

Beacon Lights

April
2003

Volume LXII
Number 4

“For as the rain cometh down, and the snow from heaven, and returneth not thither, but watereth the earth, and maketh it bring forth and bud, that it may give seed to the sower, and bread to the eater: So shall my word be that goeth forth out of my mouth: it shall not return unto me void, but it shall accomplish that which I please, and it shall prosper in the thing whereto I sent it.”

Isaiah 55:10

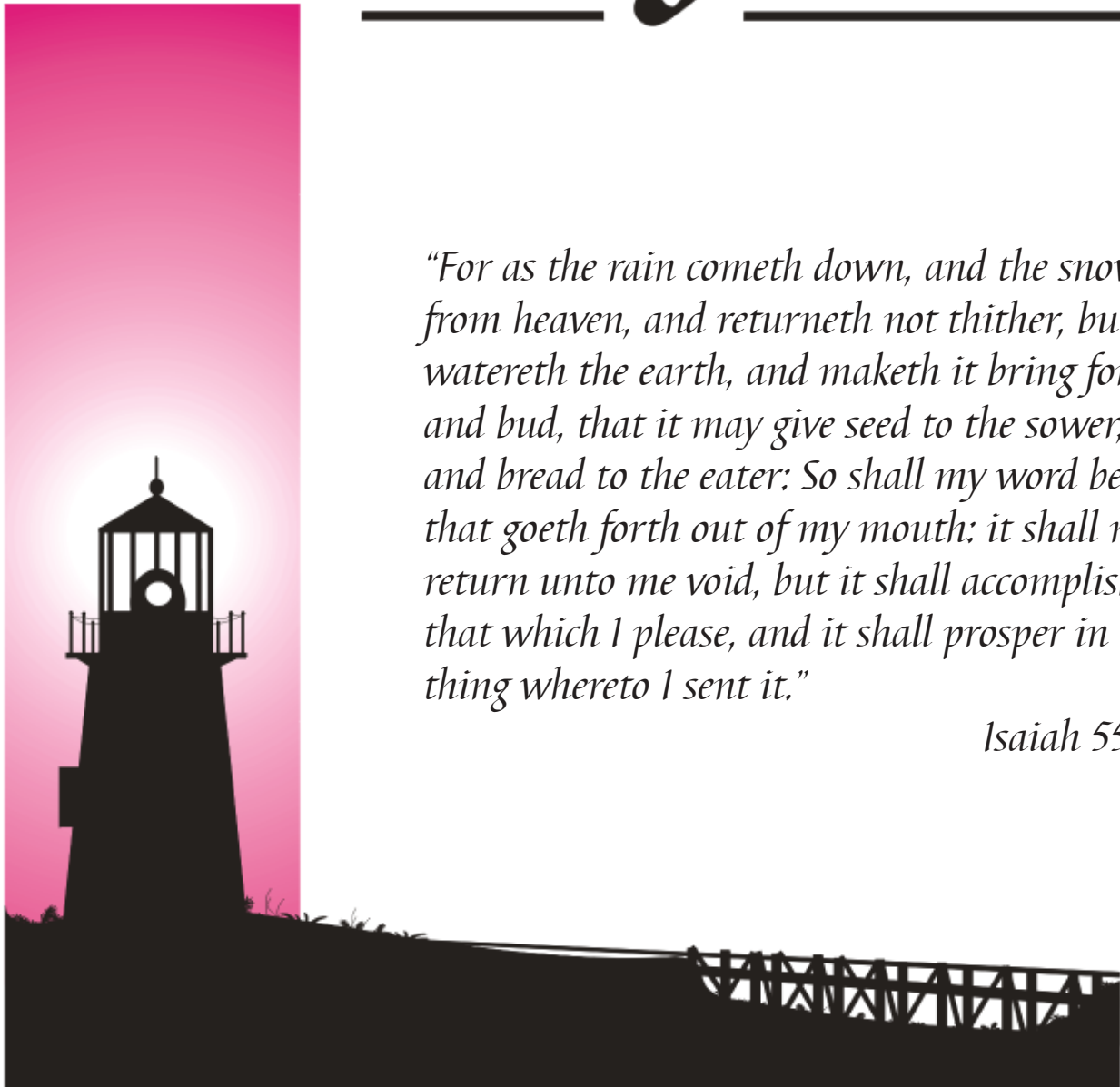


Table of Contents

	EDITORIAL
3	The Sins of Youth
	FRUITFUL BRANCHES
4	An Essay on Humility
	LETTERS TO THE EDITOR
5	A Response to "Slim Possibility of Overcoming a Weighty Problem"
	STORY TIME
6	A Writing Contest For You
	THE READER ASKS
7	How Should Children Be Raised?
	CHURCH FAMILY
8	The Call to Minister an Effective Word
	DEVOTIONAL
11	Watching Daily At My Gates
	WHERE WE STAND
15	Arminianism (3): God's Evaluation of Teachers in the Church
	FROM THE PASTOR'S STUDY
17	The Fifth Pointer on the Spiritual Roadmap: Honoring Parents
	OUR YOUNG PEOPLE'S FEDERATION
19	Update from the Federation Board
	CHURCH HISTORY
20	George M. Ophoff (6): Early Years
	LITTLE LIGHTS
23	What Was It Like?
	CHURCH NEWS
	Back Cover

BEACON LIGHTS

EDITOR

John Huizenga

ASSOCIATE EDITORS

Aaron Cleveland

Randy Vaalburg

SECRETARY

EDITORIAL STAFF

Jeff Kalsbeek

David Langerak

Kris Moelker

EXECUTIVE FEDERATION BOARD

Trevor Kalsbeek (President)

Kevin Gritters (Vice-President)

Audra Bol (Secretary)

Brad Pastoor (Treasurer)

Jeanine Boeve (Librarian)

Rachel Kuiper (Vice-Secretary)

Brad VanderVeen (Vice-Treasurer)

Jim Holstege (Youth Coordinator)

Rev. Barry Gritters (Spiritual Advisor)

BUSINESS OFFICE

Beacon Lights

P.O. Box 144

Randolph, WI 53956

Phone: (920) 326-6186

Email: huizenga@powercom.net

BEACON LIGHTS ON TAPE

A free service to the legally blind. Contact

Sam Copple

659 Lincoln Ave. NW

Grand Rapids, MI 49504

