
Beacon Lights

*June
1998*

*Volume LVII
Number 6*



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Our Responsibility To Those Who Are Excommunicated

by Aaron J. Cleveland

Note to the reader: Before reading what follows, please read the Form Of Excommunication found in the back of The Psalter.

As stated in the Form Of Excommunication, excommunication is the “last remedy” for those under discipline who show no “true repentance.” Excommunication is the final step that the Church takes when the biblical method of discipline is practiced. It is important that the Church carries out discipline and that excommunication, if necessary, is practiced, because the proper administration of discipline is one of the marks of the true church. Churches which do not practice discipline are false churches to whatever degree discipline is not practiced.

In most churches today, excommunication and discipline are rarely heard of. Unrepentant sinners are allowed to remain members in good standing. Sin is not preached against. Members of the congregation fail to admonish one another. The elders and ministers allow sin to run through the congregation. A false notion has overtaken many churches that brotherly love consists of letting the unrepentant brother continue in his sin, accepting him in full fellowship, and not offending him by preaching against sin.

But this must never be the case in the true church where there is sound preaching and discipline is practiced. Excommunication, or the “last remedy” is commanded in God’s Word and has a three-fold purpose. The first purpose of excommunication (as well as the purpose of all discipline) is to bring the unrepentant sinner to repentance. Excommunication removes the impenitent sinner from the church and ultimately the kingdom of heaven is closed to him. (Matt. 18:18) If it is God’s will, the sinner who experiences life outside of the church and outside of the kingdom of heaven will come to see the seriousness of his sin and the deadly consequences of his behavior. He will become entirely ashamed of his lifestyle, repent of his sins, and do all that he can to lead a life pleasing to God. This is the first purpose of excommunication, to bring the unrepentant to see the shamefulness of his actions and to repentance, if it is God’s will.

The second purpose of excommunication is to protect the body of the church. We read this in the Form where it states, “and likewise that we may not by this rotten and as yet incurable member, put the whole body of the Church in danger.” This is a very real danger. First of all, those who do not admonish and discipline the unrepentant become partakers of their sins. Secondly, it does not take long before the sin of one becomes the sin of many in the congregation. “Know ye not that a little leaven leaveneth the whole lump?” (I Cor. 5:6). It does not take long for one overlooked sin to spread through and destroy an entire church. We don’t have to look too far to see how the sin of adultery has overtaken many once-faithful churches.

The third purpose of excommunication is that God's name is not blasphemed. When those who despise God's perfect law are allowed to remain members of the church, God is blasphemed, and the judgment of God falls down upon the whole church.

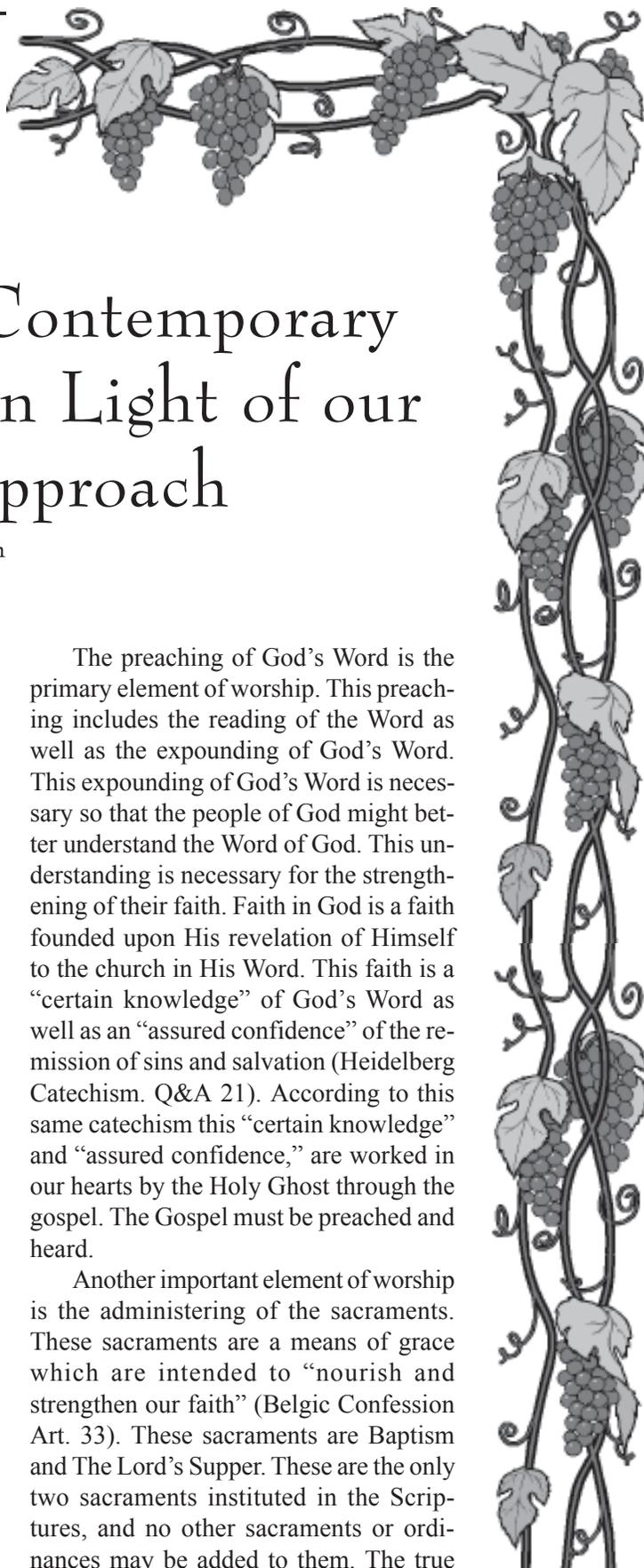
It is important to notice that discipline, as well as excommunication, is a process which involves every member of the congregation, not just the elders. We do good to remind ourselves of this. When a member of the congregation is excommunicated, everyone in the congregation has a responsibility to that excommunicated person. First, we are to keep no company with that person, so that he may be ashamed. In II Thes. 3:14 we read, "And if any man obey not our word by this epistle, note that man, and have no company with him, that he may be ashamed." We can be assured that he who continues to live in his sin will not come to see his shameful behavior if we continue to fellowship with him as before, and by that fellowship, indulge and flatter him in his sinful behavior. In fact, he who is nourished by our indulgence, will only become more obstinate in his unrepentance.

Our second responsibility is not to treat him as an enemy, but to admonish him as a brother. We read of this in II Thes. 3:15, where we read, "Yet count him not as an enemy, but admonish him as a brother." This is how brotherly love is shown. John Calvin speaks of this in his commentary on II Thes. 3:15. He says, "We must observe, however, by what sign he would have brotherly love shown - not by allurements or flattery, but by admonitions. According to Calvin, we must do everything in our power "to shun the society of those whom the church has cut off from her communion." And if the occasion arises, and we happen to cross paths with this brother, our only conversation must consist of an admonition. Anything less, and we are failing in our obligation to this brother.

Another important aspect of excommunication is that of self-examination. This is apparent when reading the Form Of Excommunication. We all must take heed to ourselves, lest we fall into sin. We read in the form, "You have seen, beloved brethren and sisters, in what manner this our excommunicated brother has begun to fall, and by degrees is come to ruin; observe therefore, how subtle Satan is, to bring man to destruction, and to withdraw him from all salutary means of salvation." Also mentioned in the prayer following the form is the request for the grace of God to avoid "all pollution of the world." This is an important request, because Satan has many means to lead us into sin.

Finally, we must notice the seriousness of excommunication. How easily we may be tempted to keep familiar association with those who have been excommunicated. This excommunicated person may be a brother, or parent, a close friend, or even a grandparent. Fellowship may be extremely difficult to cut off. But that is our calling. When this does not happen, terrible sin is committed. This is true, because the authority of the church, and Christ as the head of the church, is brought into contempt. Calvin puts this concisely when he says in his commentary on I Cor. 5:11, "When, therefore, the Church has excommunicated any one, no believer ought to receive him into terms of intimacy with him; otherwise the authority of the Church would be brought into contempt, if each individual were at liberty to admit to his table those who have been excluded from the table of the Lord." None of us are free to ignore excommunication as the work of a handful of elders who have their own peculiar opinions. Excommunication is the work of the whole church whereby the kingdom of heaven is shut to those who are impenitent. This is serious.

Whenever the temptation arises to continue familiar association with an unrepentant brother, we must look at the peril this brother stands in. He is outside of the church and therefore outside of the kingdom of heaven. There is no more dire position. When we see this, our only inclination will be to admonish him and point out to him the seriousness of his sin and the consequences he faces. We will have no desire to indulge him in his sin. Neither will we be tempted to flatter him with our fellowship. Rather, we will show our love by admonishing him. And then, if it is God's will, he will come to true repentance and change of life, and be united in true fellowship with God and with us. ❖



An Assessment of Contemporary Trends in Worship in Light of our Traditional Approach

by Rodney Kleyn

Many churches today are introducing into their worship services all sorts of elements which are foreign to the Scriptures. In this paper we will see what proper worship is, as well as what the elements of worship ought to be. We will then look at contemporary trends of worship and compare them to proper worship, and we will assess the root problem behind these contemporary forms of worship.

Each of God's people ought to live a life of continual worship to God. This is done when Christians perform good works that express their thankfulness to God for His great salvation. We determine what these good works are by going to the Scriptures. The Scriptures give us rules and regulations for Christian living. The church also worships God in its congregational gatherings. What is right and proper for the worship of the church is also regulated by the Scriptures.

The church may "in no wise represent God by images, or worship him in any other way than He has commanded in His Word" (Heidelberg Catechism. Q&A 96). This means that every element of our worship service must be biblically based. The Catechism sets forth these elements in its discussion of the fourth commandment. The purpose of the Sabbath is that each of God's people may "diligently frequent the church of God, to hear His Word, to use the sacraments, publicly to call upon the Lord, and contribute to the relief of the poor as becometh a Christian" (Heidelberg Catechism. Q&A 103). The elements that worship involves are the preaching, the sacraments, public prayer, and offerings for the poor. These are the only elements that our worship may include.

The preaching of God's Word is the primary element of worship. This preaching includes the reading of the Word as well as the expounding of God's Word. This expounding of God's Word is necessary so that the people of God might better understand the Word of God. This understanding is necessary for the strengthening of their faith. Faith in God is a faith founded upon His revelation of Himself to the church in His Word. This faith is a "certain knowledge" of God's Word as well as an "assured confidence" of the remission of sins and salvation (Heidelberg Catechism. Q&A 21). According to this same catechism this "certain knowledge" and "assured confidence," are worked in our hearts by the Holy Ghost through the gospel. The Gospel must be preached and heard.

