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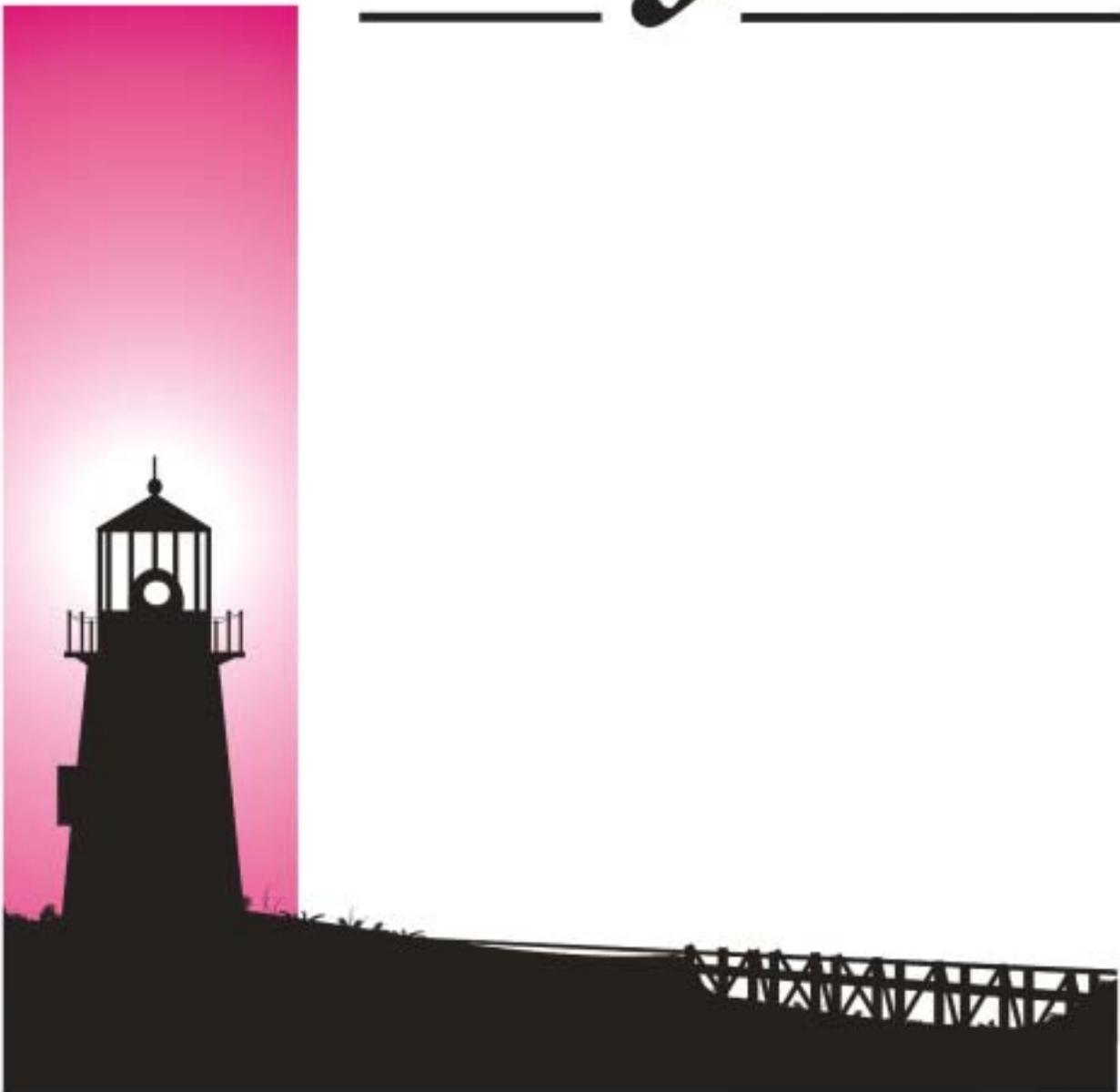


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The Beginning of Knowledge (1)



by Randy Vaalburg

Fear of the Lord, as we know from the words of inspired Solomon, is the beginning of the knowledge of God (Prov. 1:7; Prov. 2:5). This idea of reverence and awe of Him is prevalent throughout the holy Scriptures. We can get a better understanding of what it means to properly fear God by first looking briefly at some teachings and practices that it is not.

Godly fear is not being afraid that “there may be a god out there” who will judge all men. A while back, signs posted on churches in the area drew attention to this idea with the question, “What if it’s True?” This question begs more: “What if God does exist?”, “What if there is eternal life for some and eternal hell for others?”, etc. To some, these may seem fitting questions for the seemingly fearless attitude of our society. After all, aimless young persons have “No Fear” plastered on T-shirts and vehicles. However, these questions do not proclaim God as true and living. Instead, the questions promote doubt of His existence and fear only of the personal consequences of sin. They serve only to scare people into going through the motions of worshipping God in order to appease Him.

Proper fear of the Lord does not mean living in terror of an angry god who is never pleased with his people because they are sinners. This is the error of some, who fear only the consequences of their sins rather than grieving over their transgressions against the Most High. Such sinful terror also spurred the works-righteousness of the late Reformation leader Martin Luther before his conversion. He said that God “tortured” him by offering him no peace for his soul due to his sins. The Holy Spirit later enlightened Luther so that he knew that righteousness was completely “alien” to him by nature and there was no way that he could earn it or merit any favor with God by his own works. God’s covenant young people know that although the wages of their sins is death, those sins have all been covered by the blood of the Lamb. We know that the Lord is plenteous in mercy, and will neither keep His anger forever nor reward us according to our sins (Ps. 103).

Fearing God correctly has nothing to do with believing that the godly are blessed less, or even cursed by Him in this life, while the ungodly *seem* to receive blessings. This is an error that even God’s children can fall into, as did the psalmist Asaph. It is a temptation when surrounded by the wicked who prosper in every physical way; job status, over-abundance of material things and free time, and apparent happiness. Asaph realized, however, that this thinking is like the foolishness of beasts (Ps. 73:22). We too, know that the Lord chastens whom He loves, rather than giving them over to the lusts of the flesh. Children of God are admonished not to be envious of the ungodly (Prov. 23:17). God is a God of justice and injustice must not be expected of Him. He is good to spiritual Israel, guiding them with His counsel to glory (Ps. 73:24). But, the wicked are set in “slippery places” to their own destruction (v. 18). Often, those slippery places are the high slopes of a mountain of wealth that they put more and more of their confidence in – God punishing sin with more sin. How gracious is our sovereign Lord for keeping His people from the snare of trusting in earthly riches!

Proper fear of the Lord is not to live in constant question of His love for oneself as if this is somehow a pious and humble thing to do. For example, one must not believe that a special supernatural experience is required before one can be sure of Christ's love for oneself and be able to celebrate His death and resurrection. This is a sad delusion and a lie of Satan to get man to claim some credit for his own salvation. It is neither humble nor God-fearing to hold to the idea that "one can never be sure" of God's love and that assurance of salvation is prideful. Instead, as God's children, we draw near to him with a "true heart" and "full assurance of faith" for we know that He is faithful to His promises to us (Heb. 10:22-23).

Godly fear is not fearing that we might fall away from grace and that He might withdraw all His love from us. We reject the dangerous heresy which the early Arminians suggested and the outright declaration later made by John Wesley that the believing child of God can make "shipwreck of the faith" and then "may go to hell, yea, and certainly will if he continues in unbelief" (book *Elements of Divinity*). Christ was forsaken in our place, so that we must not and can not fear that we will ever be forsaken. There are many threats to the new life in Christ which covenant young people receive. But, we know that nothing can separate us from the love of God which we have in Jesus Christ (Rom. 8:35-39). We know that God has given us eternal life already in this present life, and that we will never perish (John 5:24; 10:27-29). By His grace, we will persevere as saints communing with our God on our earthly pilgrimages until we are finally brought to glory.

Finally, correct fear of the Lord is not being terrified of His judgment upon the living and the dead on that day when Christ will return on the clouds of glory. We know that His return is our hope and comfort for we belong with both body and soul, in life and in death, to our faithful Saviour Jesus Christ. We confess the resurrection with righteous Job, that although skin worms will destroy our bodies, yet in our flesh, we will see God (Job 19:26).

Do we fear any of the things just talked about? At times, a believer may. But, those kind of fears are sin. God's Word tells us that if one is afflicted in this way, he or she is to pray (Jas. 5:13). The sinful fears must be repented of and left at the cross. "Are we to fear Him at all?" one may ask. Well, many devout men of the Bible were described by themselves or others as God-fearing. There was the Lord's servant Job, whom He Himself described as a "perfect and an upright man" that feared God and turned away from evil (Job 1:8). The centurion Cornelius was characterized as a devout man, giving much alms, praying always to God, and fearing Him with all his house (Acts 10:1-2). Joseph, son of Jacob, and Jonah described themselves as fearing the Lord. The virtuous woman in Proverbs 31, who was trusted by her husband, opened her mouth to wisdom, kept her household well, and stretched out her hand to the poor, was considered one who feared the Lord. By the Holy Spirit's work in them, these godly men and women of the Bible obeyed the command, "Let all the earth fear the Lord; let all the inhabitants of the world stand in awe before Him" (Ps 33:8). They were doers of the Word – not just hearers. They sincerely kept His commandments – not just memorized them. Knowing their calling to be holy, they walked as pilgrims and strangers in opposition to the wicked world that walked after the lusts of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life.

The Apostle challenged the Hebrews with the following question: Shouldn't we fear and honor our heavenly Father all the more if we have been called to honor our sinful parents? (Heb. 12:9-10) Jehovah instills this fear into the hearts of His young people through His covenant with them! (Jer. 32:40) We are to fear Jehovah God for His name is glorious and fearful (Deut. 28:58). Throughout the inspired book of Deuteronomy, we learn it is in the way of godly fear that we keep His commandments. Our private and public worship of God in the assembly of saints must be done with fear and reverence (Ps. 89:7; Ps. 5:7).

Also, proper fear of the Lord is one of the chief signs of true repentance (Mal. 3:13-16). This is significant because repentance is one of the main traits of a Christian; it distinguishes us as children of light from the workers of iniquity. It is plain that godly fear should encompass every aspect of our lives including our daily walk, worship, and spiritual attitude. The inspired writer of Ecclesiastes summarized this well when he declared that our whole duty is to fear Him and keep His commandments (Eccl. 12:13).

Let's make no mistake about it, though. To fear the Lord does not mean being among the fearful and unbelieving spoken of by the Apostle John who will have their part in the lake of fire (Rev 21:8). We are *not* to be among the God-fearful, but the God-fearing! There is no place in the Lord's army for those who are fearful of the enemies of God - the wicked, our old natures, or Satan and his hosts. The Lord made this clear when He commanded through the mouths of Israel's officers that the "fearful and fainthearted" must not go out to battle against the enemy but go home (Deut. 20:1-8). Also, the practical danger is given here that one who is fainthearted might cause his brother to have a faintheart as well. In other words, one sinning against God by being fearful might cause his brother to sin in this way also. We are not to fear any of our enemies, for the Lord our God is with us and it is *He* that fights against our enemies to save us.

