Kooiker & Miss Catherine Cammenga—Southwest, MI