Another important element of worship is the administering of the sacraments. These sacraments are a means of grace which are intended to "nourish and strengthen our faith" (Belgic Confession Art. 33). These sacraments are Baptism and The Lord's Supper. These are the only two sacraments instituted in the Scriptures, and no other sacraments or ordinances may be added to them. The true church "reject(s) all mixtures and dam-

nable inventions, which men have added unto, and blended with the sacraments, as profanations of them,” and it “rest(s) satisfied with the ordinances which Christ and the Apostles have taught us” (Belgic Confession Art. 35).

Another element of worship commanded in the Scriptures is public prayer. Public prayer includes both the public singing of the Psalms in worship of God, and the congregational prayer. These elements are regulated by the Scriptures. The singing in the worship of God must be the singing of the songs that God has inspired and given in His Word. The introduction of any other songs besides the inspired songs of the Scriptures is the worshipping of God in ways other than He has commanded in His Word. Public prayer in the congregation is also a legitimate part of worship. In Acts 1:14 we read that the early church continued with one accord in prayer and supplication.” This is the example that we must follow in worship.

The remaining element of worship is the public contribution to the relief of the poor. This element of worship is expressly commanded by the Apostle Paul in his first letter to the Corinthians. He writes, “Now concerning the collection for the saints,... Upon the first day of the week let every one of you lay by him in store as God hath prospered him” (I Cor. 16:1-2).

In spite of God’s clear commands in the Scripture about what worship is and the elements of worship, many today are introducing all sorts of new elements into the worship services of their churches. The preaching and hearing of God’s Word is replaced by drama and personal testimonies. The sacraments are replaced by liturgical dances and speaking in tongues, and if they are

administered at all, they are not administered as set forth in the Scriptures. Instead of the public singing of the inspired Psalms, churches are entertained by special numbers or hymn singing. Instead of congregational prayer a “praise choir” sings or beats out its tunes. Church services are intended to appeal to human emotions, and to make worshippers feel good.

When we examine these trends of worship we see that they are contrary to the Scriptural principles for worship which we looked at earlier. This shows that those who introduce and practice such forms of worship either do not know what the Scriptures teach about worship, or they choose to ignore the Scriptures. They demonstrate a lack of faith. This appeal to the emotions and sensual feelings of men in worship is contrary to the “true faith” set forth in the Bible. These contemporary forms of worship do not instruct God’s people in their “certain knowledge” of His Word. They do not give to God’s people an “assured confidence” concerning their salvation. These forms of worship are empty and superficial.

Our examination of these forms of worship and our comparison of them to the Scriptural and Confessional form of worship ought to give us hearts of praise and thanks to God. He has preserved our churches in the Reformed faith. He has continued His covenant line in us by passing in tradition from father to son the historic Reformed faith. We now are called to continue walking in the old paths. In this way God will preserve His covenant amongst us. ❖

Rodney is a member of Southwest Protestant Reformed Church in Grandville, Michigan.

Guest Article

Jesus Will Have Mercy, and Not Sacrifice

by Mrs. Shari Vaalburg

These are Jesus words to the Pharisees in Matthew 9:12, 13: “They that be whole need not a physician, but they that are sick. But go and learn what that means. I will have mercy, and not sacrifice: for I am not come to call the righteous, but sinners

to repentance.” (Parallel texts are Mark 2:17 and Luke 5:31,32)

When Jesus says, “I will have mercy, and not sacrifice...,” he is saying that those whom he saves must believe they are sinners and confess their sins with sorrow and repentance. Only when by God’s grace one cries for

mercy by expressing sorrow for one's sins will Jesus have mercy on that person.

Jesus will not be merciful to those who do not think they have sin or to those who are not sorry for their sins. He is not willing to sacrifice for them. When people think

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they are pretty good, and half-heartedly confess their sins, Jesus will not sacrifice himself for them. A sacrifice, not being merciful, is what it would take for Jesus to die for those who are not really sorry.

Some while reading this may think, "I haven't done anything too bad lately," and that's a typical thought coming from completely depraved human beings. Think of how our whole human race would be cast into hell if it weren't for God's Son, and realize how wrong even our little sins are. With God's grace we must be sorry for our sins every day.

We must be sensitive to the word of God in order to know what sins we are guilty of. This means we must read the Bible often, and pray that the Holy Spirit richly

dwells in us to give us more understanding of, and sorrow for, our sins.

In Luke 16:10 Jesus says, "...and he that is unjust in the least is unjust also in much." We are, as imperfect creatures, consistently unjust especially in little things. In God's eyes, whether the sin is small or large, it has the same implication: guilt, deserving condemnation. Jesus will have mercy on the sorrowful, but he won't sacrifice for the self-righteous.

How can we be cleansed if we don't repent? It's impossible.

How can we bring forth fruits if we think we can do them ourselves? We won't bring forth real fruits.

Is the Holy Spirit dwelling in self-righteous people? No, because the Holy Spirit glorifies Christ. In John 16:14 Jesus says, "He, [The Spirit of Truth,] shall glorify me..." It is not glorifying to Christ to suppose, however vaguely, that we are responsible for our salvation.

Again; we must be sensitive to the word of God in order to know what sins we are guilty of. This means we must read the Bible often, and pray that the Holy Spirit richly dwells in us to give us more understanding of and sorrow over our sins.

May God bless all of His chosen ones (Isaiah 41:9) with continuing realization of sins, and the gift of continuous sorrow and repentance for them. ❖

Shari is a member of Byron Center Protestant Reformed Church in Byron Center, Michigan.

Story Time

The Castle

by J.P. de Klerk

Charles van Zevenaar stared in front of him. Next to him stood his daughter, Christine. In front of them stood the castle Vinkenstein, reflecting in the water of the moat. In the grass at their feet waddled a couple of chattering ducks. The day before they had come home from a long journey overseas, where they had seen a lot, but it had been very tiring. They lived in a city, five kilometers from there, but they stood here now for a very important reason...Charles

van Zevenaar had lost his wife last year after a short illness, but he had promised her, that he would travel with Christine to show her something of the world. Therefore he had accelerated his retirement as the Secretary of Foreign Affairs. Some people had said that he had feathered his nest, so, he could afford to make a big journey. Christine just said, "Dad, I think I understand now, why you found that traveling to a lot of countries is important, and mother too. You wanted me to see how the

world has changed, how people mainly live for themselves, that they walk away from the Christian faith and have nothing anymore to hold on to.”

Her father smiled and straightened himself and smoothed out the piece of paper with notes, in his left hand. “You are right,” he said. “Before the Lord took her away, we talked about you and she suggested that such a journey would probably help you to become strong and able to cope with the temptations of student life, the pranks, and so on. We did speak about that, didn’t we? But first we have to do something else. Your grandfather has given us this castle in his last will, and I didn’t expect it. He passed away while he was sleeping, and we were still at the friendly island of Tonga. Yes, how wonderful it was there. The climate, the kind Christian people, and on the Lord’s Day everybody went to Church. I will never forget all those ringing bells, all over the main island. And that night we were in the chapel of the king, with a sermon in English, by his chaplain. What a difference there is in the countries with heathen religions, like India, Uzbekistan and Thailand. But in The Netherlands we are going in that direction, with thousands of Moslems; they have entered the public schools. Is nobody worried about this development? We have to bring the gospel and we have to defend it. That brings us to this castle. Will it be possible to establish a Christian school in it?”

His daughter took in the whole scene at a glance and agreed. “Dad, it looks very suitable to me. Can anyone give us financial support, or aid us in another way? In the past, a school with the Bible was something worth working for, a cause that had to be furthered. I expect, the world of today will give us the cold shoulder; the standards are lost.”

“Well, Christine, let us not have too high expectations, not indulge in illusions, but if God wants it to happen, that school will come here. It is a big responsibility, but I think about boys and girls for secondary education, continuation for those who are seriously interested in something, who have a goal already, a certain direction.”

They let their eyes wander over the building, the forests, the birds in the sky. It was so peaceful, so inviting.

Christine adjusted the braid of her thick brown hair and said, “A boarding school at this place would be wonderful, I believe. Something like we have seen in Australia, in Melbourne and in Brisbane. Especially that old Scottish school.”



“Yes, I know what you mean, and you liked that teacher in gymnastics too,” grinned her father. “I saw you trying to discover whether he was wearing a wedding ring.”

Christine made a fending gesture, but she did not deny anything “Dad, suppose I give art lessons, and botany, perhaps also the Dutch language. The pupils must know that we can have just as much respect for Dutch as the Flemings do. They defended it in a gathering of the European Union.”

Charles van Zevenaar nodded and said, “Now you mention the Flemings, I believe we could very well make use of the services of a Reformed Fleming. I could take up contact about this with friends in Antwerp. But in the meantime, what are your plans for your own studies?”

Christine lowered her eyes and hesitated, though she knew she could always frankly speak with her father; she felt a bit embarrassed.

“I have been thinking about it seriously in the last couple of days. Do you remember, when we had a talk with three girls from Italy about student life, the pranks, the rags, and so on? And those young people in Oslo, in the museum, and that couple in Nassau, at the Bahamas, and that boy from Johannesburg? Dad, to tell the honest truth, I don’t feel attracted. I don’t think I can tackle all

that. It will wreck my nerves...I don't know. I have become a conservative Christian girl, and I face a lot of secular modernist ideas...I will be unable to stem the tide. Perhaps God expects it from me. I don't know...I intend to take some correspondence courses, and then I will also have my hands free to help in the school in the castle."

Charles van Zevenaar evaded her gaze and said, "Let us have a look inside."

They walked over the neatly cut grass and reached the bridge that led to the double front doors, recently varnished. "Your grandfather got the whole castle restored, inside and out, two years ago. He appointed a gardener, who lives here now with his wife, in rooms next to the entrance. I spoke with him this morning through the telephone, so they know that we are coming," he explained.

Christine hooked her arm into his and pulled the big copper bell. It resounded in the hall.

The doors swung open and there stood square-built man with a weather-beaten face, and behind him a small, chubby-faced woman, in the traditional dress of the region.

"Ah! Here you are!" the man said with a bass voice. "Come in! You are in the nick of time for drinking a cup of tea together...the joke is on me...perhaps you want first to see everything."



The castle was in fact much bigger than they had expected. There were plenty of big rooms for classes, a refectory, an assembly hall and a gymnasium. All the walls covered with wood panels. They discussed the plans, the four of them. The gardener agreed to act as the caretaker. His wife, Iet, was willing to show interested pupils how to make a kitchen garden and how to preserve fruit in bottles. Those things become all the rage again, she told Christine.