Our fear of God is to be based on courageous faith. Faith that is a free gift from God to His elect – not of works, not of ourselves. Faith which the Enemy tries desperately to destroy, but our Lord and Saviour prays will never fail in us (John 17:9). It is by our fearless faith that we serve the Lord in fear with rejoicing (Ps. 2:11). By being among the God-fearing, we experience the confidence and joy of our salvation (Ps. 85:9). ❖

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

Fruitful Branches



Teaching Christ in the Catechism and Classroom

by David Overway

The chief task of the Christian instructor of children is to "teach Christ" to his students. This is true both with respect to the minister of the gospel who teaches the children in the catechism room and the Christian school teacher who teaches in the classroom. Both instructors have much material covering a broad variety of subjects and topics, to which to introduce the students. But the heart of it all and that which is most essential is that the instructor "teach Christ."

The primary reason why this is so essential is found in Who Christ is. For Christ is the One anointed by God for our benefit, for our salvation. This is the teaching of our Heidelberg Catechism in Question and Answer 31. Here we find that Christ is anointed to be our Prophet, Priest, and King. As High Priest, Christ "by the one sacrifice of his body, has redeemed us" and

in each of the three offices Christ works to cause us to enjoy that redemption as the One Who reveals it to us, intercedes for us, and governs, defends and preserves us.

The Belgic Confession, in Article 21, also makes known the identity of Christ. This article appropriately focuses on Christ's work as High Priest. We confess in this article that Christ is the One Who has appeased the wrath of God "by his full satisfaction, by offering himself on the tree of the cross, and pouring out his precious blood to purge away our sins." Later, in the same article, after a listing of the sufferings of Christ, appears the phrase, "and hath suffered all this for the remission of our sins." Here we come to the essence of who Christ is. He is the One Who suffered for us in order to take away our sins. In Christ we have forgiveness of sins and having this we are able to enjoy the covenant friendship of the Triune God. Christ is our salvation in that He took upon Himself the guilt and punishment of our sins so that we may be declared righteous before God and believing in this righteousness, we may by faith enjoy peace with God and therefore also covenant fellowship of friendship with Him.

This is the essential truth regarding Christ and it is this truth that must be taught. In whatever sphere the instructor finds himself, it is this truth that must be the focus and heart of all the instruction he gives. For this truth is at the center of all knowledge, fact, and existence, and apart from it all, is vanity and emptiness. Simply put, knowing Christ gives meaning to all knowledge and purpose to all learning.

The second reason why it is so important that Christ is always taught in catechism and classroom, is found in the identity of those who are taught. The children in catechism and in our Christian schools are God's children. They are as certainly included in His covenant as are adults and must be taught as such. The children of the covenant are (according to the very essence of the covenant, which is loving friendship) God's friends and God loves them for Christ's sake Who took away their sins. This we must teach them. If we teach them nothing else, this we must teach them!

This must be taught to God's children constantly, repetitively, and from every perspective possible. The truth that Christ has taken away our sins so that now we are the covenant friends of God ought not be limited to Bible class or the particular catechism lesson that expressly mentions it.

The instructor must bring this truth into every lesson in as far as he is capable. The reason for this is that Christ cannot be learned merely as a fact to be intellectually grasped, for Christ can only be learned by faith. Those things learned by faith are food for our souls and so must be constantly presented to us and constantly grasped by us for our spiritual edification and health. Viewing the children of the covenant as those who have the gift of faith, the Christian instructor can joyfully and without despair teach Christ to these children confident that they can and will learn the glorious truth of their salvation in Him.

But how can this be done? How can the Christian instructor teach Christ as He stands in relation to all things? There are no quick easy steps to take in order to begin suddenly to do this masterfully. There is no secret technique that if discovered will ensure success in this area. Instead, the instructor himself must be living in and growing in the knowledge of the truth of Christ. The instructor himself must not be content with being able to recite various doctrines concerning Christ, rather he must be "abiding" in Christ as Jesus explains in John 15. This means, at least in part, that the instructor must always remember that Christ is the One Who has forgiven his sins and the One Who has given him access into covenant communion with God. And he must make it his business to enjoy that communion with God, studying His word and praying to Him. In this way the instructor will find that God will reveal Christ to him in more and more richness and diversity, and in connection with more and more aspects of the body of knowledge which he is called to teach.

But also the instructor will only effectively teach Christ if he himself demonstrates and exhibits Christ. Not only is it important *what* one teaches, but also *how* one teaches. God does not only *tell* us about His love for us, He *demonstrated* it in the cross of Christ (Romans 5:8 and John 3:16. Be like Him! Demonstrate the love of God to the students as their instructor, show them and tell them that God has forgiven them all their sins and loves them as their covenant Friend. And teach them that this is because Christ the Anointed One of God, has died for them to take away their sins. Teach them this, in as far as you are capable, in every lesson and in connection with every truth. ❖

David is a fourth-year student in the Protestant Reformed Seminary and is a member of Hope Protestant Reformed Church in Grand Rapids, Michigan.

The Fourth Man

A Story from the Time of the Afscheiding

by P. S. Kuiper
translated by Rev. Cornelius Hanko

Chapter 11 Mud Beggars

Four men were returning from Loosdrecht where they had been ordained as elders and deacons in a new congregation in Hilversum. Their names were: Jan Donker, Gijsbert Haan, Gerrit Meijer, and Tijmen Grootveld. In the dark, rainy night, they had hit a stone and broken a wheel on the wagon in which they were riding. The farm where they sought help was owned by Ko Boelhouwer, a troubled man who was not inclined to go along with the Secession of 1834. When Ko heard the dog barking to announce the arrival of visitors, he concluded that the men could only be “flayers;” no one else would be out on such a miserable night. Flayers were wretched men who went about in the dark in search of animals that had died of disease. When such animals were found, they would cut the meat off the bones and sell the meat in local butcher shops. Ko had taken his gun down and was now about to investigate all the racket.

Meanwhile the “flayers” wearily plodded along the muddy farm drive. As they walked, the dog came out of his coop and tugged fiercely on its chain. “Go back in your coop, mutt,” scolded Jan Donker, “you’ll be getting a wet hide too.”

“At least they hear that we are coming,” was Gijsbert Haan’s comforting remark. At that moment the door opened and a large figure appeared in the doorway, gun in hand.

“That’s Ko Boelhouwer,” mumbled Jan Donker. “He is not giving us the impression of a hearty welcome.”

With a brief sharp word the farmer silenced the madly raging Bas. To his relief, he noticed that the approaching figures had no dog with them. He shouted with a booming voice, “I will not allow scum on my farm! Get out of here as quick as the wind, or I’ll send my dog after you!”

“Don’t answer,” said Gijsbert in a low voice, “Just keep walking toward him.”

The farmer became excited when he saw that his warning was ignored. “Don’t you have any ears on your head, you dirty thieves?” he thundered.

“You would think he was opposed to Secessionists,” joked Jan Donker, undisturbed. His companion merely shook his head. He decided he’d better say something.

“We would like very much to talk to you for a moment, Ko Boelhouwer,” he called to the farmer, hoping to quiet him a bit. This, however, had the opposite effect. Ko, not recognizing Haan’s voice, was beside himself with rage when he heard the friendly voice of what he thought were “flayers.” He raised his gun and shot over the heads of the two men. The bullet landed harmlessly in the top of the haystack. The dog crept yelping into his coop.

“That was no joke,” the incorrigible Jan Donker muttered. He shouted loudly, “Since when do you treat the employer of your daughter in such a manner?”

Bewildered, Ko Boelhouwer lowered his gun. “Is that you, Jan Donker?” he stammered. “Come in, man.” Jan did not need to have that repeated. Fol-

lowed by Gijsbert Haan, he waded through the mud to the door.

A few moments later they stood on Ko's yard. Their newly discovered host hastily lit the stall lantern,¹ in the meantime pouring out excuses. The gun was no longer to be seen.

However, when the lantern hesitantly spread its light over the two men, the farmer stood aghast. He now could recognize Gijsbert Haan, who looked like a drowned cat, while Jan Donker appeared to have taken a mud bath. But what mainly impressed him was the fact that these special visitors wore their best clothes, complete with shoes and high hats.

"No wonder that I took you for a bunch of flayers," he finally said. "Whatever got into your heads to come out in weather not fit for a dog? Have you maybe been to a funeral?"

Gijsbert Haan looked him straight in the eyes. "No, Boelhouwer, today in Loosdrecht we were ordained into office by Reverend Scholte."

"Oh," came the answer in an almost hostile voice. "I could have known. You are the mud beggars!"

Jan Donker took a step forward. "Thank you very much for this compliment, Ko! At the time of the twelve years when the Reformed folk who were resisting the Arminians and had to leave their congregations where they were being persecuted, they were also given that name. I consider it a privilege to be counted with them."² Gijsbert Haan took a deep breath. This was Jan Donker at his best.

"Language according to my heart," sounded a voice from out of the shadow. The two Secessionists turned with surprise. For the first time they saw the old man who had been following events from the beginning.³

In the silence that followed the tension could be cut with a knife. Motionless the farmer looked at the men, his eyes seeming to want to penetrate into their very souls. Then he asked in an entirely different tone of voice, "Why did you men really come here?"

Gijsbert Haan told briefly what had happened to the wagon. Without saying a word, Ko Boelhouwer pulled on an old jacket and disappeared with the lantern into the darkness. A little while later he returned, dripping wet. "Grootveld and Meijer⁴ agree with me that the wheel can be repaired, but it will take an expert to do it. We must call in a wagonmaker." He took

in a quick breath and added, "The wagon can not remain standing there. I suggest that Jan Donker unhitch his horse and put it in the stable. Our Black can be moved over a bit. After that we will together drag the wagon on to the farmyard and take off the broken wheel. Then wagonmaker Roest must be called."

"All well and good, but you certainly do not think that Roest will come out at this hour of the night for this messy job, do you?" Jan Donker asked doubtfully.

"When he hears about your situation he will do it," answered Ko Boelhouwer with certainty, and the old man, his father, added emphatically, "He is favorably inclined toward the Secessionists."

Gijsbert Haan wondered how the old man knew this. He looked to his companion and said in a thankful tone of voice, "Boelhouwer, we agree completely with your plan."

A half hour later the men stood panting and sweating by the house. The wagon stood on the farm. Pleun was in the stable. Jan Donker was about to make another joke about a Secessionist horse in a Reformed stall, but fortunately he restrained himself.

In the meantime grandfather was not just sitting there doing nothing. First he wanted to go with the men outside, but, because of a general protest, he had given that up and had gone into the house. He calmed his daughter-in-law and grandchildren, who had become very nervous by the gunshot, and, on his own, he put on a pot of coffee.

The men, after finishing their job, flatly refused to come into the house. They pointed out that they were wet and muddy. Instead they looked for the dimly lit shed at the entrance of the house. They sat down there and there they were joined by the other members of the Boelhouwer family. There they enjoyed their coffee together. Klaartje stared at her "boss" with big eyes. Maarten enjoyed himself immensely. This was what could be called an adventurous evening!