A few minutes later they said good-bye and Charles van Zevenaar showed his daughter the list with the names and addresses of all the people he had to speak with, including the mayor and aldermen of Oldedurem, four ministers of churches, the public notary, a lawyer, and other people who would cost him a lot of time to sort things out with. "Now look, there in the left corner of the field we can get tennis courts, in the right corner an indoor swimming pool, on the other side room for football, korfbal, hockey, et cetera. And the last corner, if it is suitable, we have that for some fine fruit trees and

vegetables. The wood will give protection against the cold wind during the winter months, don't you think?"

Christine agreed and made the suggestion, "What about a bus, for Church-going, concerts, paying visits to exhibitions and museums, perhaps factories?"

"Excellent," said her father and wrote it down



Already a week later Charles van Zevenaar got a meeting together. Not in his own house in the city, but in the future dining room in the castle, with the long table of oak wood in the middle and the chairs dating back to the year 1500. There was tea, coffee and cake, served by Christine to the fourteen guests, to discuss the foundation of the school.

Charles waited till everybody was sitting comfortably, walked to the middle of the room, looked at the mayor and said, "I am grateful for your support and cooperation, so that we could get quickly through a whole lot of formalities, obligations and regulations. I am also thankful for the help and encouragement of the ministers. And notary van Zoutegem and doctor Luintjes, I am glad that you with your expertise are willing to write a draft statute. I have been pleasantly surprised by a generous gift from you, mister van Zuil, on behalf of your factory, because as you said you find the school very important for this part of the country. Minister Bouwman, special thanks for the gift of many books for the library. Several people who made contributions in one form or another are not here at the moment, and I will thank them in writing. A lot of work has yet to be done, now we are laying the first stone, this afternoon; but in our case it is more like filling up a basket."

Charles took his seat, and the mayor put in, "In the past I often wondered, what would become of this place. The owner organized it well, with its own drinking water pumped up, its own generators for the power supply, the central heating. A well preserved building, ready for use. It is amazing."

Christine noticed that her father went nervously through all the papers in front of him and suddenly he whispered to the journalist Bram Stoof, "If you write about our agenda today, will you please point out that the school will be really Reformed?"



Some months later, when it was nearly winter, Charles van Zevenaar and Christine stood again at a distance watching the castle. They felt very happy and thankful for all the Lord had provided. Small clouds came out of the chimney, of the central heating furnace, they heard

the sound of voices from one of the classrooms, from a truck a parcel was delivered at the front doors. On the grass walked now not only ducks, but also geese and several coots, turbits and moor-hens. All had come right, with much patience.

The media had paid a lot of attention to the castle project, and there had been a stream of letters, faxes and phone calls. Christine had been long days in the office, often with the help of two other girls for typing letters, filling in forms, and the administration. An accountant had organized the bookkeeping.

Charles did all the conversation; a couple of times he got a sore throat. Now the school had a headmaster,

that was no longer his job. There were six classes, for different age groups. The dormitory part was split up in four groups boys and one group girls, each with a leader or a chaperone respectively. Nobody had objections against this or had caused any problems. There were agreements in writing, and signed by each student. The young people were delighted about the surroundings. Some had seen deer coming out of the woods, and they had given them hay.

“Dad,” said Christine softly. “I feel I am going to fall in love with that young classical master... ❖

J.P. de Klerk is an author and journalist from Ashhurst, New Zealand.

Gem of the Month

The Sad Tale of a Young Church-Rejector

by Allen Baird

A young man 'round the age of sweet sixteen
Is the strangest beast you ever have seen.
For although much diminished by age's lack,
He has far more brains than a miser's sack.
He knows so much more than his pastor and others—
Whether mum, dad, grand-folks, sister or brothers.
'The Church is a place for old dudes,' (he reasons).
'Best trade God in for the sporting seasons.
I'll have my fill of shallow tom-fooling,
Get some quick bucks and forget about the schooling.'
Before the lad knew it he was seventy-three,
Dark in the eye and fragile at the knee.
'What comfort are memories as I reach the grave?
Neither body or soul can all of them save!
A life without Him who made me from dust—
Though it be filled with laziness and laughter and lust—
Is as useless and vile as a fiddle in the flame.'
Then the old man died without Christ—fearful shame.
But there is some hope 'lest we all should despair.
Where that man is, take heed that you never end there.
Neglect not the words of your parents and pastor.
Only they can save you from similar disaster.

*Allen is a member of the
Covenant Protestant
Reformed Church of
Northern Ireland.*

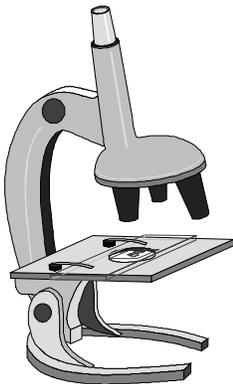
A Look at Seeds Under the Microscope of God's Word

by John Huizenga

A tiny seed is launched through the air and tumbles to earth where it bounces a few times and falls into a crack in the dry ground. There it nestles in among some particles of dirt where even the sharp eye of a hungry bird can not distinguish it from the dirt. The days go by. The sun scorches the earth. Feet trample it. The snow falls upon it. The cold freezes it hard. The tiny seed remains inconspicuous like one particle of dirt among millions.

Clouds build up, thunder booms, and warm raindrops melt the snow. The sun comes out and the soil grows warm under its power. The warm moisture sets microscopic creatures into a flurry of activity as they begin to

bustle about among the particles of dirt and the seed. Molecules of water prod the dry testa (seed coat) of the seed; heat brings the atoms within the seed to an excited buzz, and a new life begins to stir and grow toward the form and function of the plant from which it came.



The tiny seed is a great wonder of God's creation. Scientists distinguish some basic parts of the seed such as the embryo and its food supply encased by the testa. God made the embryo a special arrangement of cells containing everything necessary for the development and

life of the plant into which it will grow. He made the testa a locked case to protect the embryo against the times of drought and cold. He made the only key capable of opening the case gently enough to stir up the life within the seed to be the environment necessary for the life of that particular plant. When the precise quantity of moisture, heat, oxygen, and in some cases, light unlock the intricate mechanism of the testa, God brings life to the embryo



which draws food from the cotyledon (seed leaf) and water from the soil through the testa. The cells divide and burst through the testa. The embryonic root obediently grows downward into the soil probing for the water and food necessary for the plant. Soon the command rings through the seed for the cells of the plumule (embryonic shoot) to divide and push upward toward the light that God has given for the growth of a mature plant. God placed within the plumule everything necessary for the development of leaves and new seeds. As the plumule develops, the plant grows upwards for the use of man and the glory of God.

God created the marvelous intricacies of the plant and its seed on the third day of creation. "And God said, Let the earth bring forth grass, the herb yielding seed, and the fruit tree yielding fruit after his kind, whose seed

is in itself, upon the earth: and it was so.” Genesis 1:11. Along with all the living creatures God created, He created the seed whereby it would produce again another of its own kind.

God employs the idea of a seed throughout His Word to teach God’s people about His marvelous work of salvation. The word “seed” is used in Scripture in three basic ways. First of all it is used to refer to the part of a plant described above. God reveals to us that He has created the seed. He gives the seed to man for food. He sends the rain and the sunshine, as well as the drought and devouring insects. In these passages God reveals His sovereignty over all creation and His work of providence.¹

A seed is also used by Jesus to teach the truths of the kingdom of heaven. In Matthew 13:20, the seed is the word of God preached and entering into the ears of believers and unbelievers. In the believer it grows and produces fruit, but in the unbeliever it withers and dies. In Matthew 13:24 the seed and sprouting plant is likened unto the believer living in the world among unbelievers. Matthew 13:31 compares the tiny mustard seed to the kingdom of heaven which seems tiny in the world but grows to be the greatest among herbs. In Matthew 17:20, Jesus compares our faith to a mustard seed, which, though it be small, has power to move mountains.

By far the greatest use of “seed” in Scripture is to denote children. The seed is the means whereby a living creature produces another of its own kind. The seed which was created within Adam to produce another Adam developed into Abel, a distinct being in himself, yet essentially Adam. And so today every person in the world is a copy of Adam. Not an exact copy, not a clone, but each child is brought forth in accordance with the wonderful process created by God for the bringing forth of unique individuals.

Though the natural process of bringing forth children is marvelous, the entire seed of Adam is corrupt with sin. Sin is as inescapable as the fact of being human. Sin has taken hold of man’s entire being. Sin has brought death to man. Though children are born and the human race continues, the individuals die and there will eventually come an end to the human race. Sin blots out the covenant fellowship with his Creator, the only true life for man. The life within the seed of man is gone, but God in mercy creates a new and marvelous seed filled with the eternal life of God.

Out of the human race, dead in sin, God chooses certain individuals, particular seeds, to be counted as His seed. “And because he loved thy fathers, therefore he chose their seed after them, and brought thee out in his sight with his mighty power out of Egypt;” Deut. 4:37. God produces again another of His own kind in these chosen. “That is, They which are the children of the flesh, these are not the children of God: but the children of the promise are counted for the seed.” Romans 9:8. These are born of God and free from the bondage of sin. They have the seed of God within them. “Whosoever is born of God doth not commit sin; for his seed remaineth in him: and he cannot sin, because he is born of God.” 1 John 3:9. These are “born again, not of corruptible seed, but of incorruptible, by the word of God, which liveth and abideth for ever.” 1 Peter 1:23.

Because of the wonderful work of God within us, we are no longer dead but alive. When the natural earthly life of our body ceases and we are cast into the grave, we are like a seed. Though our dead body appears no different than the dead body of the natural man, no different than a lifeless particle of dirt, it is a seed planted in the ground waiting for the call of God to sprout. We have the principle of a new life within that endures even though the body is dead. We are buried. The days go by. The sun scorches the earth. Feet trample it. The snow falls upon it. The cold freezes it hard. Fire and wild beasts may even consume and devour the body. It may be scattered across the earth as dust.

Then Christ comes upon the clouds of heaven. The trumpet sounds. The fires of God’s judgment burn and purge the entire creation. The word of God’s power awakens the life within the seeds sown in the earth throughout the history of the world. In the twinkling of an eye, the new plants spring forth (1 Corinthians 15:52). Our bodies will be raised. They will spring forth as the plant springs forth from its seed, “And as we have borne the image of the earthy, we shall also bear the image of the heavenly.” 1 Corinthians 15:49. ❖

¹Genesis 1:12, Genesis 1:29, Genesis 47:19, Genesis 47:23-24, Lev. 11:37-38, Lev. 12:2, Lev. 26:16, Lev. 27:16, Lev. 27:30, Numbers 20:5, Numbers 24:7, Deut. 11:9-10, Deut. 22:9, Deut. 28:38, Eccl. 11:6, Isaiah 5:10, Isaiah 30:23, Isaiah 55:10, Ezekiel 17:5

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The Song of Zion

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

June 1-9 Devotionals from Psalter #157 “A Cry for Help”

June 1 Read Psalm 59, noting verses 1 and 2; Read and sing Psalter 157:1

This psalm and song versify David’s thoughts when Saul sent men to watch his house to kill him. Notice that his first thought in response to his fear is to call on God. As we walk close to God that is our immediate reaction also to fear and turmoil in our lives. In this safe country we rarely face life-threatening danger and we become self-satisfied and confident. *He* is our only security and provider, but sinfully we always look to our own strength and the power of money or prestige to take care of us. If praying is our last solution when other hopes have failed, we aren’t walking with God as we should. Today focus on thinking of God as your only answer to every trouble. Pray to keep Him first in your thoughts! By looking to Him first your human efforts will be directed rightly.

June 2 Read Ephesians 6 especially verses 10–12, Psalm 59:3, 4, and Psalter 157:2

In the second verse of this song, the enemy is surrounding David to capture him. We have outwardly peaceful lives, but when we as individuals and as a church stand up for the truth and reject sin we feel the pressure of hatred building against us too. We may someday experience being surrounded by those who are against us because we won’t accept their lies. We need to be willing to be embarrassed and uncomfortable today when it would be easy compromise our beliefs just a little to keep “peace” and not draw attention to ourselves. But doing that makes us guilty of lying. Also don’t neglect constructive criticism of your friends in the church. Pray for courage!

June 3 Read Romans 12:14–21, Psalm 59:5 and Psalter 157:3

David is justly angry against his false accusers, and he calls on God to take vengeance. We shouldn’t sympathize with those living unrepentantly in sin. We must condemn their actions, and pray that wickedness will be punished. But God is the judge and He alone punishes sin (except as He gives us authority.) Our calling is to continue to act in love even to our enemies, not to bring justice by making others suffer. When we “get back” in our petty little ways to those who don’t quite please us, we are defending our own pride, not God’s glory. Trust God to deal with the faults

of others. Often forgiving your own family is the hardest of all! Pray for grace to work for the good of the neighbor even when you feel attacked.

June 4 Read Psalm 2:1–6, Psalm 59:6–8 and Psalter 157:4

David’s enemies continue their attack. He is steadily hopeful in God and doesn’t lose faith when they seem to be succeeding. The wicked are openly violent, ridiculing the good and trying to drag it down. Today we see our nation has turned aside from the true God and imagine they are powerful and self-sufficient. God scorns their feeble insults. They think God won’t see their evil, but they will someday stand in judgement. In your life do you preserve God’s holiness with your words? Speak respectfully—God hears you!

June 5 Read Psalm 37, especially verses 7–9, Psalm 59:9, 10, and Psalter 157:5

David is confident, knowing God is his defense. He has no hope in man’s power, only in God’s mercy. Much in this Psalm makes us look ahead to the persecution we may experience in the end times. We, like David, need to be firmly grounded in God and His promises so we can withstand those trials. And of course we need to live today, as every day, in strong faith. Is God your refuge and renewal? Or do you flee to the TV to unwind each day, or escape in other recreation? Like David, look to Him as your source of strength. He won’t let you down. When we acknowledge Him first and center our thoughts on spiritual things we are set high above our spiritual enemies of doubt and temptation.

June 6 Read Psalm 93, Psalm 59:11–13 and Psalter 157:6

David calls on God to bring down his enemies for their lies, knowing that in the end all will recognize God’s rule and will worship. We can cling also to that certain knowledge that God will have the final victory. In this age of tolerance even the worst crimes are hardly punished so wickedness grows. But God has the proud wicked in derision, and those who live in sin will reap the rewards. They will be trapped in their own pride, because when God is denied all meaning is lost! God reigns – praise Him!

June 7 Read Psalm 2:7–12, Psalm 59:13–16, and Psalter 157:7

Those who hate God will be consumed in His anger. They will suffer for their sin and will acknowledge that He rules. By trusting God and continuing to speak the truth, we render the attacks

of the wicked useless. Their ultimate goal is to “get us off our pedestal” and join them in sin. We are strong because God is our strength. Notice this is also a picture of our constant spiritual fight against our own sinful nature. As soon as we try to save ourselves we fall, but keeping our eyes on Him we can’t waver!

June 8 Read Psalm 3, Psalm 59:13-16, and Psalter 157:8

David looks beyond the turmoil before his eyes and is confident that a new day will dawn. This is a small picture of heaven where we will rest and praise God after the darkness of this world. In this life we fail continually, and often as we see sin grow and flourish in us and around us we can lose faith and be discouraged. Take his attitude of hope and look past your frustrations of work today! Never doubt God’s sovereignty! When doubts take hold in your mind look to the Scriptures and Psalms like this one to remind you of His eternal care.

June 9 Read Psalm 100, Psalm 59:16,17, and Psalter 157:9

The last verse is David’s response of thanks and praise to God. Many psalms end with this theme, and the Heidelberg catechism also sets the pattern of thankfulness as the final step in the life-long process of realizing our salvation. This is also our natural response to all the little victories we experience when we don’t give in to temptation and uphold the truth. Most of all it is our constant expression in every action of life. We have true joy in our salvation, God’s victory in our heart. We can always trust God’s steadfast love. A chief means of praise is songs such as this Psalm. Pray to realize this joy and respond with praise.

Devotionals by Beth De Vries June 10-17

June 10 Read Psalm 60

We often feel that God has turned His back on us and is not attentive to our requests. It seems that we think that we deserve some attention from God. In reality all that we receive is a free and gracious gift. We turn our backs to God and His appointed way and then wonder why He seems so far from us. God may become displeased with us and angry when we disobey Him continually as he did with the people in the Old Testament. We find an example of this in Numbers 11 when Israel murmured about the manna. Yet, God truly loves His people and will restore the to His favor again, not by any merit of theirs, but by His working of grace in our hearts. Sing Psalter 158:1.

June 11 Read Job 38:1-15

God has created the heavens and earth in all its glory. He controls them for at His command the mountains shake and the earth is moved. In Job 38, Job is challenged by God for his doubt of God’s faithfulness. God reminds Job that the triune God alone was present at the beginning and He alone rules the world and all therein. In the second stanza of Psalter 158 we read of God bringing His judgments upon the earth and we find the psalmist begging for God to renew the strength of the land that she not become destroyed by man’s own wickedness. Sing Psalm 158:2.

June 12 Read Proverbs 3:1-12

We find ourselves in trials and difficult situations frequently in this life. Maybe today you have already faced a difficult situation or are afflicted by some ailment. Many times God gives us these trials to strengthen our faith and to lead us closer to Him. Our lives seem to be filled with despair and disappointment especially when we focus on our earthly life. The third stanza of

Psalter 158 reminds us that God has led His people into these difficult and bitter times. Proverbs 3:11-12 also teaches us that God uses chastisement and trials to correct and build up those whom He loves. May we find comfort in this and not become discouraged as we sing stanza 3 of Psalter 158.

June 13 Read Psalm 107:1-8

“O give thanks unto the Lord, for he is good: for his mercy endureth for ever.” This is the truth that Psalm 107 calls us to proclaim to all the world. We have been given grace and a great inner happiness. May this spirit flow freely from us. God commands us to show His truth to all those that we meet and have contact. God’s gracious love for us should cause us to proclaim our blessing to everyone. We know that God has His elect people but we know not who they are; therefore, we must proclaim the banner of His truth to the world. They should be able to see not only by our words but also by our actions that we are filled with the love of God in our hearts. May we be known as a people who display this banner. Make a special effort today to show to a neighbor or stranger the love God has given us. Sing Psalter 158:4.

June 14 Read Deut. 7:6-11

The truth of God’s eternal election is brought to light again in stanza 5 as well as the passage which we read in Deuteronomy. This passage shows us that God has not chosen us by our own merits or because we are such great people. Rather we have been chosen and preserved by Him because He set His love upon us and has promised to care for us. We are called to keep God’s commandments in thankfulness for what He has done for us. The theme is the same in the fifth stanza of Psalter 158 where the psalmist speaks of God saving His beloved from their foes. Our help comes from the Lord’s almighty hand especially when we ask this of Him. May we bring our needs and troubles to the Lord that He may defeat our enemies and make us strong. Sing Psalter 158:5.

June 15 Read Psalm 60:6-8, Psalm 2

The rulers of this world think themselves to be great and plot against the people of God to harm Christ. They foolishly think that they can break the bands of God’s anointed. God triumphs over the wicked with ease, and puts them in derision. He even goes so far as to laugh at the wicked. He shall break them with a rod of iron and dash them in pieces like a potter’s vessel. God shall have the wicked bow to Him in the judgement day and acknowledge that He is God alone. God accomplishes this defeat of the wicked by the death, resurrection, ascension and second coming of His only begotten Son, as is seen in Psalm 2:5-7. Sing Psalter 158:6.

June 16 Read Romans 7:12-25

We are often overcome with our sins in this world. The old man of sin wars in our flesh with our new man of righteousness. It seems at times as though the old man is winning the battle and we will soon be completely wicked. The good that we seek to do we appear to be unable to do, and the evil, we are too willing to do. This passage in Romans reminds us of how difficult the battle is even for those who seem strong in their faith as Paul was. Psalter 158:7 refers to the strongholds of sin when we are about overcome in the battle. Who will guide us in these sinful times? God will be our guide and lead us from our tents of sin. He will

cast off the devil and our enemies and give us the victory that His name may be praised. Sing Psalter 158:7.

June 17 Read Isaiah 12

As was discussed yesterday God is our sure help against the foe in time of trouble. It is God that will comfort us and lead us in the right way. This has been the theme throughout this Psalter and Psalm and it is ever so important for us to remember. We must always put our trust in God and not rely on our own strength or that of man. When we learn obedience to God's will for our lives, we also find patience and contentment. Isaiah 12:5 is good for us to remember as we study the Psalms "Sing unto the Lord; for he hath done excellent things: this is known in all the earth." Sing Psalter 158:8.

Devotionals by John Huizenga June 18-31

June 18 Read Psalm 61

Have you ever been far away from home where everything and everyone around you is strange and unfamiliar? The loneliness quickly turns to panic when trouble arises and there is no one around to help. It is at a time like this when the truth of God's omnipresence brings comfort to the believer. Communion with God is never cut off by distance nor height nor depth. God is present in every part of the creation so one who is united to God by faith in Christ is always very near unto his covenant Friend. This confidence in God to be near does not belong to all who call themselves Christian. If you walk in unrepentant sin and put your trust in earthly help, then you may find yourself very much alone in time of need. Turning unto God is an act of faith, it does not proceed out of the heart of man by nature. May God so work faith in your heart that He is there with you in time of need to lead you unto Christ our Rock. Sing Psalter 159:1 & 160:1.