After the coffee, a "council of war" was held. It was decided that Gerrit Meijer and Tijmen Grootveld, who were a bit less soaked than their fellow travelers, would go to the town. Meijer would stop at the wagonmaker Roest and Grootveld would reassure the wives of Gijsbert Haan and Jan Donker. The others would wait for an hour for the arrival of the wagonmaker. After a hearty farewell to the

Boelhouwer family, Meijer and Grootveld disappeared into the darkness. The lady of the house thereupon strongly urged the other two to put on some dry clothing. They finally agreed. Maarten, who should have been in bed long ago, helped Klaartje to clean up with a suspicious eagerness. Grandfather threw two more blocks of wood into the fire. Just when they were all ready to settle down around the hearth, Bas began to bark again and a moment later Roest and his son Jan came on the farm. They had a satchel of tools with them.

The wagonmaker was a man of few words and began at once to repair the wheel in the light of the stall lantern. His son Jan, more talkative than his father, helped. Maarten knew Jan Roest very well. Jan was now with his father in the business of repairing wagons. With jealous glances he saw how handy the boy was in helping his father.

When the job was finished and Jan Donker asked how much they owed him, Roest smiled mysteriously. "We'll talk about that later. But you'd better remember that one more collision like that and your wheel is done. Good night!" Before they could thank the man and his son, they were already on their way out.

"I predict that he will never again mention those expenses," laughed grandfather, "if I know Roest."

Ko Boelhouwer suddenly looked at his children and sent them to their beds. Klaartje and Maarten realized that it would do no good to sputter against it. They wished everyone a good night and then turned to their beds. Mother soon followed, while the men enjoyed a pipe together. They took their places around the hearth and the host presented the guests with a pipe and tobacco. Soon the men were busily engaged in a discussion of that which occupied their minds, the present condition of the church.

At first the voices were loud, especially those of Ko Boelhouwer and Jan Donker, but gradually that changed. The minutes became quarter hours and the quarter hours became hours. Even the old man seemed to forget all about his need for a night of rest. Only when the first hesitant rays of dawn began to announce the new day did the four men stand up, and then ... together they kneeled at their chairs.

Outside the rustling rain sang its song.



At the large parsonage of Rev. Hellendoorn on s'Gravelands Street,⁵ picked up two letters which had come in the mail on the evening following the events just described. The minister opened them before going to bed and read them in the light of a candle, with his sleeping cap already on his head.

The first letter was from Evert Splint from the Langeind. The minister vaguely remembered the family that faithfully attended church every Sunday and of which he had baptized a child on Easter Sunday. Splint requested financial aid for his family. This was a matter for the diaconate. The minister carelessly laid the letter on the pile of mail for the deacons. The need to pay this family a visit on the following day did not even occur to him.

The second letter was much longer. The farmer Ko Boelhouwer from Loodseind explained why his family could no longer remain members of the Netherlands Reformed Church. He informed the minister that they were separating.

With growing disgust Rev. Hellendoorn read the letter and then angrily threw it in a corner of his desk. Another confused mind that read more than it could understand! Those cursed Canons of Dordt were even brought into the struggle. One could really better be without such members!

With this comforting thought the minister poured himself another glass of wine. That drove away the anger and helped the Reverend get a good night's sleep.

1 A stall lantern usually hung on a hook in the shed through which one passed into the house. It was used to give light to the farmers on their way to the barn and in the barn.

2 While the Arminians, prior to the Synod of Dordt, were gaining increasing influence in the Netherlands, the government was supporting them. Because the church was a state church, the church could not deal with the Arminian problem without government approval. This approval, the government refused to give. Those who were faithful to the Reformed faith and who resisted the Arminian heresy, were harassed and, in many instances, driven out of their congregations. They often met separately in worship services.

3 We met this old man in chapter 1 at the time Maarten came home for lunch after knocking over the cart of the fish peddler.

4 The two men who were riding with Donker and Haan, but remained with the wagon and horse.

5 The minister of the local State Church, which had become apostate. ❖

A Look at Your Brain Through the Spectacles of Scripture

by John Huizenga

From the time the first few cells of your brain began to develop within the womb, your brain has been absorbing information. Having grown older, your brain has become an intricate three dimensional network of interconnected nerve cells woven together far more densely than the best computer chips made today. Nerves pour information into your brain about the health and safety of every cell and system within the body. Pressure sensitive nerves within your skin send messages to your brain about your physical contact with the world around you. Olfactory nerves within your nose send messages about the presence of certain molecules floating about in the air. The optic nerve in your eye sends messages about the patterns of light reflecting off the things around you. Nerves in your ear send messages about vibrations of the air around you. God has designed your brain to receive this information, store it, use it, and develop your understanding of world around you.

Then brain the uses the information it receives to control every function of the body. The brain sends signals that control all of our movements as we walk and jump. It even regulates the temperature of our body, hunger, thirst, sleep, the concentration of the various hormones, and a host of other things necessary to keep our bodies healthy and correctly orientated in this world. The brain is also responsible for our emotions, perception of the world, and feelings. Any sort of problem with this incredibly complex and important organ often has a profound effect on our ability to live. Slight chemical imbalances can result in depression and a physical injury to the brain can leave the entire body paralyzed.

The brain is a hot topic in science these days. In fact, Congress, on January 1, 1990, designated the past decade as “The Decade of the Brain.” Technologies such as the PETT scan and SPECT images allow neurobiologists and doctors to see what parts of the brain are ac-

tively receiving and interpreting the signals it receives. Intensive research and profound questions have led scientists to study the relationship between the brain and imaginations, our sense of self, our consciousness, personal identity, and yes, even religion. In recent years, more and more scientists are taking up something they call “neurotheology.” Are we ready to defend our faith when science comes to “prove” that our mind and soul and covenant friendship with God is merely caused by physical processes of the brain? What do we say to the evolutionist who says that our brains evolved some spiritual circuitry in order to help us cope with our fears and advanced development? Are we facing another attack upon our faith comparable to the attack made by Darwin when he tried to give a scientific explanation for the biological diversity found on the earth?

The May 7, 2001 issue of *Newsweek* magazine had for it’s cover story an article entitled “God and the Brain, How We’re Wired for Spirituality.” The basic idea of the article can be summed up in this quote from the article: “today’s studies try to identify the brain circuits that surge with activity when we think we have encountered the divine, and when we feel transported by intense prayer, an uplifting ritual or sacred music. Although the field is brand new and the answers only tentative, one thing is clear. Spiritual experiences are so consistent across cultures, across time and across faiths, says Wulff, that it ‘suggest[s] a common core that is likely a reflection of structures and processes in the human brain.’” Scientists used their equipment to look at the brain of a nun while deep in meditation during her most intensely religious moments. They did the same thing to meditating Tibetan Buddhists and others who use meditation to enter into a trance-like state. They found that when the region of the brain that distinguishes the self from the rest of the world is disrupted by intense prayer,

ritual, drumming, music, dancing, etc, your sense self becomes blurred and you experience transcendence and what some want to call an encounter with the divine. In conclusion, the scientists say our brains are wired for spiritual experiences and our mystical union with God can be manipulated and controlled with drugs or other biological manipulation.

When we look at the brain through the spectacles of Scripture, we see first of all that man was created “in the image of God.” Genesis 1:26-27 It is quite obvious, then, that God created man in such a way that he is “wired for spirituality” as the scientists say. But “wiring” or physical, psychological, and spiritual makeup is not in itself the image of God. It is clear from passages like Colossians 3:10 and Ephessians 4:24 that the image of God is the knowledge we have, and the righteousness and holiness that we receive in Christ. In these passages we read, “And have put on the new man, which is renewed in knowledge after the image of him that created him” and “that ye put on the new man, which after God is created in righteousness and true holiness.” That we are created “in the image of God,” means that we are created in such a way that we are able to have the knowledge of God, righteousness, and holiness within us. We are image bearers like a cup is a water bearer. Man has the ability to enter into a covenant relationship with God who is spiritual and infinitely greater than man.

God, then, in His word reveals that our relationship with God has much to do with the brain and the knowledge that it contains. We read further of this knowledge in Ephessians 4:17-27. We read in verse 18 that the alienation from God that unbelievers have is due to “having the understanding darkened,” and “the ignorance that is in them, because of the blindness of their heart.” In contrast, the believer has “learned Christ,” by hearing Him and being taught by Him. This knowledge does not come only through our physical senses of reading and hearing because it must also be accompanied by the work of the Holy Spirit before it is believed (1 Cor. 12:8). Even so, this knowledge we have is severely limited by sin. We read in I Corinthians 13:12 “For now we see through a glass, darkly; but then face to face: now I know in part; but then shall I know even as also I am known.”

True knowledge, righteousness, and holiness is at the heart of all true covenant fellowship with God. Without it there can be no fellowship with God. When this knowledge, righteousness, and holiness is missing, as it is in man by nature after the fall, then man bears the image of Satan and enters into fellowship with this

wicked spiritual being. The “neurotheologians” may have been able to make their computer screens light up with signs that the brain comes into contact with spiritual reality, but a right knowledge of the God revealed in Scripture is the only indication of fellowship with the living God.

The neurotheologians say nothing about doctrine, but have much to say about mystical experiences and feelings. The Bible also records such experiences in particular men as another way in which God reveals himself to man. To be certain, the way of dreams and visions is a very dramatic way for God to reveal himself, but this is not the usual way. It seems dramatic to us because it is not the ordinary way. In reality, God’s revelation through the preaching of the word is just as dramatic. Our brains are such that we are capable of entering into communion with God directly with visions and dreams. For whatever reason, God has chosen to reveal himself to sinful man in the way of His Word. God is able to save his people and enter into covenant fellowship with them in the way of true knowledge, and on that basis alone, may also be pleased at times to enter into communion with his people in the way of dreams and visions.

We find much interest today in mystical out-of-the-body experiences. People take drugs to have such experiences and religions that claim such experiences are quite popular. The scientific research seems to indicate that such experiences can be explained by having all the normal inputs of information to the brain through hearing, seeing, etc. blocked or distorted leaving one with an open mind. Some look at these experiences as a way to have a direct connection to the mind of God. Is this something that the believer should strive for? Is this a legitimate shortcut around years of study and listening to sermons. Should we practice intense meditation in order to bring on the mystical experience described by certain nuns and such? If this was the way in which God wanted to reveal himself, then there would be no need of the Bible. But God makes it clear that the word alone contained in the Bible is the only way of salvation. When people try to open this mystical door of the brain for their own satisfaction through wild drumming and dancing, ritual, drugs, and anything else that blocks out all other sensory input to the brain, they will only let in a host of demons. If you are going to meditate, don’t try to push all thoughts from your brain to let whatever spiritual being rush in; rather, meditate upon God’s word and fill your brain with true knowledge. This is the way in

which the mysterious work of the Holy Spirit yields the fruit of communion with God.

God has placed us in this world and has given us five senses to live in it. As we, as believers, go about bearing the image of God, we are called to use our senses to grow in our knowledge of God. Sure, this sinful world can be a distraction from our walk with God, but we employ our own sinful ideas when we think we can attain communion with God only by blocking out everything around us. We are, after all, the body of Christ. We

are not individuals in communion with God. As the body, we must be in constant fellowship with one another. The love we show to the fellow believer is love for God. Let us be busy learning with our brains, and doing good works with our hands within the body of Christ rather than pursuing some elusive mystical experience of our own imaginations. ❖

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Gem of the Month

The Ten Commandments

by Thelma Westra

I am the Lord; the Lord, your God;
I made the heav'ns and earth.
From Egypt's bondage I have led
And brought my people forth.

Before Him, you shall never make
An image—wood or stone,
Or any man—made concept:
For I am God alone.

You may not serve nor bow
yourselves
To objects you've observed;
For I, I am a jealous God;
My justice will be served.

To those who hate Me, I shall show
My wrath against their sin.
To generations following
No pity shall they win.

Howe'er, to those who show their
love,
Obeying My command,
My mercy shall be showered down;
I give with lib'ral hand.

My name in vain you must not take:
A holy name I bear.
Those who will disobey this law
Are severed from My care.

The Sabbath Day is to be kept
A holy day for Me;
A day of rest, a foretaste of
Praise in eternity.

Six days are given for your work,
But on the seventh day
Your whole household must cease their toil:
To Me their homage pay.

This figure represents how I
In six days made all things,
Then rested from My labor:
Therefore creation sings.

Your father and your mother
You must honor every day.
Long life shall be your portion
When this precept you obey.

You are forbidden to take a life
Of enemy or friend.
For I Who generate each one
Have also planned its end.

No fornication may be wrought,
No passion may allure;
In wedlock or in singleness
You must be chaste and pure.

Your neighbor's goods you may
not steal.
Contentment with your own
Is what you must be striving for;
Your needs to Me are known.

Against your neighbor you may
not
Speak falsely; nor with pride
Exalt yourself and humble him,
But peaceably abide.

His mate, his servant, nor his
beast
May you crave to possess,
But you must dwell with him in love
And truth and righteousness.

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Watching Daily At My Gates

by Skip Hunter

October 1 Read Genesis 41:25-36

In a study of history one idea must stand out. That is that the sovereign God is in control of all things. This we see in this passage. We read in verse 25, “*God* hath showed Pharaoh what he is about to do.” Twice more in these eleven verses we find similar words. Verse 32 ends with the words “God will shortly bring it to pass.” Do we live our lives knowing that it is God who ordains and directs all of history? Do we believe that God is sovereign over all things even the events which happen to us? God had also given to Joseph the solution of what was to follow. This was not to elevate Joseph in Pharaoh’s eyes. The purpose was the preservation of His church and the birth of the Savior. The purpose of all of history is that Christ would be born and will come again. Let us be aware of that fact and live our lives in accordance with that fact. Sing Psalter 267.

October 2 Read Genesis 41:37-45

We see the difference between Joseph and Pharaoh most vividly in this section. While Joseph gave all of the glory to God, Pharaoh, after making the decision to place Joseph in authority, boldly states, “I am Pharaoh and without thee shall no man lift up his hand or foot in all the land of Egypt.” Here is the difference that regeneration makes. Without the power of God’s grace, natural man will give to himself all the glory. If even the best of the elect’s works are filthy rags, what about those who are devoid of grace? God is preparing Pharaoh and Egypt in their generations for a mighty fall. He does this because Egypt is a picture of Satan and his kingdom. Pharaoh and Satan worked to bring Joseph down. This we see in verse 45. But we know that God by his preserving grace kept Joseph from falling. Let us pray for that grace and seek to glorify God only in all that we do. Sing Psalter 224.

October 3 Read Genesis 41:46-52

Yesterday we alluded to the fact that Satan was working against Joseph in the wife that he married. It is hard to understand this marriage. Did his wife become a believer? We do not know. But we see that Joseph remains strong in the Lord as we see in the naming of his children. His forgetting was not the turning of his back upon his father’s house and the covenant, but rather he put behind him the evil done to him by his brothers. He has not forgotten it totally as we shall see in a latter passage. As Joseph carried out his work with all the pomp and circumstance that went with it, he did not forget his God. Young people, what might success do to you? Older people, what has success done to you? Have you forgotten God? Have you forgotten His commandments and made your honor the goal? If you have, repent and humble

yourself before the mighty God. If you do not, He will bring your sin to your remembrance. All of us must remember who we are and who God is. Sing Psalter 188.

October 4 Read Genesis 41:53-57

During those seven years of plenty most of Egypt probably had begun to forget the second half of Pharaoh’s dream. They allowed Joseph to take their crop, but it did not matter; they had plenty. You can imagine that even Pharaoh was beginning to doubt Joseph’s revelation of his dream. But then the eighth year came. It was not a time that was a little dry. It was a severe drought. The Nile river did not provide for them the sustenance that it normally did. Pharaoh was shaken and he told the people to go see Joseph. Once again we must see that this is all part of God’s wonderful plan of salvation. The famine was not just in Egypt, it spread over the earth. That famine would reach Canaan and touch Joseph’s family. Scripture would be fulfilled. God’s prophecy to Abraham would come true. God would call His son out of Egypt. Sing Psalter 181.

October 5 Read Genesis 42:1-8

Young people, do your consciences bother you at times? Is there some sin that you have committed for which you have not sought forgiveness from God or your neighbor? That was the condition of Joseph’s brothers. After selling Joseph into slavery and deceiving their father they had tried to live as if they had never done the awful deeds. But now as the famine affected them and their families and as the news came that in Egypt there was bread, their old sin troubled them. They could not do the sensible thing. Their father had to force them to go buy food for their children. Unconfessed sins will bother us to the grave. We must seek forgiveness from God and from the neighbor we have wronged. People of God of all ages, make this your desire. In doing so you will walk a blessed life of fellowship with God and the neighbor. Sing Psalter 83:1-3.

October 6 Read Genesis 42:9-20

Here, I believe, we have a child of God using what God had given to him in order to take advantage of his neighbor. In this case it was his brothers! Yes, God used these means to bring repentance to Joseph’s brothers. Yes, God used these means to bring Israel to Egypt and eventually to bring them out with great substance. But yet Joseph did not “let brotherly love continue.” His actions caused his father great pain. Let us make use of the position God give to us to glorify him and Him alone. As we enter God’s presence tomorrow, let us vow to worship Him and glorify Him every day of our life and not just on Sunday. Sing Psalter 369.

October 7 Read Genesis 42:21-28

As we saw yesterday God was using these circumstances to bring repentance to the fathers of His church. The brothers understood God and His ways. Even though they had been guilty of heinous sins, they knew what was right in His eyes. So as one of them exclaimed, “What is this that God hath done unto us?” they were beginning to be convicted of past sins. As we listen to the Word today, let us pray that God convict us from past sins so that we may put them out of our lives. It is only by His grace that we can find forgiveness in Him. Let us approach that throne of grace often. We must know that God does not forget His people. He will not leave them in sin, but He may chastise them sorely to deliver them from that sin. Let us pray that He does not need to do that to us. Let us daily seek forgiveness and repentance from our sins. We know that through Christ this can and will be done. Sing Psalter 140.

October 8 Read Genesis 42:29-38

In these verses we seem to get the feeling that Jacob knew of his sons’ deceit. Notice that he says in verse 36, “Me have ye bereaved of my children.” Also in verse 38, “If mischief befall him by the way in the which ye go.” Jacob knew of his past sins. He knew too that the Lord would chastise those whom He loved. But his faith was weak as he blurts out, “all these things are against me.” The Old Testament saints, like us, must live by faith. Sometimes that faith is weak. We need to see that all things are not against us, but that all things “work together for good to them that love God.” This history can become very confusing. It may be hard to figure out what is proper behavior and what is not. But let us trace the path of salvation in this history and see that what Jacob and his sons received in a figure, we have in reality. Salvation is of God; let us thank Him for it. Sing Psalter 100.

October 9 Read Genesis 43:1-14

Jacob’s faith is again shown to be weak. When faced with his lying sons, he cannot stand up against them. When faced with starvation, he forgets the God of Bethel. After being convinced by Judah to let Benjamin go with them, he makes a sad statement, “If I be bereaved of my children, I am bereaved.” He has forgotten the covenant promises which had comforted him in the past. His name may have been Israel—Prince of God, but at times he was weak struggling Jacob. People of God, how strong is your faith? Do you daily lay hold upon God’s promises? Do you “work out your salvation with fear and trembling,” or do you try to gain salvation by your works? We must daily cast our burdens upon Jehovah God, resting in the assurance of the covenant which He established in Abraham and fulfilled in Christ. Sing Psalter 84.

October 10 Read Genesis 43:15-25

God through Joseph was leading Jacob’s other sons to repentance. Just think of their bewilderment when they were commanded to go to the ruler’s house. Think of their surprise when the servant stated that God had given them treasure. Think of the wonder as the servant provided for them as if they were foreign dignitaries come to beg from Egypt. And then what did they think when they found out about the state dinner that they were to attend that noon. Their minds must have been churning. Is this not God’s way with us? Does He not let our mind work on circumstances as He leads us to repentance? Let us pray for forgiveness

from all sin. Let us make that part of our daily prayers. Let us never forget to pray, “And forgive us our sins.” Sing Psalter 362.

October 11 Read Genesis 43:26-34

From the time that Joseph’s brothers had left him until he had returned, Joseph thought of his father. This is evident from his conversation with them. He then is moved to tears when he sees his full brother Benjamin. Many thoughts are going through his mind. But he was not done testing his brothers yet. First of all, he is careful not to upset the Egyptians by eating at the same table as his brothers. Secondly, he has his steward set them in birth order. Finally he favors Benjamin with much more than his brothers. Even though Joseph has gone through great pains to eventually reveal himself to his brothers, God was using this for His purpose. That purpose was salvation for His people. What man may think to be a good story is actually the unfolding of God’s plan for His church. Let us be careful as we read the Bible and see the message that God means to tell us. Sing Psalter 324.

October 12 Read Genesis 44:1-13

God’s testing of the brothers through Joseph continues. We may not like Joseph’s ways, and I think we must examine them critically, but we must see that it is God’s hand. God uses many means to try our faith. The dross must be burned from us so that we appear pure and holy in heaven. Let us not be weary of His testing, people of God. Let us see that His ways are good. Also we must not look at the brothers as pawns in God’s hands. They were responsible for their sins even as we are responsible for our sins. This way of God would lead to their confession of sin now and also after Jacob dies. Let us confess our sins daily before the most holy God. Sing Psalter 64.

October 13 Read Genesis 44:14-23

Judah takes the lead that he would have in the nation of Israel. He confesses before God and Joseph that they had sinned even before they knew that the ruler was Joseph. Judah tells the whole story now because he sees that only the truth will do. What about us people of God? Do we speak the truth? Do we confess our sins with the truth? This only what is acceptable before God. The lie may keep us out of trouble for a time, but we know that our sins will find us out eventually. Young people and children, do not lie to those in authority over you. Do not use the lie to protect yourselves. Speak the truth and receive a blessing from God. Sing Psalter 80:1,2,5,11, 12.