June 19 Read 1 Corinthians 1:1-10; Psalm 61: 2-4

We are born sinful, our souls sold into the cruel bondage of sin. Many churches today would have us believe that multitudes of unbelievers are by their own free will groping blindly to seek shelter for their souls, but that is not true. The sinner seeks shelter for his naked guilty soul under the filth of more sin. God sovereignly chooses to be a shelter for the souls of His people. Having been taken into that shelter we realize and rejoice in the fact that our souls find rest. It is the believer, who knows and has tasted of the rest found within God, that cries out to God for help when in time of need. He knows God as a refuge, a strong tower, and a God of sheltering wings. With the apostle we also put our trust "in God which raiseth the dead: Who delivered us from so great a death, and doth deliver: in whom we trust that he will yet deliver us." Sing Psalter 159:2, 160:2&3.

June 20 Read Luke 1:26-33; Psalm 61:4, 5

Why does the child of God have such confidence and trust in God? The reason is found in the verses upon which we meditate today. David and we also confess that God has heard our vows and confers to us our heritage. Our vow is to walk in newness of life by the power of God's grace. Our heritage given us now is that new life in Christ as the tokens of eternal life in heaven. In this connection, David speaks of his being anointed unto an everlasting kingdom which comes to fulfillment in Christ. Christ rules by the power of His grace and Spirit in the hearts of every believer. He gives us the will and strength to serve our Creator

and Redeemer in this life. In Him we are able to fulfil our purpose in life. In Him we continue through this life on our way to perfect covenant life with God in heaven. There is no greater joy or peace. Let us rejoice and give thanks to God. Sing Psalter 159:3.

June 21 Read Hebrews 9:22-28; Psalm 61:6, 7

David speaks on the basis of God's promise of a Redeemer of that Redeemer Himself. He shall abide before God forever. You will notice that the Psalter puts the believer who sings this Psalm in the place of him who abides before God forever. The believer can be included understanding that we are in Christ also made kings and priests, but it is Christ first of all Who lives in perfect covenant friendship before God. The Eternal love and righteousness of God has placed Christ in this position as head of the redeemed. All who abide before God are sustained by the mercy and truth of God. For this reason the believer is assured that his prayer is heard and answered. In this knowledge the believer sounds forth praises and lives a life of thankful obedience. Let us live by faith in this day and make our vows to walk in thankful obedience. Sing Psalter 159:4.

June 22 Read Luke 2:25-32; Psalm 62:1, 2

Does your soul wait in awed silence upon God? The world surrounds us with noise and sights to arouse our attention and response. Our souls are continually aroused by this or that problem, hurt, or distress to cry out for justice and attention. God alone is able to bring a hush to the soul. In terror wicked men are put to silence when God reveals Himself in powerful earthquakes or storms. In peaceful assurance, the believer stands in quiet patience before his sovereign God. Putting all our trust in God, we know that all things are in His hands. The aged Simeon waited quietly and patiently upon God though nations raged and it seemed impossible for Christ to come. Let us pray for this soul quieting dependence upon God. Be diligent in your study of God's word to know Him and the greatness of His salvation. Sing Psalter 161:1.

June 23 Read Isaiah 30:8-17; Psalm 62:3, 4

Sometimes when we think about our enemies, those who come to mind are the neighbors who rarely go to church or criminals. The most dangerous and cruel enemies, however are people right in the church: ministers who preach lies, people who come to church but lead wicked lives and want others to go with them, and people who condemn pure preaching. Isaiah came straight to the congregation of Israel which was full of such hypocrites with his word of God's judgment. These rebel against God and seek to destroy the soul of the child of God as well. Be assured that such are as a wall that is bending and ready to burst and as a fence ready to tip. God will destroy them in fierce judgment except they repent and submit to Him in humble obedience. May we never join in the sins and ever see their plots to destroy the godly. Sing Psalter 161:2.

June 24 Read John 6:37-69; Psalm 62:5, 6

How do you react to the doctrines of sovereign election and reprobation, total depravity and salvation by grace alone? Are these words of God to us too hard, as were the words that Jesus spoke to the people? Are you inclined to speak out against the preaching of these truths and demand softer preaching? These doctrines have been since the fall of man a source of bitter rebel-

lion against God. The Psalmist lives in close fellowship with God and knows it is foolish to react so against the plain word of God. Though he may not fully comprehend the depths of such doctrine, he does know that God is his rock and tower. He waits in quiet trust. May we also wait in quiet trust and confess with Peter "Lord, to whom shall we go? thou hast the words of eternal life. And we believe and are sure that thou art that Christ, the Son of the living God." Sing Psalter 161:3.

June 25 Read Philippians 1:12-30; Psalm 62:5-7

The Christian life demands that we put our trust in God alone. Many in the world, who do not believe in God as He reveals Himself in Scripture will, in a time of great fear, pray to God just in case He really is the true God. Some try to believe in many religions at one time so that they have the best chance of believing in the right one. Others confess that God is God alone, but frantically save money and buy huge insurance policies just in case God does not take care of him as He promises. But the child of God must live in the absolute assurance that God will care for his every need. Like Job, the child of God must be able to lose everything, and yet trust that God will uphold him. We must speak with the assurance of Paul that all that we believe is true and we will never be ashamed. This may seem impossible, and indeed it is apart from the power of God's grace, but this blessed gift of full assurance is ours in Christ. Sing Psalter 161:4 and 162:1.

June 26 Read Philippians 4:1-7; Psalm 62:8

How often do we pour out our hearts before God? How often do we bring before Him all our fears and cares and ask for the grace that draws us into close fellowship with God? It is a beautiful act of faith to pour out your heart unto God. We must put our trust in Him at all times. When we are happy, we must sing thankful praise to God with all our heart. When sad, we must desire to come first of all to our God and bring all our sorrows to Him. When we search our souls and find there the iniquity of our sinful natures, then we bow before Him in humble repentance. All the varied aspects of our life are things to bring before our God. We do not try to hide anything. Such is the life of covenant friendship of God with His people. It is the life given to us through the death of Christ our Savior. Do not disparage the life of covenant friendship with God. Pour out your heart to God each day. Sing Psalter 161:5.

June 27 Read Isaiah 40:1-18; Psalm 62:9

So quickly we put our trust in banks, insurance, jobs, doctors, our own wisdom, the government, and material wealth. For many people, these things are all that there is. When any of these things in which they trust fail, then they are thrown into deepest despair. If we could, however, put these things on a scale that measures value and worth in life, they would not even register. All things created are created for a purpose, and are of no value apart from God Who is glorified in them. Even the mighty nations of the world that boast of their culture and great achievements do not tip the scale in the least. The worthlessness of the greatest achievements of man is compared in Isaiah to the infinite value of God, His Word, and the church that He gathers by the power of His word. When we meditate upon these things we are amazed. We are humbled to think we are a part of this wondrous work of God. We find comfort when it appears to us that the world is ready to swallow up the church. Sing Psalter 161:6.

June 28 Read Luke 12:13-21; Psalm 62:10

When we lose sight of the insignificance of earthly wealth and power and the great value of God's word and covenant life with Him, then we will most certainly begin to put our trust in earthly riches. That is what we do by nature. When we begin to trust in earthly riches, then we also begin to use oppression and means not ordained by God to gain those riches. Wealth may be attained righteously, but then the temptation is to set our heart on it. But let us remember the value of those riches in the eyes of God as we saw yesterday. They are as nothing in the balance of God. Let us rather be rich toward God. Study His word. Listen carefully to the word preached in church. Listen carefully in catechism. The knowledge of God is everlasting life. Knowing God brings peace which passeth all understanding in this life also. Sing Psalter 161:7.

June 29 Read Isaiah 26:1-11; Psalm 62:11

"Power belongeth unto God." The power of God is that virtue of God "according to which He is able to accomplish whatsoever He pleases" (*Reformed Dogmatics*, Hoeksema). God alone has this kind of power. All other power is given by God to others to serve His purposes. The Psalter directs our attention to the saving power of God. We who are dead in sin find great comfort knowing that God certainly accomplishes His purpose to deliver us from death and bring us into eternal life. We read in Isaiah 62 that "Jehovah is everlasting strength." Knowing this, the believer puts his trust in Him and has perfect peace. Our little children sing "they are weak but He is strong." May we also come to God in childlike faith confessing that we are weak and helpless. God reveals to us throughout His word that He is strong to save. Sing Psalter 161:8.

June 30 Read Micah 7; Psalm 62:12

Mercy is also an attribute which finds its only source in God. Mercy is "the virtue of God according to which He wills [his people] to be perfectly blessed in Him, to taste His own blessedness, and according to which He leads them through death to the highest possible life of his covenant friendship" (*Reformed Dogmatics*, Hoeksema). In His tender love and mercy, God sent His Son to bear the just judgment upon sin. In this wonderful act of salvation God reveals to us His mercy. The way of sin and death is a way that brings this attribute into the heart and soul of the believer. We will continue to grow in our knowledge of this attribute forever in heavenly glory. May we who have tasted of God's mercy also show mercy to one another. Sing Psalter 161:9.

June 31 Read 2 Cor. 4:1-9; Psalm 62.

In this life we continually fight the temptation to put our confidence in earthly things, and then when that fails, to cry unto God. This Psalm teaches us that we must look to God alone. He is our Rock, our Salvation, our Defence, our Glory, and our Refuge. He is everything to us. In His mercy and power He reaches out to us and sovereignly accomplishes His purpose with us. Never once in this Psalm does the Psalmist express fear and despair. May God write this Psalm upon our hearts. May we sing this Psalm with all our heart. Sing Psalter 162.

Psalter #151— Prayer for Deliverance

by Mindy DeMeester

“Be merciful unto me, O God: for man would swallow me up; he fighting daily oppresseth me.” Psalm 56:1. We as God’s people are hated by the wicked world. They use the evils and sinful distractions of this world to tempt us into sinning with them. The wicked despise to see God’s children striving to live holy lives. We as God’s people must show by our very walk of life that we are different from the world. We must refrain from joining the world in their sinful pleasures of drama, drinking, and lusts. The wicked are always looking for some way to get the godly into trouble. The devil uses the tactics of the wicked of the earth to try to draw God’s people to himself. He wants to take us from our Lord. The wicked will in their sly and sneaky ways try to destroy even our very lives. If God would allow them to do so, they would. However, God faithfully keeps His people to Himself. Ultimately the devil is trying to do us harm and to take away our souls. “They gather themselves together, they hide themselves, they mark my steps, when they wait for my soul.” Psalm 56: 6.

By the grace of God and in His strength alone do we fight off these physical and spiritual enemies. So often we think that we must face our trials and tribulations on

our own and battle our earthly foes by our own strength. But, God who is more mighty than all creatures controls and governs our entire life. He will fight for us and through Him we will overcome the wicked. He sovereignly reigns over all things

and we are confident that God will continually care for us. In God alone do we put our trust for He shall guide us through all. “In God have I put my trust: I will not be afraid what man can do unto me.” Psalm 56: 10. He shall keep us through what evils and trials the wicked set before us. Our God will keep us from falling into the plots of the devil and his demons even when they try so hard to coerce us into their nets.