October 14 Read Genesis 44:24-34

Judah continues his confession in this section. He knows what he has done. But yet he leaves one part out. He is not confessing what he has done to Joseph, only what sorrow he has caused to his father. His request to remain in Egypt is admirable, but it is not enough. He and we must confess all of our sins. His request is nothing but the works righteousness that we love. We would also wish to find another way to salvation than the blood of Christ. We would like to have a part for which we can claim honor. This cannot be, people of God. Salvation requires confession of all our sins and trust in the one sacrifice of Christ. There is nothing that we can do for our salvation. This we must believe and this must be the guiding principle in our lives. Sing Psalter 363.

October 15 Read Genesis 45:1-15

Finally Joseph could hold his emotion no longer. He burst out in tears and revealed himself to his brothers. Joseph has changed.

He realized that it was in God's providence that he had been sent to Egypt. He realized that his being in Egypt brought life to his beloved Father. He knew that this was God's way for him. What about us, people of God, do we accept the way that we are led? Do we confess that it was God who brought us on our particular way? Reread this passage and see Joseph's confession of faith. Then let us examine our lives and see if we, too, can confess that God led us on a certain path. Sing Psalter 287.

October 16 Read Genesis 45:16-28

There are two thoughts presented in this section. First of all, we see the truth that the chaff serves the wheat. It was not of grace that Pharaoh makes his offer to Joseph. It was of God's mercy on His people. This does not give to us the right to cultivate the world's favor. That would be the worse thing we could do. But we must see that God will use the wicked world for His and our good. Secondly, we see Jacob's faith being renewed. That faith which was so strong at Bethel and Peniel had faltered over the past years. But Jacob again saw God's goodness, and he confesses that it was enough. God's goodness was better than all the riches of this earth. Let us see this and let us seek the goodness of God. Sing Psalter 81.

October 17 Read Genesis 46:1-15

Once again God appears to Jacob. Once again a theophany occurs for the comforting of the people of God. Jacob undoubtedly was worried about leaving the promised land and going to Egypt. God comes to him and tells him that He will be with him even in this wicked land. There was also prophecy involved. When God said that Jacob would return, Jacob must have known that he would not be coming back alive. But he knew that God would not let his bones lie in wicked Egypt's soil. This promise is for us as well. When we die, our bones will only stay in the grave until Christ's return. Then we will go to the promised land and be united with all the saints that have gone before us. Let us hold to this promise as we walk through this vale of tears. Sing Psalter 33.

October 18 Read Genesis 46:16-28

The last verses of yesterday's reading and the verses of today's are not a tiresome list of names. They are the evidence of the covenant promise which God established in Abraham and has carried out in Jacob. As aged Jacob led his family, he could not help but see that God had blessed him. We, too, must see this. The line of generations did not end in Egypt. Out of that small number came the Christ. Later it was ordained that the gospel would be taken to the line of Japheth. What a blessed promise that is for us! God's covenant is established in the lines of continued generations. Think of that with each baptism that you witness. Think of that with each covenant seed which is born. Think of that when you thank our heavenly Father for His covenant promises. Sing Psalter 243:1, 2, 5, 15.

October 19 Read Genesis 46:29-34

While Joseph was waiting for his father and brothers to join him he had been thinking. His thoughts were not about how they could gain power and influence in Egypt. No, his thoughts were how they could remain separate from Egypt. In other words he was thinking about how he and his family could walk the line of the antithesis in this wicked place. This was what concerned him. He must have seen other peoples swallowed up in Egypt, and he

did not want that to happen to his family. Is this your concern for your families, Fathers? Do you seek ways for them to walk the antithesis? Do you show your young people and children which path they must travel. The path of the antithesis is the narrow path which leads to heaven and not to hell. Let us be as conscientious as Joseph and find the way of the antithesis for our children. Sing Psalter 1.

October 20 Read Genesis 47:1-10

There are two words in these verses to which I wish to call your attention. They are the words sojourn and pilgrimage. Can you find them? To sojourn means to stay for a time. It means that you are temporarily staying in a place. Pilgrimage has much of the same idea. You are a pilgrim if you are seeking something that is not found in the place where you are now abiding. In Jacob's beautiful confession of faith before Pharaoh, he states that he is a pilgrim in this world. People of God, are you pilgrims? Is your life but a sojourn on this earth? Many of the things that we do indicate otherwise. We must confess and live as if this world is not our home, but that we are seeking our eternal, permanent home in heaven. Only in this way will we please God and find true blessing. Sing Psalter 323.

October 21 Read Genesis 47:11-17

If there was any doubt in Pharaoh's mind about the veracity of Joseph's explanations of his dreams, they were quickly being dispelled. The famine was not a one month phenomenon. It did not last one year; it lasted the full seven. Pharaoh and his people watched Egypt wither up and dry out. This is the punishment for being far from God. This world is our Egypt. It too will be destroyed by the withering fire of God's wrath. That should not fill us with dread; it should fill us with hope—hope in the eternal promises of God. God did not leave Jacob and his family to perish; He provided for them. God will provide for us when we face antichrist in the last days. Of that there is no doubt. Sing Psalter 206.

October 22 Read Genesis 47:18-26

The famine continued. The people's money, herds, and lands were all used to pay for food. Pharaoh became very rich. Through Joseph's planning their lives were saved. But we see that Pharaoh still had power in Egypt. In Egypt he was worshiped as a god, and he had many things made which portrayed this. But Pharaoh was not the gracious God who cares for his people. Solomon in Proverbs states, "that the tender mercies of the wicked are cruel." What a comfort it is for us that our God is compassionate. There are no strings attached to His deliverance. Let us seek the mercies of Jehovah which are new every morning. Sing Psalter 187.

October 23 Read Genesis 47:27-31

God cared for his people well while they sojourned in Egypt. Jacob's family was blessed with earthly possessions. But Jacob did not forget God during those seventeen years he lived in Goshen. As he felt his strength failing, he calls Joseph to his side. Jacob wanted to make sure that his bones did not stay in Egypt. We might wonder what difference did it make since God could take those bones to the new earth from Egypt as well as from Canaan. But Jacob knew the promises of God. He knew that typically he needed to be buried in Canaan. He was so convinced of this that he made Joseph swear that his body would not

stay in Egypt. Are we that concerned about our final resting place, people of God? I don't mean the cemetery; I mean heaven. Are you preparing to live in heaven? Sing Psalter 28.

October 24 Read Genesis 48:1-7

One of the themes of the book of Genesis is that of the covenant. Once again we see that in these verses. Notice in verse 4 the restatement of the covenant promise. Jacob passes the double portion of the covenant blessing on to Joseph through his sons Manasseh and Ephraim. This was not normal. Normally that blessing would be Reuben's, but as Jacob explains in chapter 49, Reuben had forfeited that blessing. Fathers, what is your last will and testament for your children? Is it the blessings of your earthly existence, or is it the better things found in the heavenly promises? Children, after which of these do you seek? Let us seek the covenant of God where we can find blessings which will last into eternity. Sing Psalter 278.

October 25 Read Genesis 48:8-14

Once again we see that the ways of God are not as the ways of man. It would have been natural for Jacob to have given to Manasseh the more honorable blessing since he was the first born. This was not God's intention even as it was not his intention to bless Esau who was older than Jacob. We do not know for sure why Jacob broke with tradition, but we know he had a purpose since we are told that he guided his hands "wittingly." Let us learn that God's ways are not the ways of man. It is God's way we must follow in our lives and not follow man's earthly ways. Let us pray daily for the grace to seek the blessed way of Jehovah. Sing Psalter 231.

October 26 Read Genesis 48:15-22

As Jacob blesses Joseph's sons, Joseph's mind is not on the beautiful words found in verses fifteen and sixteen. Joseph's eyes and mind are on Jacob's crossed hands. When he protests, Jacob tells him that this is the way that it should be. Notice Jacob's words. He states that it was God who had fed him throughout his life. It was God who cared for him at Bethel and during his stay at Laban's. It was God who sustained him in his return to Canaan and in Egypt. This he can confidently confess by faith. This is what he wants his son and grandsons to hear. He tells Joseph that God would not leave him in Egypt. He did not know that it would not be Joseph or even Manasseh and Ephraim who would get to leave Egypt. But it would be his seed who would take up their lives in the promised land. Let us look with the same eyes of faith to the Giver of every good gift and upon Him who will take us to the heavenly Canaan. Sing Psalter 289:1-5.

October 27 Read Genesis 49:1-7

Before he dies, Jacob gives to each of his son a blessing and also a summary of their lives. This would make an interesting study for us some time, but for now we will content ourselves with a brief look at Jacob's words. In the words to his oldest sons, he pronounces them as being unfit to receive the birthright blessings. Children, what pronouncement do your earthly fathers make about you? Are you unfit for their earthly blessings? If you are, than you are probably walking in ways that make you unfit for the blessing from your heavenly Father. Stop and examine your lives and see if you are fit for the important blessings of God. Sing Psalter 111.

October 28 Read Genesis 49:8-13

In the blessing to Judah we find one of the well-known prophecies of Christ. I am sure that Jacob did not understand the importance and impact of what he was saying, but it is truly blessed to us. Judah received the portion of the birthright in which he would rule the nation of Israel first through David, and then through his sons, and finally through Christ. There are five pictures of his rulership to be found in these verses. Can you find them? We see that in Judah we are blessed as well as we look to Shiloh to give us rest and peace in a kingdom not on this earth but in heaven. Let us seek diligently that kingdom which has "foundations whose builder and maker is God." Sing Psalter 198:1-5.

October 29 Read Genesis 49:14-21

It is verse 18 which I wish to meditate on today. Jacob had many sons. As he saw his sons grow up, he found in their folly that they did not provide for him salvation. Salvation was something that he had to wait for. Now in his early life he was not good at waiting. It took banishment from home and then many trials to teach him patience. This is a characteristic for which we must long. We need the patience to wait upon our salvation which is wrought for us through the blood of Christ. We need to have the patience to see how that is worked out in our lives and in our families. When young people walk in sin, we must trust in God to bring them upon the right path. This patience is hard to have, but we must see that it only comes through prayer, from Christ. Let us make that our daily prayer. Sing Psalter 96.

October 30 Read Genesis 49:22-28

As we have said before, Joseph received part of the birthright blessing. His two sons were counted as part of the tribes of Israel. We see Jacob reminding Joseph that his strength was not in his own power but in the power of God who is the strength of His people. Remember these words were spoken before all of the brothers. Jacob reminds them of their treachery. He knew either by their confession or by his own instincts. He knew their sins. But he also stops to caution Joseph to not be proud as Joseph had been after his dreams. These are good words for all of God's saints to hear. Not just our young people, but all of us need to remember that our help is in the strength of Jehovah. There is no better blessing that a father can give to his children than the blessings of the covenant. He does this by using the covenant schools, and he does this by leading them in a covenant way at home. Let us seek those covenant blessing in our lives. Sing Psalter 27.

October 31 Read Genesis 49:29-33

As Jacob finishes blessing his sons, he once again reminds them that he is not to be buried in Egypt. As we have seen before, this is not just some earthly desire. It has a very spiritual meaning. Jacob is ready to die. He can peacefully leave this earth. His sojourn and pilgrimage is over. What about us? Do we have spiritual desires? Do we lead our children in those desires? Are we sending them out tonight to serve Satan or are we teaching them about the great Reformation? Are we ready to die? Do we feel our work is done in this life? We must see that it is necessary to know that God holds our days in His hands. We must be ready to leave this vale of tears when he calls us home. We must be ready to leave the earthly Egypt and journey to our heavenly Canaan. Are you ready, people of God? Sing Psalter 31:1, 3, 6, 7.

Israel's Glorious History of Music

by Melissa Van Baren

Since the historians pick up where the tribe of Israel began, that too is what I would like to consider in this article. I thought that it was quite amazing that Israel had the earliest traces of music according to the worldly historians. It makes you wonder how people can then doubt the beginnings of time and the true beginnings of music! As I said before, How can they use the Bible for some history accounts and ignore the rest as false information?

Anyway, this article is going to focus on Israel's great and glorious history of music. Music, as you can see in the Bible, is a very rich part of their heritage. There are many, many accounts where God ordained music, and people to be in charge of the music, for the worship of God. Music was seen to have taken many forms in the Old Testament for the worship of God. The Israelites sang, chanted, and played instruments. One of the most common of these at the time was chanting. This type of praise to God was often a chanting praise and then a response. Often this was done between the men and then the women. The men would chant and the women would respond. This was believed to be so with the Song of Moses in Exodus 15:1-19 where Moses leads the song of thanksgiving and praise to God for bringing them out of the hands of the Egyptians. After Moses leading, Miriam in verses 20 and 21 and the women follow his lead and "answered them, Sing ye to the Lord, for he hath triumphed gloriously: the horse and the rider hath he thrown into the sea." The Israelites also chanted in the case of the blessings and the cursings on Mt. Gerizim and Mt. Ebal (Deut. 27 & 28), which is worship that the Lord commanded them to do and a worship given to them (Deut. 11:29). There are many, many cases in the bible where Israel is directed by Moses in singing/chanting.

There are also cases where the worship in the temple is concerned—that the Levites were in charge of the

music. The Levites were in charge of all types of music both in singing and instrumental. Numbers 3:8, "And they shall keep all the instruments of the tabernacle of the congregation and the charge of the children of Israel, to do the service of the tabernacle." The Levites also helped Moses during the chanting on Mt. Ebal, Deuteronomy 27:14. "And the Levites shall speak and say to all the men of Israel with a loud voice." And so continued the cursings while the other half of Israel chanted the blessings on Mt. Gerizim. The Levites played a very important role (as did Moses) in the conducting of the worship of God in the temple in the singing.

Israel was greatly blessed by the music God had given them to worship Him with. Just imagine music directed by God. We too have this great music directly from God, although we do not have the exact music put to tunes that the Israelites had at that time, and we don't have all the exact songs they sang in worship at the beginnings. We do, however, have Moses and Miriam's song, the chants of the blessings and cursings, and also the richly spiritual Psalms. It's wonderful to know that God has given to us music with which to praise Him. How greatly Israel and more so we are blessed to have them!

Although, yet we are tempted in our old man of sin to follow the music of the world. Israel, too, I think was probably tempted by the worldly music of that time. Even though this is mostly speculation I would still like to consider that angle. In my next article, I would like to show the different types of music that they might have been tempted by at that time and may be even show how that might be similar to some of the music of today. ❖

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

Professor David Engelsma

edited by Kris Moelker

In 1939, Mr. and Mrs. Dewey and Dena Engelsma became the parents of Professor David Engelsma. Prof. Engelsma was born in Grand Rapids, Michigan. He grew up in the Riverbend area which was then a rural area southwest of Grand Rapids.

As he was growing up, Prof. Engelsma enjoyed playing any and every kind of ball, and he liked hockey, hunting, trapping and reading. Now his hobbies include: tennis, listening to classical music, Irish and Scottish folk music and reading. He also occasionally tries to play basketball with his sons, “but, oh, the knees.”

During his teenage years, Prof. Engelsma didn’t experience much peer pressure. Living in the country helped because he and his peers were an independent lot.

Prof. Engelsma attended Hope Protestant Reformed Christian School and received his high school education at Grand Rapids Christian High School. After high school, he studied at Calvin College where he received his Bachelor’s Degree in 1960.

The Lord used Godly parents to lead Prof. Engelsma to consider preparing for the ministry. His parents reared him in the fear of the Lord. They occasionally suggested that he consider the ministry, but they did not pressure him. Also, Alice Reitsma, who was a teacher at Hope School bluntly told him to consider the ministry. His covenant family and friends were and have continued to be a source of encouragement and support ever since he first desired to enter the Seminary. This has been a joy to Prof. Engelsma.

His memories of being a seminary student include a debate between Prof. Herman Hoeksema and Prof. George Ophoff when the retired Prof. Ophoff visited dogmatics class. As the only first year student, Seminarian Engelsma witnessed an earthy, passionate and even heated debate between these men over the virgin conception of Jesus. They debated whether Mary contributed anything biologically to Jesus’ conception. The two theologians debated theology, biology and more. When they delved into the biological matters of eggs and sperma and zygotes, Seminarian Engelsma became amused, and his reaction was: “The truth is important; get it right.”



This heated debate took the whole class period and the two giants forgot about Seminarian Engelsma.

In 1963, Prof. Engelsma graduated from the Seminary and was ordained a minister of the Word. His first charge was in Loveland, Colorado where he labored until 1974. In 1974, the Lord called him to go to South Holland, Illinois. He was pastor in South Holland for fourteen years. After serving the Lord as a pastor in two Classis West churches for twenty-five years, the Lord called him to take up his labors as a professor in the Protestant Reformed Seminary in 1988. Reflecting upon his labors, Prof. Engelsma says, “The work of a pastor is the greatest work in the world.” He also thoroughly enjoys his work as a professor in the Seminary.

In 1963, the year he graduated from the Seminary, Prof. Engelsma married Ruth Lanning. They were both members of Hope Church in Grand Rapids. The Lord

has blessed their marriage with four sons, five daughters and eleven grandchildren in the covenant of grace. He thanks God that the love in their marriage and peace in their home are not the least of the blessings of their marriage.

As he taught the little children in catechism, Prof. Engelsma would again and again see a little child of five or six years respond to the lesson with a child's sincere expression of love for our good God or trust in Jesus. Prof. Engelsma's heart then would rejoice and the tears would come to his eyes. He would then say to himself, "See that you never, never teach these little ones of God the lie, or otherwise cause them to stumble."

It is rewarding for Professor Engelsma to see the Protestant Reformed Churches standing fast in the Reformed faith. He delights to see young people become godly, faithful husbands, wives, and parents. He says it is a delight for a minister to go back to a church he has served and see the young people he has taught and worked with, sometimes because of their sin, who are now solid, active members and even officebearers. This makes all the work worthwhile.

Prof. Engelsma was fourteen in 1953, old enough to experience the angry strife and painful division in Hope Church and in his family.

Concerning the other controversies that we as Protestant Reformed Churches have faced, Prof. Engelsma has memories of being involved in many of them. He came into Classis West studying a three hundred page protest and he left Classis West studying a four hundred page protest.

As Prof. Engelsma looks back over his many years in the ministry, he has many memories. When he was a seminary student and preached his first sermon at the old Southwest Church, he made a gesture and swept all

his notes onto the communion table. He forced himself to finish the sermon without his notes. Another time Prof. Engelsma had to lead a service and preach a sermon to one man in Pella, Iowa. Cecil Van Der Molen sat on his sofa and Prof. Engelsma stood behind the sewing machine which was his pulpit. As they went into the living room, Mr. Van Der Molen said, "If you preach heresy, it will be my word against yours." Prof. Engelsma responded, "If you fall asleep, we're done."

During a morning service, Prof. Engelsma used the illustration in his sermon from his boyhood of losing all of his marbles, especially his favorite blue one, to an older trickster. At the evening service, the collection plate contained a large, blue marble for him. Prof. Engelsma takes this opportunity to thank the generous giver.

Prof. Engelsma's advice to young men who are considering the ministry of the Word to be their calling is to continue and not give up considering the ministry too quickly. Your consideration of the ministry may itself be an indication that you are called. "We need godly, able men, who have natural gifts and who love the churches. It is a grand work with precious rewards, though demanding."

There are changes Prof. Engelsma would like to see in the thinking, attitudes and behavior of the young people, and they are the same changes he would like to see in himself and other parents. They include: more zeal for God; more love of doctrine; more spirituality (piety) of life.

Prof. Engelsma is encouraged to see that our young people do have a zeal for God, do love the Word, and do live spiritual lives. ❖

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

Church Family

True To The Faith

by Mrs. Jacob Kuiper Sr.

Dear Young People,

I was asked to write an article on how life in general was for a young person in the church of my day. I am thankful that the Lord, in His eternal counsel, had

my parents included in that little mission station that met in Riverbend, Hope, inane sixty years ago. Those were the horse and buggy days. This area is where I spent the first twenty years of my life.

My father, being one of the leaders, had to take his turn to pick a student to preach for us on Sunday. This was done on Saturday afternoon with horse and buggy. This student would stay the weekend and be brought back to the streetcar, some five miles away, again on Monday morning. I particularly remember Rev. J. R. Brink, who would always pat me on the head and say, "God bless you."

These meetings were held in people's homes until 1918. A cement block church was then erected, which was later organized as Hope Christian Reformed Church. Rev. G. M. Ophoff was our first pastor.

We were really isolated from all other churches, "out in the sticks" as many people called it. We hardly ever got to see any other young people. There was no young people's society, banquets or conventions. Once a year we had a big day which was a Sunday School Church picnic, held at Fenessey Lake about two miles from church. There was a large pavilion, some playground equipment and even 100 square feet of sand and muck bathing beach. What fun! Later, when a few more people purchased Model T cars, we went to John Ball Park for the occasion. This was five miles away, which was really quite a trip and something we looked forward to all year.

There were no Christian schools around. There was only a public grade school, thru 8th grade, which I attended and from which I graduated. It was a one room school. At recess and noon hour the whole school participated in games. School life was really enjoyable. I remember especially singing out of the Folk Song Book every day. As a child I enjoyed music and singing. I was chosen as part of a quartet that had to sing at special school day events. The teacher had asked me more than once if I might sing at P.T.A. but father and mother never went and I was not supposed to either. It was a public school, you see. We wouldn't feel at home there. Only once I had permission. We sang the Riverbend School Pep Song and "The Old Rugged Cross." That was it.

I took reed organ lessons from one of my school teachers. As soon as I could play a couple of hymns my father said "That's enough, now you know how to play. Never mind all of that other fancy stuff." I kept playing which prepared me for being an organist, which I later was in Hope Church.