Our lives are in God’s eternal counsel. He shall remain our constant help throughout our whole lives. In this great comfort we must praise and magnify our God. Let us always remember that God watches over us in all situations of life and will keep us even in the hour of affliction and persecution. He shall give grace sufficient for us to

bear our burdens and to fight the wiles of the devil and his followers. Thanks be to God! ❖

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Do Christians Who Commit Suicide Go To Hell?

by Rev. Richard Moore

Question

I know it has been long debated as to whether those who take their own lives go to hell or not. I could understand that if the person was an unbeliever his/her entire life, but what if the person was at one time or another experiencing a strong faith in God?

Answer

I will attempt to answer this question rather briefly. In the first place, normally when one takes his own life it destines one to hell. The reason for this is that it is sin against the sixth commandment—"Thou shalt not kill." The Heidelberg Catechism rightly says that included in this commandment is that "I hurt not myself, nor willfully expose myself to any danger." Understand that God alone has the right to give life and to take life. To take one's own life is to be discontent with the life God has given, or it is to count God's work as wrong. This is even the case when we take the life of a neighbor, we are discontent with God's way with us and are not satisfied with the neighbor that He places in our path. So in dark sin we plot to remove that which is not pleasing to us. Hence rebel against God and break this commandment.

Now we must understand that when God says it is sin to kill, and we decide to take our own life that is to kill ourselves, then we sin. The thing with suicide is that it is a sin for which we cannot repent. Almost all true suicides therefore involves one in sin against God which cannot be repented of. Such sin leads straight to hell. The sin against the Holy Spirit is unforgivable, Matthew 12:31. The sin against the Holy Ghost is the sin of impenitence which damns to hell.

It is possible to speak of a hypothetical situation where one takes his own life by some method and does not immediately die, for one reason or another. Perhaps doctors try to save him and keep him alive for a certain

time, only in the end he dies. It is possible in the time between the act and the final death that such a one may repent. This is really quite unlikely however. If one hates himself and God so much that he would take his own life, it is highly unlikely that he will suddenly repent and in sorrow before God seek His forgiveness. And yet remember that we cannot judge the heart. Which makes this exception possible, but not likely.

This brings us to the second aspect of your question and that is our trying to understand this especially when the one that takes his or her life seems to us to have had faith. One thing in this regard is true, and that is if the

act of suicide immediately causes one to die without repentance, then we may be sure that this person never did have true faith. There is no falling away from grace. There is no such thing as being once a child of God and then a ceasing to be God's child. God causes His

children to persevere in faith. Philippians 1:6 is an absolute, we may be "confident of this very thing, that he which hath begun a good work in you will perform it until the day of Jesus Christ..." God saves and His work cannot be thwarted.

This means if there is such a suicide by one who apparently believed, the fact is that there never was true faith. We can understand that this is possible even from the Scriptural examples of Saul who often spoke as a believer speaks, and of Judas who was one of the apostles of the Lord and even preached in His name and did miracles in His name. And yet without a doubt both of these in suicide took the path swiftly to hell.

May God give us the grace to see the horror of this sin, that we may never contemplate so rebelling against God. ❖

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

Almost all true suicides therefore involves one in sin against God which cannot be repented of. Such sin leads straight to hell.

Practical Antithetical Living

by Rev. James Slopsema

The text for our convention this year is Ephesians 5:8, “For ye were sometimes darkness, but now are ye light in the Lord: walk as children of the light.” Here we are taught that naturally we are darkness. We are lost in the darkness of sin and death. We are under the dominion of the devil, totally depraved so that our lives are headed away from God. But in Jesus Christ we have become light. God has graciously brought us to the light of faith and salvation in Jesus Christ. We are no longer darkness but light.

This work of God’s grace to make us light creates an antithesis or contrast between us and the world. The world is darkness. We are light in the Lord.

But now we must live this antithesis. Since we are light in the Lord, we must “walk as children of the light.”

As you know from experience this is not easily done. It is only with great difficulty that we walk as the children of the light. This is surely something we can not do in our own strength. Those who attempt to walk in the light in their own strength will fail miserably. Antithetical living requires nothing less than the strength of Jesus Christ.

How do we receive the strength of Jesus Christ to live antithetically every day as children of the light? We receive that strength by diligent and faithful use of what we have come to know as the means of grace. Let’s discuss these means.

Sabbath Day Observance

The first is the Sabbath day. God in the fourth commandment instructs us to set one day aside each week as a Sabbath day, i.e., as a day of rest. In the NT this has become the first day of the week. We are charged not to work on this day of rest. The purpose of putting aside our daily work is to devote the day to spiritual things. This Sabbath is a good gift of God to us. A wise use of it will refresh and empower us to walk as children of the light during the rest of the week. In this connection we can discuss a number of questions.

Discussion questions:

1. What should we be doing on the Sabbath that empowers us to live antithetically? (See the Heidelberg Catechism, Lord’s Day 37)
2. What part should physical rest (taking a nap) have in our Sabbath keeping?
3. There are all kinds of questions about what we may or may not do on Sunday. What principle(s) should guide us in answering these questions?
4. Can you suggest worthwhile activities for us as young people to make the most out of our Sundays?
5. Do our Saturday evening activities have any impact on our ability to use the Lord’s Day profitably?

Bible Study And Prayer

Another means that Lord gives to strengthen us to live antithetically as children of the light are Bible study and prayer. Bible study and prayer go together. The Bible is the inspired Word of God to us. Prayer is our response to God’s word. A person who spends time with God’s word will be a person who prays. How important Bible study and prayer are to antithetical living! II Timothy 3:15-17 teaches us that the Bible, being God’s inspired word, is able to make us wise unto salvation. Through its instruction we become perfect (complete), thoroughly furnished (equipped) to every good work. Prayer is also important. We can live as children of the light only by the power of God’s grace and Holy Spirit. Q&A 116 of the Heidelberg Catechism reminds us that we can receive grace and the Spirit only through prayer.

Discussion questions:

1. How much time should we spend as young people with the Bible and in prayer?
2. Is it important to have private devotions every day?

-
3. Can you think of examples from the Bible of God's people who received strength to live antithetically in a wicked world though prayer and meditation on God's word?
 4. How important is it for us as young people to have an active part in family devotions?

Music

Another means that God uses to strengthen us to live as children of the light is music. After calling the church of Colossae to live antithetically, Paul exhorts the church to let the word of Christ dwell in them richly. If we will live as children of the light, the word of Christ must dwell in us. One way this is done is with psalms, hymns and spiritual songs. (Colossians 3:16)

Discussion questions:

1. What effect does the music of the world have on our spiritual life?
2. What guidelines can we make for the kind of music we listen to and sing?

Friends

To live as children of the light is also important to have the right kind of friends. God uses the advice, encouragement and even rebukes of Christian friends to empower us to live as children of the light. This is part of the communion of saints as set forth in Q&A 55 of the Heidelberg Catechism. This principle is also taught us in Proverbs 13:20, "He that walketh with wise men shall be wise: but a companion of fools shall be destroyed."

Discussion questions:

1. What are the kind of friends we should seek?
2. What can we do to cultivate spiritual discussion with our friends?
3. Think of examples from the Bible of saints who were helped to live antithetically by good friends.
4. Think of examples from the Bible of those who were misguided by bad friends.
5. Must we limit our friends to those who are Protestant Reformed? ❖

Rev. Slopsema is pastor of First Protestant Reformed Church in Grand Rapids, Michigan.

Antithetical Dating and Marriage

by Rev. James Laning

The word *antithesis* means "the exact opposite." So when we speak of antithetical dating and marriage, we are saying that our view of dating and marriage is *the exact opposite* of that of the world. Only in Scripture do we find the truth concerning marriage and concerning how God brings to a man the woman whom He would have him to marry. But the world hates this truth, and seeks to do the exact opposite of that which God commands. This means that in

Scripture we see the glorious truth concerning dating and marriage, and out in the unbelieving world we see not just a slight departure from that truth, but the exact opposite of that truth. With this in mind, let us first consider the proper, antithetical view of marriage, and then proceed to discuss how the child of God seeks to find the one whom God would have him or her to marry.

Marriage

Earthly marriage is a picture of the heavenly marriage of Christ and the church, the heavenly marriage that is also called God's everlasting covenant of grace. When we look to Scripture, we see that this covenant refers to an unbreakable bond of friendship that exists between God and His people in Christ. Of this heavenly bond of friendship, the earthly bond of marriage is a picture. When a man and woman marry in the Lord, they are united by this most intimate bond of friendship. A bond which is so intimate that they actually become one flesh.

The following are some of the chief texts that speak of what marriage is, and of what the calling of the husband and wife are within the bond of marriage.

Genesis 2:18-25

I Corinthians 7:1-5

Ephesians 5:22-33

I Peter 3:1-7

Discussion questions:

1. How is the biblical view of marriage the exact opposite of that of the world?
2. In what ways is the husband called to imitate Christ within the marriage bond?
3. What are some of the wrong views of the world concerning how a husband is to show love toward his wife?
4. In what ways is the wife called to be like the church in her relationship with her husband?
5. What are some of the wrong views of the world concerning the relationship of a wife toward her husband?
6. What are some proper reasons, and some improper reasons, for choosing to remain single?

Dating

In the institution of marriage, recorded in Gen. 2:18-25, we read that if God desires a man to get married, He will bring to that man the woman that He would have him to marry. The woman who gets married knows that she has been prepared by God to be exactly what her husband needs to complete him. As the husband grows to know and love his wife more, he sees more and more clearly how his wife is exactly the woman that he needs.

Since the covenant is essentially friendship, a man and a woman can tell that God would have them get married when they are experiencing a very intimate bond of friendship. Just as Christ and His church are brought closer together as they speak the Word of God to one another, so also a Christian couple will find that they are being drawn by God closer to one another, the more they talk with one another and agree with one another on the glorious truths of the Reformed faith.

Discussion questions:

1. How is the world's view of dating the exact opposite of that of the child of God?
2. Considering the fact that the husband is called to imitate Christ, what are some spiritual characteristics that a young woman should look for in a man?
3. Considering the fact that the wife is called to be like the church, what are some spiritual characteristics that a young man should look for in a woman?
4. What are some proper things to do on a date?
5. If a man and a woman are discussing getting married, how should they view the calling to raise a family, if it is the Lord's will for them to have children?
6. How can one be certain that he or she has found the one that God would have him or her to marry?
7. What are some right reasons, and some wrong reasons, for putting off getting married?
8. What are some things that will draw a believing man and a believing woman closer to one another?

Earthly marriage is a great blessing that God has given to us, His covenant people. The more a couple enjoys talking about the truth while they are dating, and the more they do so in their marriage, the more they will experience a foretaste of that glorious, heavenly marriage of Christ and the church.

Rev. Laning is pastor of Hope Protestant Reformed Church in Grand Rapids, Michigan.

Healthy (Humble) Self-Esteem (2)

by Rev. Charles J. Terpstra

What is proper self-esteem? How should I regard myself as a person? Should I think highly or lowly of myself? What am I really worth? When we began to answer that in our last article (October, 1997), we started with the negative aspects: what is unhealthy self-esteem, i.e., what is the wrong way to regard ourselves and what is the wrong basis of our worth. At that time we basically said that true self-esteem is not a *proud* but *humble* estimation of ourselves. Proper self-esteem must not be *self*(man)-centered but *God*-centered. That means that in order to have a proper estimation of myself and a true sense of my worth, I must first of all know myself to be a *sinner*. That may seem ironic, even contradictory, but that's the teaching of the Bible. I must know that I (be sure to make that personal, young people!) am a person who is guilty and wicked before God, worthy of being cast away from Him in this life and in that to come. I must know that in and of myself I am not a beautiful and wonderful person, but an ugly and wretched person. I must know that I am not a great, significant individual with high potential and endless powers to make something of myself and my life, but a small, insignificant person who is totally lost in sin and whose only potential and power is to corrupt everything good and make an utter mess of myself and my life. When we grasp that, then we are on the road to gaining a proper self-esteem.

For then we go on as believers to see what we are in *Christ* and to value ourselves based on what *God* has made us and given us. We don't simply esteem ourselves sinners, but we esteem ourselves sinners *saved by grace*. We don't simply confess our lowliness and worthlessness in sin, but we confess our exalted position and worth in Christ. Our salvation from God, in other words, gives us the proper estimation of ourselves.

We say with humility yet confidence, "I am a precious person in the sight of God because He loved me and chose me to be one of His children even from eternity! I am of great value because I was purchased by the blood of God's own Son at Calvary! I have amazing worth because Christ gave me His Spirit to dwell in me and make me His temple and to apply His saving blessings to me." Are you able to say that in true faith, young people? Do you realize your real worth as a saved child of God? Is this what you base your self-esteem on?

We don't simply esteem ourselves sinners, but we esteem ourselves sinners *saved by grace*. We don't simply confess our lowliness and worthlessness in sin, but we confess our exalted position and worth in Christ. Our salvation from God, in other words, gives us the proper estimation of ourselves.

As Reformed Christians we may also judge our worth from the perspective of God's covenant of grace with us in Christ. We may say, "I am precious to God because He revealed His friendship to me; He pledged Himself to be my Friend and He took me in as His friend. I am of exceeding value because the living God is pleased to fellowship with me, to walk with me and talk with me in life. And He allows me to walk and talk with Him. I have

such amazing worth because God wills that I live with Him forever in heaven someday, to be His everlasting friend and to enjoy unending fellowship with Him.” Can you say this too, young people? Is it from this that you gain a high-estimation of yourself? This is proper self-esteem; this is our real self-worth. It is really *God’s* esteem of us; it is really *Christ-worth*. Which is why healthy self-esteem is humble—it is all of God and His grace.

Further, we may gain proper esteem of ourselves from an even more basic truth concerning God and ourselves: He is our Creator and the God of Providence to us. We believe that though we are sinful creatures, we are still the special handiwork of God. He planned in His eternal counsel that He would make us and form us to be exactly what He willed. And in time that’s what He did. He formed us in our mother’s womb by a miraculous work. He gave us our own unique personality and character. He gave us our physical traits, our looks, our shape and size. He gave us all our abilities and skills, physical and mental. Each of us is a special work of God, even from a natural point of view.

When we realize this, then we also may have a proper estimation of ourselves. Then we don’t proudly think too much of ourselves because we believe we are self-made persons, but we humbly acknowledge that all that we are and have we owe to God (Remember Ps. 139 and Psalter #383?!). Then it doesn’t matter to us what others may think of our looks or how some may judge our personality or abilities. God has made us just the way we are, and from that we may judge our worth.

This implies that we are *content* with how God made us. If we are not satisfied with the way in which God made us, if we are discontent with who we are and how we look and what level of abilities we have, then we are not going to have a healthy self-esteem. Is that after all, why many young people do not have a healthy view of themselves? Are *you* content with the way God made you? And do you then have a healthy (and humble!) estimation of yourself? Or are you dissatisfied with the way God made you, so that you have an unhealthy (really proud!) estimation of yourself? Because God is God, and we but creatures, we *must* rest content in how He made us and from that draw proper esteem of ourselves.

So too, when it comes to God’s providence at work in our lives. We believe that our sovereign God guides us and provides for us in this world by His almighty and everywhere-present hand. Let’s make this personal also. The God of heaven and earth watches over *me*, takes care of *me*, protects *me*, gives to *me* my daily bread, my

strength, my work, etc., feeds *me* by His Word and Spirit with all the grace I need, guides *me* through this world and preserves *me* unto my heavenly home. And He does this to me in His *love* because I am one of His children! You believe that, don’t you, young people? Then from that special, providential care of God for us we may also gain a rich and healthy estimation of ourselves. If I am so loved and cared for by the Almighty God, then surely I am precious to Him; I have value and worth beyond description! If this is how the heavenly Father treats me,

If I am so loved and cared for by the Almighty God, then surely I am precious to Him; I have value and worth beyond description! If this is how the heavenly Father treats me, then with what confidence may I live and go about all my tasks?!

then with what confidence may I live and go about all my tasks?!

Do you see how this all works? Only a *God-centered* perspective can give to you and me a proper view of ourselves, can give us true self-worth. The world does not and cannot have proper self-esteem, because it does not have a believing view of God. It is lost in itself. But you and I are found in God. We have a believing view of God; He is the center of all we are and have and do. And therefore we may have, and by grace do have, a proper view and estimation of ourselves. Keep that Godly perspective as you go through these years of your life. It will keep you from the false and destructive self-esteem of the world. It will keep you humble before your God, which is the principle of true self-esteem. ❖

Rev. Terpstra is pastor of First Protestant Reformed Church in Holland, Michigan.

Through Strife to Victory

Chapter 5

Unrest in the Churches

by Rev. C. Hanko

The period leading up to the Synod of 1924 was a period of unrest in the Christian Reformed Churches in Grand Rapids. This unrest first appeared among the ministers and leaders of the churches as observed in the printed page.

Rev. Jan Karel Van Baalen penned a brochure entitled, "The Denial of Common Grace Not Reformed But Anabaptistic." The Revs. Hoeksema and Danhof responded to this attack with the brochure, "Not Anabaptistic But Reformed." (Rev. Danhof, who was a minister in the First Christian Reformed Church of Kalamazoo, Michigan, was also known to oppose the theory of common grace and did not hesitate to speak out freely against it.) Later Rev. Van Baalen countered with a brochure called "Innovation and Error." This brochure remained unanswered for awhile, because the two ministers were busily engaged in writing an extensive explanation of their views in a book entitled "Of Sin and Grace." They also planned to give a brief answer to the attacks made against them in the church papers, *The Banner* and *De Wachter*, but both of these periodicals were now closed to them for any further discussion on common grace. This gave rise to The Reformed Free Publishing Association, which took upon itself to publish the material written by the Revs. Hoeksema and Danhof. This committee also published *Along Straight Paths* and later *The Standard Bearer*.

In discussing the unrest seen in the printed page, it is ironic that these two ministers, Hoeksema and Danhof, have often been accused of creating unrest in the churches, opposing the three points, and finally with-

drawing themselves from the denomination, and thus creating schism in the churches as if their stand was a completely new idea. This is not true. Already in 1918 Rev. Hoeksema wrote a series of articles in *The Banner* as editor of the department "Our Doctrine," which clearly exposed the error of common grace as taught by Dr. Abraham Kuyper. In these articles, Rev Hoeksema maintained that the entire theory as developed by Dr. Abraham Kuyper was not found in, but was contrary to Scripture and the Reformed Confessions. At the time not a word of criticism was raised against these writings, nor the



Photo courtesy of Calvin College Archives

Rev. Van Baalen: Vocal foe of Hoeksema and Danhof and their asserting the God of particular grace.

faintest sign of unrest seen. No attempt was made to refute this bold attack by Hoeksema upon the common grace doctrine developed by the much loved and revered Church father. In fact, in 1920 Hoeksema was reappointed as editor of the department. It was only after the Janssen controversy arose and after Janssen used the denial of common grace against Rev. Danhof, Hoeksema, and the four professors of Calvin, that Hoeksema began to experience opposition because of his stand against the doctrine of common grace.

The unrest in the churches became ever increasingly larger as time went on. Rev. Hoeksema and Danhof keenly felt this as is plain from their writings. Shortly before the Synod of 1924 the two men wrote in the brochure entitled “For the Sake of Justice and Truth”, the following:

Nevertheless, at present we are dealing with the theory of common grace, in particular as this was defended by Dr. A. Kuyper. Any other theory of common grace, in spite of what some may say, does not exist. And of Kuyper’s theory we maintain that it cannot stand the test of Scripture and the Confessions. *We maintain the right to draw the line of truth differently than is done by Kuyper.* What sin do we commit when we do this? There naturally will be those who disagree with us, or may have a different view; but if we are to be accused of being unreformed then we should be dealt with honestly. If this is not done, whoever is guilty is responsible for the consequences.

And finally, we request that more study be made of the subject of common grace, and also of the related subjects that we brought up in our latest book, *Along Straight Paths*. In this book we answered every word of criticism that was brought against us. If we exclude the matter of man’s free will—which was decided long ago (at the Synod of Dordt, C.H.)—what, we pray, still remains that can be used to condemn us? That would be most dangerous. We must have research, not ecclesiastical procedures. Yet if there are those who are determined to raise all kinds of protest and objections against us, then we shall be forced to reckon with them at that time.”

To quote no more, the Revs. Danhof and Hoeksema in the brochure, *Along Straight Paths*, reiterated what was a clear crippling blow to the common grace theory.