My father was an elder at the time of the 1924 split when, along with others, Rev. Ophoff, our pastor, was deposed. I remember sitting in church one Sunday morning after we really had been forbidden to use the church.

During the sermon two strange men walked in and Rev. Ophoff kept on preaching. Everyone was quite shook, but the men turned around and walked back out. After that Sunday we had to give up our church. Then we began meeting in the Blair Schoolhouse.

After graduation I asked my parents if I could go to high school. My desire was to become a teacher or a nurse. High school! Where? Grand Rapids Christian High was miles away. There was no Wilson Ave. and no bridge over the Grand River at Grandville. I would have to board away from home all week! That was not for girls. I shed many a tear that fall.

Going back to my schooling, we had no Bible courses. One or two of my teachers did read a chapter before school. I received my knowledge by reading Bible story books at home, from Sunday School, and from my parents' instruction. We had two church services. One was Dutch, of which I understood nothing, but always attended. I remember distinctly I had to play the piano for the Dutch service. I only know how to play a few Psalms so the consistory gave Rev. Ophoff the list. He remembered the first two times but the third time he forgot about the list and announced a number I couldn't play. I got his attention and shook my head. To my great embarrassment he said, "Can't play that?" And then, "Oh, that's right." He found the list.

I had plenty of time to study even though evenings were short. We no electricity, so we sometimes went "to bed with the chickens." We didn't have a "Pizza Hut" down the road, a drugstore, or a car. We could go down the road to my cousin once in a while, or to a neighbor until dark.

I also had a lot of enjoyment on our back 60 acres, which was pasture at that time, picking wild flowers. It is now Ferndale and Wilson Avenue.

At 14 years of age I had to get driver's license. My older brothers worked away from home, my father worked part of the farm, and I had to take produce to the retail market a few days every week. This was a lot of work, but fun. Mother or sister always went with me. Here we got to meet a lot of different people, including my future husband (of whom I was ignorant of at that time). He was always there with celery and onions.

I said earlier that we had very little evening activity. Well, in the summer the neighborhood fellows played softball at the schoolhouse. I was allowed to go provided I was home by dark. I recall a couple of times when a team from First Church came out and competed. That was exciting, seeing some fellows from one of our other

churches. After the game they would go and get an ice cream cone. That was a treat! I wasn't in on this, though. As I said, I was to be home by dark.

There were some evenings when my parents had company. These times were spent in much singing and praising the Lord around the reed organ. This was very rewarding!

On Sunday evenings, too, the whole congregation would meet at different homes for Bible Class. We would have prayer, an hour of Bible discussion and some singing. After meeting the children and young people would have lunch in one room and the grownups in another. We would go home early. These were profitable evenings. This happened yet even after we were married, 41 years ago.

As I said before, we had no young people's society, just catechism. We went to this until we were married, confessing members or not. That was the way it was and no one complained.

When I was sixteen and a half years of age I went to my first Young People's Outing. We took a bus to Ludington, got on a big boat, went out on Lake Michigan to Grand Haven, and then returned to Grand Rapids by bus. At that time I was with a fellow from the Dutch Reformed Church. He was a son of some dear friends of my parents. We sort of dated for six months, but father said we had to break up because he was not of our faith.

A few months later it seemed like the world was becoming a little bigger. Two young fellows from the Hudsonville Protestant Reformed Church motored to Hope after catechism and picked up a couple of young ladies from Hope and took them home. When my father found out they were from one of our churches it was O.K. This resulted in two happy marriages. As dear Rev. Vos said at that time, "There's Hope for Hudsonville."

Young People, what is my conclusion? I thank the Lord for the way I was brought up. There were moments of rebellion because sin constantly cleaves to us, but on the whole, I was content. With quiet times, reading, music and meditation I was happy.

You might perhaps say, "Sure was dull and boring!" I wish we could go back to that kind of living. God in His counsel has brought you face to face with many, many temptations, luxuries, sports, etc. I pray for you every day. You will need much grace. Spend much time in prayer. Make very good use of your time in your Christian schools and on college campus. Choose the right friends. We are nearing the end of time. Be on the alert. Set not your affections on things below for they shall perish. Think of the Eternal Rest which lies in store for those who cling to the "Faith of Our Fathers." ❖

This article is a reprint from the June-July, 1976 issue of Beacon Lights. Mrs. Kuiper is still a member of Hope Protestant Reformed Church in Grand Rapids, Michigan.

Our Young Peoples' Federation

Young Peoples' Society Discussion Topics

A new society season is about to begin for most of us. As societies of believing young people we come together to grow spiritually through the discussion of God's word. Some of our societies will be looking for a new book of the Bible or topic to discuss. We've put together a list of the books and topics that our societies studied last year to be used as ideas for

this year by your society. Because of time constraints we were not able to obtain information on every church.

Bethel: The Young People's Society meets every other Sunday throughout the year. They finished studying I Peter and then started the Life of David in I and II Samuel.

Byron Center: The Young People's Society studied *Trusting God* by Jerry Bridges.

Cornerstone: The Young People of Cornerstone studied the Book of Romans chapter by chapter.

Covenant: The Young Adults' Society at Covenant has been studying Jerry Bridges' book, *The Pursuit of Holiness*, over the last year. Typically they meet two Sunday evenings a month for dinner and study at a member's home. On alternate Sundays the group usually gathers for an evening of fellowship.

Doon: The Young People's Society studied Acts and after recess studied *Jesus' Beauty Shining in You*.

Edgerton: The Young People's Society studied the Book of Esther and the Five Points of Calvinism (TULIP).

Faith: The Junior Young People's Society studied the book of Ephesians over the last year. The Senior Young People's Society studied through the parables of Christ using a study guide from Kregel Publications.

First of Edmonton: The Young People's Society studied I Timothy and James as well as special topics from the Beacon Lights and Standard Bearer.

First of Grand Rapids: The Young People's Society studied the Book of Job.

First of Holland: The Young People's Society studied the Book of Revelation. Also, they have a special once-a-month topic meeting on the first Sunday evening of each month, where they have lunch together and discuss a special topic of interest and value to the young people. Sometimes, they invite a member of the congregation or an outside person to speak to them.

Georgetown: Over the last year, the Young People's Society studied the background of the historical narrative in Scriptures, focusing on the geography of the land of Israel, using appropriate passages.

Grace: The Young People's Society meets after Sunday morning services from 11:00 until noon. This past year, they studied from the Book of Ruth, using Rev. Haak's study guide. After completing Ruth, they went on to study a few topics such as Sabbath observance, exclusive psalmody, the diaconate, and Christian judging.

Grandville: The Senior Young People's Society is comprised of approximately 20 high school juniors and seniors. They studied I and II Peter last year. The Junior Society includes 9th and 10th grade students. They studied the parables. Both groups meet every Sunday morning after the worship service for about 20 weeks. The groups also try to get together for an activity each month.

Hope (Walker): The Junior Young People's Society studied Revelations chapters 1-4 over the last year. The

Senior Young People's Society studied Jonah and I Corinthians chapters 1-10.

Hudsonville: The young people are divided into four or five smaller groups, each studying the same topic and led by different individuals from the church. This past year they studied the End Times and the Second Coming of Christ.

Immanuel: The Young People's Society studied Genesis.

Kalamazoo: During the school year, the Young People's Society made its way through James, using a study guide booklet published by the RFPA. For its after recess programs, the group meets once a month on Sunday evenings and discusses a matter of practical concern to the lives of young people.

Loveland: The Young People's Society studied Daniel and *The Mysteries of the Kingdom*, a book written by Professor Herman Hanko on the parables.

Peace: The Young People's Society studied Christian living and ethics topics with the books, *Like Living Stones* and *A Spiritual House*.

Pittsburgh Mission: During the last year, the young people studied topics ranging from evolution to prayer to dating. Each time, Rev. Mahtani gave an introduction and then the group spent a half an hour discussing the subject. Some of the topics planned for the upcoming year include: proper Sabbath observance, career of an athlete—is it Christian?, the Christian and alcohol, and unequally yoked.

Randolph: The Society studied James and special topics out of *Beacon Lights*, such as creation.

Southeast: The Junior Society studied the Book of Acts chapters 8 through 15.

South Holland: The Society studied I Corinthians for one hour each week and discussed a variety of practical topics for a half hour.

Southwest: The Junior Society studied the patriarchs of the Bible through Jacob. The Senior Society studied our Protestant Reformed views as they pertained to a variety of topics such as marriage, dating, evolution, and common grace.

First Evangelical Reformed Church of Singapore: The young people are divided into two groups, Kingdom Seekers Juniors and Kingdom Seekers Seniors. The Juniors studied The Sermon on the Mount and the Seniors studied the book, *The Rebellious Years*, by Peter Masters. ❖

The Way of Christian Discipline

by Rev. Ronald Hanko

Reprinted from the mission newsletter circulated in the UK by Covenant PRC.

Because Christian discipline is such a serious thing, careful rules are laid down for it in the Word, especially in Matthew 18. These rules are of the greatest importance.

For one thing, as we have noticed, discipline ordinarily begins with *private admonition*. When someone has sinned against us or offended us we are required to go to them and point out their sin to them.

Several things need emphasis in that connection. First, it is the sinner himself who must be told, not everyone else. Telling everyone else the sins of others is itself the sin of tale-bearing or gossiping and is a deadly evil in the church (Prov. 26:20-26). This is the reason Jesus says in Matthew 18:15, “tell him his sin *between thee and him alone*.”

Secondly, it is the person sinned against who has the primary obligation to go to the one who has sinned (vs. 15). All too often in our pride and anger we wait for the person who has sinned to come to us and the result is that we are not reconciled to one another.

Third, rebuking of sin must be done with humility and love. Thus Jesus emphasizes, too, that we are “brothers.” Very significant is II Thessalonians 3:15, which tells us that even one who has been excommunicated must still be admonished “as a brother.” Too often our failure to gain a brother is due to the *way* in which we point out his sins.

Only if the sinner will not receive admonition and repent is the matter brought to the attention of others, but then not in the way of tale-bearing. He must be approached in the presence of witnesses (Matt. 18:16—according to Num. 35:30), who also have the obligation,

if they are convinced he has sinned, to admonish him (Matt. 18:17).

The matter is brought to the church, functioning through its ordained elders, only if the sinner continues unrepentant. Then, eventually, he is excommunicated, both for the sin he committed and for his refusal to repent. This excommunication, as the very word suggests, involves his being barred from the Lord’s table, and thus from membership and fellowship in the church.

Here too, however, Scripture has something to say. There must be *admonitions*, not just a single admonition. Love demands that every opportunity must be given for repentance. Also, as much as possible, the sinner must be spared, especially if he repents (II Cor. 2:5-8). Thus, Scripture says, love covers sin, not to hide it, so that it is not dealt with (cf. James 5:19, 20), but in sparing the sinner unnecessary shame and reproach.

In a few cases, however, Scripture indicates that sin must be immediately and publicly rebuked. Thus did Paul deal with Peter (Gal. 2:11-14), probably because of Peter’s prominent position in the church. I Timothy 5:20 gives two cases where this may be necessary: (1) where the person has “sinned before all,” i.e., sinned publicly; and (2) where the person is a leader in the church (Paul is speaking here especially of elders).

In these ways sins will be dealt with in the church and will not destroy it. So too, our Holy God is not mocked but glorified in the church, and sinners saved.

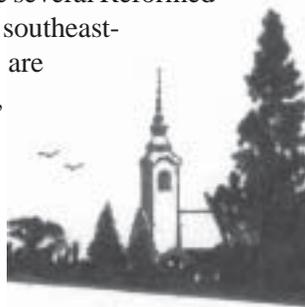


Rev. Hanko was missionary/pastor of Covenant Protestant Reformed Church in Northern Ireland.

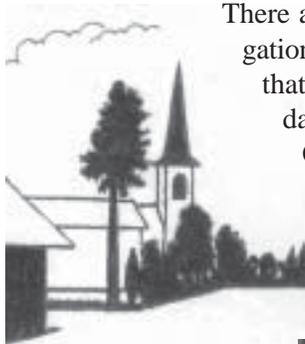
The Forgotten Hungarian Reformed Churches of Southeast Slovakia

by J.P. deKlerk

You see here three of the several Reformed Churches which exist in the southeastern part of Slovakia. They are poor and almost forgotten, but very busy. The first one is in Cicarovce, a village, where Dr. Bertalan Pándy is the minister. The second one is in Vel'ké Kapusany, a small city, where his son Rev. Arpad Pándy is the minister. The third one stands in Vel' Raskovce.



There are several Reformed congregations around without ministers, so that both father and son each Sunday not only preach in their own Churches, but also in other places where the people don't have Church buildings.



Dr. Bertalan Pándy was born in 1926, in the years 1944-1947 in prison in the Soviet Union (Russia), studied in Prague (Praha) 1947-1954, became minister in Cicarovce in 1957, went to Bern (Switzerland) for his Doctorate in Theology in 1968/1969. Since 1992, he also has been professor of Old Testament knowledge at the Seminary in Kosice.



The Hungarian Reformed Churches are still not recognized officially by the government of Slovakia, though they are allowed to operate. Some of the congregations preach in two languages: Hungarian and Slovak.

The photo shows the interior of the Reformed Church in Cicarovce, with Dr. Pándy and his daughter. You see the baptismal, the Communion table, the pulpit and the pipe organ. There are only windows on the right side of the building.

The Hungarian Reformed Churches opened their first own Seminary on September 15, 1925 in Lucenec. The finance came from abroad. There were 22 students, who received their training from professor Béla Sörös. The Churches founded also 225 primary schools. A school for the training of teachers could not be started, because there was no money; it was finally possible in 1935, in the city of Komárno. All books for the Churches and schools were imported from Hungary till enough gifts from the members had come in, so that they could do this themselves, on November 2, 1938 when Slovakia became an independent nation. There were 25 Reformed congregations. On June 29, 1945 (occupied by the Russian Communists) Slovakia was united with Czechia again, plus Karpato-Ukraine of the Soviet Union (on the Eastern side of their frontier nowadays). Tens of thousands of men were deported by force to Russia; many were killed. In every town of village of Slovakia you can find monuments with the names of the victims on them. The Churches could not function. People who spoke the Hungarian language were removed to where their ancestors had come from. The government ruled that in all Reformed Churches which were yet open on the Lord's Day only the Slovakian language had to be spoken. When on February 27, 1948 Klement Gottwald became president of Czechoslovakia, the government appointed two people in control over the Hungarian Reformed Churches (free to use their own language again), namely Dr. Imre Varga and Rimavská Sobota. Contact with the Ukraine was not allowed anymore. All the Chris-



tian schools were taken over by the government, without compensation. Atheism were promoted.

Young men of the Hungarian Reformed Churches who wanted to become ministers were allowed however to study at the Comenius-faculty in Prague, the Seminary of the Bohemians there, and the Evangelical-Lutheran Academy in Bratislava.

There were 307 Reformed congregations in Slovakia. Often one minister had to look after four congregations. Much help were given by the Liberated Reformed Churches of The Netherlands, up till this very day.

In Autumn 1989 better days began, when the Communists left the government. This was also very important for Dr. Bertalan Pándy and his wife Jolika, whom you see in the picture.

The Hungarian Reformed Churches started to restore Church-buildings, schools, youth clubs, etc. They kept as basis the Word of God, the Heidelberg Catechism and the Helvetic Church Order (“Zweite Helvetische Bekenntnis”) which is of Calvinistic origin, and organized a Synod again. They have a Psalter with all the Psalms plus 360 hymns, in the Hungarian language, and some more hymns in the Slovakian language. The number of members depends on where the city, town or village is situated (the city of Komárno has 3000 citizens); some villages in the mountains only 20. The total of congregations is now 340 members. There is a new Theological Academy, and the first minister trained there came to the pulpit in autumn 1999. There is no support whatsoever from the government, but only from churches abroad. There are at the moment 100 students. In order to ease the shortage of ministers, there exists a training of three years for young people to teach in catechism classes in Komárno and Dosice. They are also important to lend a helping hand in primary schools and children’s centers. They speak at youth conferences and holiday camps or hostels.

Because of the suffering under Communist governments, and police actions, the Christians of various denominations have regular meetings and discussions, try to help each other solving all kinds of. problems. Mainly members of Lutheran Churches and some of the Russian Orthodox Church have a good relationship with the



Reformed people; as human beings they grew up together and respect each other. They are not interested in modernist views or activities, but they are very well aware of their existence. They help each other to build more Christian schools. They want to give the younger generation what they were forced to miss out on.

Recently four schools of the Hungarian Reformed Churches (primary as well as high schools) have been opened, namely in the cities Dolny Stal, Martovce, Ket and Roznava, with separate a Gymnasium in Rimavská Sobota and a religious Center (with library) in Jelka. In three towns buildings are under construction (with great sacrifices to the members of the congregations).

The son of Dr. Bertalan Pándy, Rev. Arpad Pándy, tries to speed these projects up as much as possible during the summer, because the winters are long and very severe in Southeast Slovakia. His Church has recently bought a big plot of land for new building projects.

Their publishing house produces a monthly with the name “Kálvinista Szemle – Kálvinske Hlasy,” which is a Calvinist Review in both the languages Hungarian and Slovak. Also a small weekly with the name “Reformatus Újság” (Newspaper of the Reformed people) in Hungarian. They are printing their first books, in Hungarian, Slovak and German. They try to bridge the gap after half a century of struggles.

The young people also take care of the elderly, with gardening, cleaning, cooking meals, shopping, etc.



The picture shows a meal with Dr. Pándy in the middle, his son Arpad at his right hand, and a visitor from The Netherlands, who had brought food from the Liberated Reformed Church in Rotterdam, in front. Also from Reformed Churches in Switzerland come trucks, of the same nature and for the same purpose. ❖

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

Church News

BAPTISMS

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

Mark 16:16

The sacrament of Holy Baptism was administered to:

Irene Ruth, daughter of Rev. & Mrs. Richard Smit—
Doon, IA
Haley Marie, daughter of Mr. & Mrs. Chris VanGinkle—
Doon, IA
Danielle Nicole, daughter of Mr. & Mrs. Scott Lubbers—
Georgetown, MI
Carly Ruth, daughter of Mr. & Mrs. Doug Lubbers—
Georgetown, MI
Trenton Peter, son of Mr. & Mrs. David Miedema—
Georgetown, MI
Makayla Lou and Mason Allen, twins of Mr. & Mrs. Jeff
Berens—Georgetown, MI
Caleb Henry, son of Dr & Mrs. Doug Bleyenburgh—
Georgetown, MI
Nicole Renee, daughter of Mr. & Mrs. Nick Westra—
Georgetown, MI
Alicia Rose, daughter of Mr. & Mrs. Ryan Brunsting—
Hope, MI
Calvin James, son of Mr. & Mrs. Aaron Cleveland—
Hope, MI
Colton Bradley, son of Mr. & Mrs. Brad Brower—
Hudsonville, MI
Alyssa Joy, daughter of Mr. & Mrs. Chad
Uittenbogaard—Hudsonville, MI
Jonathan Andrew, son of Dr. and Mrs. Roy Slice—Hull,
IA
John Walter III, son of Mr. & Mrs. Jack Bretall—Peace, IL
Morgan Savannah, daughter of Mr. & Mrs. Tim Shultz—
Redlands, CA
Lane Donald, son of Mr. & Mrs. Wayne Buiters—
Redlands, CA
Mark Patrick, son of Mr. & Mrs. Mark DeKraker—
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:

Joshua Dykshorn—Byron Center, MI
Chad Mingerink—Byron Center, MI

Andy Bylsma—Faith, MI
Lisa Koole—Faith, MI
Audrey VanderSchaaf—Faith, MI
Julie Pastoor—Faith, MI
Denise Noorman—Faith, MI
Sherry Van Overloop—Faith, MI
Christiana Heyboer—Faith, MI
David Kuiper—Faith, MI
Audra Bol—Faith, MI
Joel Noorman—Faith, MI
Lisa Jabaay—Georgetown, MI
Katie Van Overloop—Georgetown, MI
Kelly Zandstra—Georgetown, MI
Kevin Stouwie—Peace, IL
Joshua Feenstra—Redlands, CA
Brent Meelker—Redlands, CA
Betsy Langerak—Southwest, MI

MARRIAGES

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

Matthew 19:5

United in the bond of Holy Matrimony were:

Mr. Paul DeJong and Miss Erin VanEgdom—Doon, IA
Mr. Tom Heyboer and Miss Rochelle Richards—Faith, MI
Mr. Jon Van Overloop and Miss Katie Vander Schaaf—
Faith, MI
Mr. Eric Petroelje and Miss Melissa Antozak—Faith, MI
Mr. Peter Byker and Miss Sara Velthouse—Faith, MI
Mr. Ryan Dykstra and Miss Michelle Kamminga—
Georgetown, MI
Mr. David Decker and Miss Amber Terpstra—Holland,
MI
Mr. Eric Yonker and Miss Marcy Slotman—Holland, MI
Mr. Tom Bergman and Miss Mindy Buys—Hull, IA
Mr. Dave Hollema and Miss Esther Tolsma—Loveland,
CO
Mr. Bill Pipe and Miss Linda Brands—Loveland, CO
Mr. George VanLaten and Miss Heather Hoekstra—
Peace, IL
Mr. Darin Gritters and Miss Amy den Hartog—Redlands,
CA
Mr. Robert Mc Claury and Miss Sheri Hendricks—
Redlands, CA
Mr. Anthony Tolbert and Miss Mary Mc Claury—
Redlands, CA
Mr. Dwight Kuiper and Miss Leshia Kuiper—Southeast,
MI

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2001***

Friday, December 28, 2001 to Thursday, January 3, 2002

Deadline for registration: October 31, 2001

Theme: Back to the Future

**Great truths learned in the *Past*,
applied to issues we face in the *Present*,
so we can really be living for the *Future***

Looking forward to seeing you there!

*Check out our web page for information, updates and advice:
members.dingoblue.net.au/~phil_connors/home.html*