There are those who raise objection to the fact that we referred to the theory of common grace as “unreformed and unscriptural.” The charge has been made that we should have served a formal protest against this doctrine and against those who defend it. To this we



Photo courtesy of Calvin College Archives

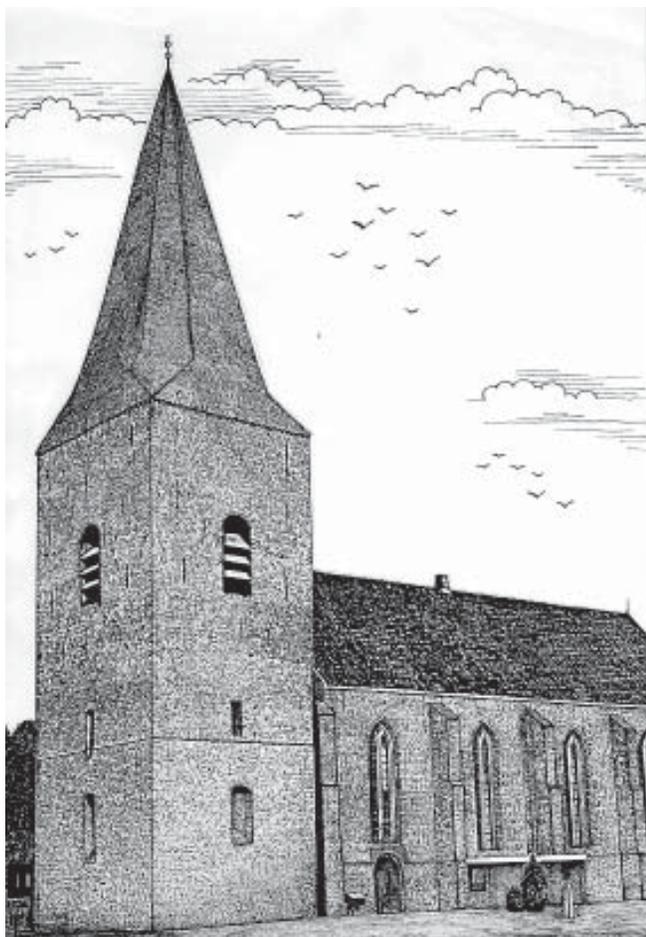
Rev. H. Danhof

answered: This all rests on a misunderstanding. What we mean is this. First of all, it must not be forgotten that, according to our conviction, this entire matter is extra-confessional. The Confessions do not speak of it. We have explained this as our conviction more than once. In the second place, it is our conviction that the theory of common grace as developed by Dr. A. Kuyper cannot be harmonized with our Confessions. Far from accepting that the basic principle, the idea of the theory of common grace is found in our Confessions, *we are of the opinion that the entire theory is in conflict with that which we have inherited from our fathers. It does not belong to the Reformed line.* In that sense we have used the term “unreformed.” The teaching of common grace is, according to our conviction, not only extra-confessional, but also so completely in conflict with our Confessions, that it can never form an integral part of them...For the Lord’s sake we shall continue to fight for our convictions, come what may. ❖

Rev. Hanko is an emeritus minister of the Protestant Reformed Churches of America and is a member of Hudsonville Protestant Reformed Church in Hudsonville, Michigan.

The Church of Onstwedde

by J.P. de Klerk



In the Dutch province of Groningen exists this State Reformed Church in the town of Onstwedde, which is a rare colossal building, made of thousands of bricks; even the whole roof of the tower. It has resisted any kind of weather up till now. The style is late Gothic.

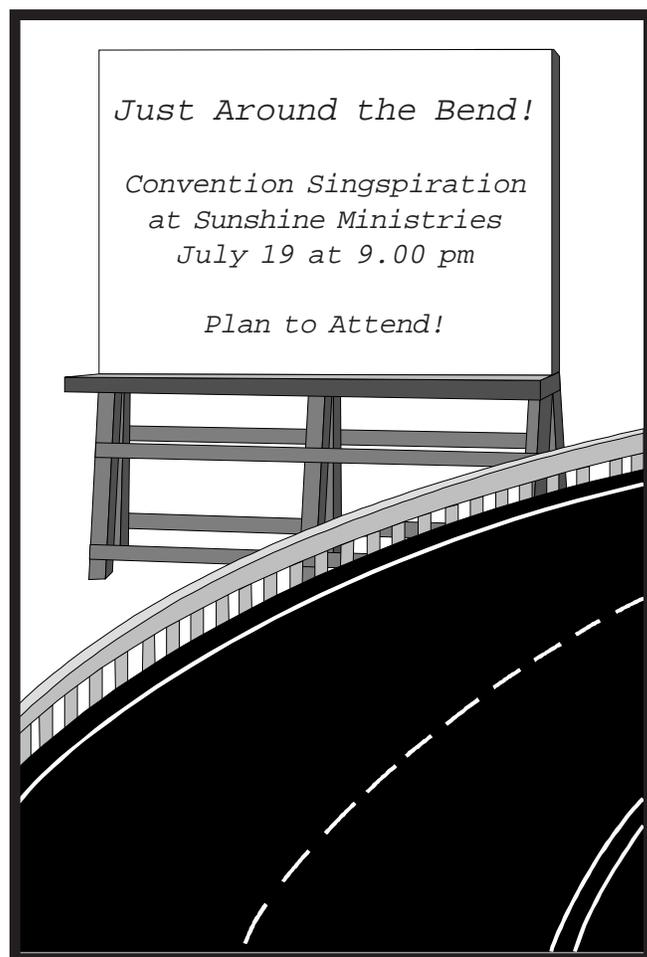
The tower was built first, in 1400; the church itself one century later, finished in the days of the Reformation.

In the soil, hundreds of urns have been found, which means that there must have been a settlement here in the

past; utensils are very primitive, without a trace of housing or other forms of shelter.

Officially the town was founded in the year 800 and became known as a fen-colony with many peat-cutters. Peat-briquettes were very important for the heating of the houses in the bigger cities and castles of The Netherlands. ❖

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



"LITTLE LIGHTS"

Just Wood

... let it shine!

by Connie Meyer

Jared watched as his father cut down a tree with a chain saw and then split pieces of the trunk with an ax. Jared wished he was old enough to help. So did his father!

"Dad, what's all this wood for?"

"Some is for the fireplace, to help keep us warm," *chop*, "and some is for the campfire," *chop*, "so we can roast some hot dogs," *chop*.

"Hm. Is that all?"

Jared's father stopped to wipe his brow. "Yep, that's all."

"But can't we make something out of it, too?"

"Sure. Wood can be used for lots of things, but this is all we'll be doing with this tree. If you would like, though, you may make something out of the smaller branches."

Jared industriously gathered a pile of sticks and with tape and twine began to put them together.

"What are you making?" asked his father.

"An Indian village," he said and brought a little teepee over to show his father. "And this is a totem pole."

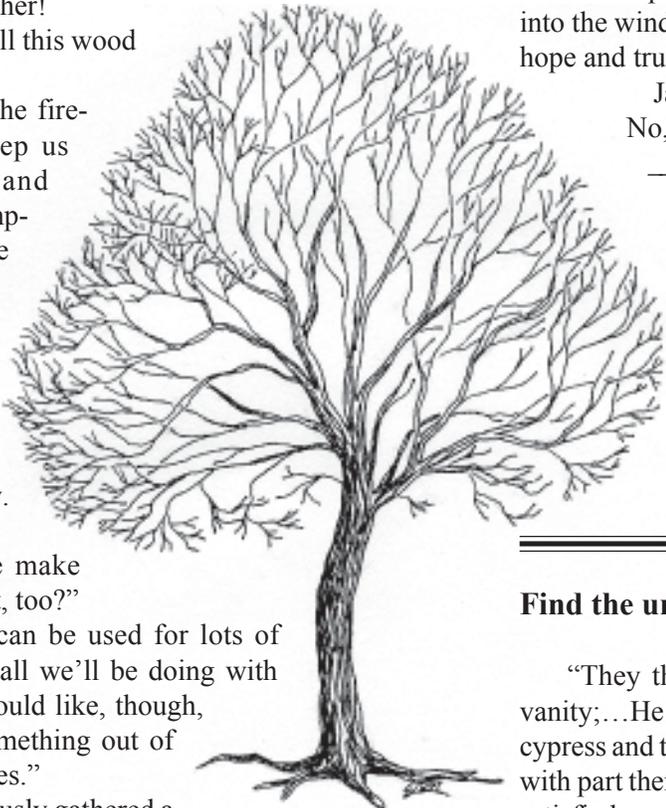
"A totem pole?" Father stopped his chopping to examine Jared's work. "Jared, do you know what a totem pole is?"

"I don't know for sure, but it looks like an idol."

"Indeed, it is! You're making one out of wood, but what do you think *real* ones are made out of?"

Jared thought for a moment. "Wood!"

"Exactly. Come over here." Father led Jared to another part of the yard where a small circle of ground had been used for a campfire. Charred pieces of wood and ashes still remained.



Father picked up a handful of ashes and threw them into the wind. "That is what an idol worshipper puts his hope and trust in. Don't forget it."

Jared's eyes were wide. The ashes were gone. No, he wouldn't forget. ❖

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

Find the underlined words in the puzzle below:

"They that make a graven image are all of them vanity;...He heweth him down cedars, and taketh the cypress and the oak....He burneth part thereof in the fire; with part thereof he eateth flesh; he roasteth roast, and is satisfied: yea, he warmeth himself, and saith, Aha, I am warm, I have seen the fire: And the residue thereof he maketh a god,...shall I fall down to the stock of a tree? He feedeth on ashes..."

Isaiah 44:9-20

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

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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:

Derek James, son of Mr. & Mrs. Rick DeVries-Grace, MI

Sara Renee, daughter of Mr. & Mrs. Bob VanDen Top-Grace, MI

Madeline Jaymes, daughter of Mr. & Mrs. Jeremy Meulenberg-Grace, MI

Rachel Lynn, daughter of Mr. & Mrs. Jon Rutgers-Hope, MI

Dolan Jay, son of Mr. & Mrs. Herman Boonstra-Hull, IA

Stephan James, son of Mr. & Mrs. Tom DeVries-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:

Jodi Reichert-Edgerton, MN

Allison Bylsma-Hull, IA

Michelle Sall-Southwest, MI

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

Matthew 19:5

United in the bonds of Holy Matrimony were:

Mr. Jeff Gunnink and Miss Kris Herman-Edgerton, MN

Mr. & Mrs. Pieter Kalkman-Edmonton, Alberta

Mr. Jeremy Lubbers and Miss Tressa Boverhof-Southwest, MI

Attention Young People!

There is still time to register for the 1998 Young People's Convention hosted by Southeast Protestant Reformed Church July 20-24. The theme of the convention this year is "Living the Antitheses," and will be held at the beautiful campus of Grand Valley State University.

Theme Text: Ephessians 5:8

Theme Song: Psalter #203

Feature Speakers:

Prof. D. EngelsmaWhat Is Living the Antithesis?

Rev. J. LaningDating and Marriage

Rev. J. SlopsemaPractical Antithetical Living

Don't miss any of the exciting events this year, including rock climbing, a hayride, swimming, a day at the beach, a unique banquet and much more. Registration forms are located in all churches for your convenience. If you have any questions regarding registration, please call Kelly Dykstra at (616) 667-0782. See you there!