Phone: (616) 774-4132

Email: SamCopple@email.msn.com

CHURCH NEWS ANNOUNCEMENTS

Melinda Bleyenbergh

Email: darylme1@altelco.net

BOOK SALES

Becky Kalsbeek

TYPESETTER

Robert Vermeer

PRINTER

James Huizinga

MAILER

Staff

Beacon Lights is published monthly by the Federation of Protestant Reformed Young People's Societies. Subscription price is \$10.00. Please send all correspondence, address changes, subscriptions, and article submissions to the business office.

EDITORIAL POLICY

The articles of *Beacon Lights* do not necessarily indicate the viewpoint of the Editorial Staff. Every author is solely responsible for the contents of his own article.

The *Beacon Lights* encourages its readers to contact the business office with any questions or comments. Letters may be edited for printing. We will not publish anonymous letters, but will withhold names upon request.

If any material of *Beacon Lights* is reprinted by another periodical, we will appreciate your giving the source and forwarding the printed periodical to the business office.

The Sins of Youth

by Eugene Braaksma



Remember not the sins of my youth, nor my transgressions: according to thy mercy remember thou me for thy goodness' sake, O Lord. Ps. 25:7

The sins of our youth; one would think sins committed and repented of years even decades ago would be long forgotten. We know God's promise to His people that if we repent of our sins and seek His forgiveness He will be a merciful God and forgive us our sins. In Psalm 138:7, 8 we read: "Though I walk in the midst of trouble, thou wilt revive me: thou shalt stretch forth thine hand against the wrath of mine enemies, and thy right hand shall save me. The Lord will perfect that which concerneth me: thy mercy, O Lord, endureth for ever: forsake not the works of thine own hands." God's promise to His people is sure, so why do those sins of our youth hang in our memory?

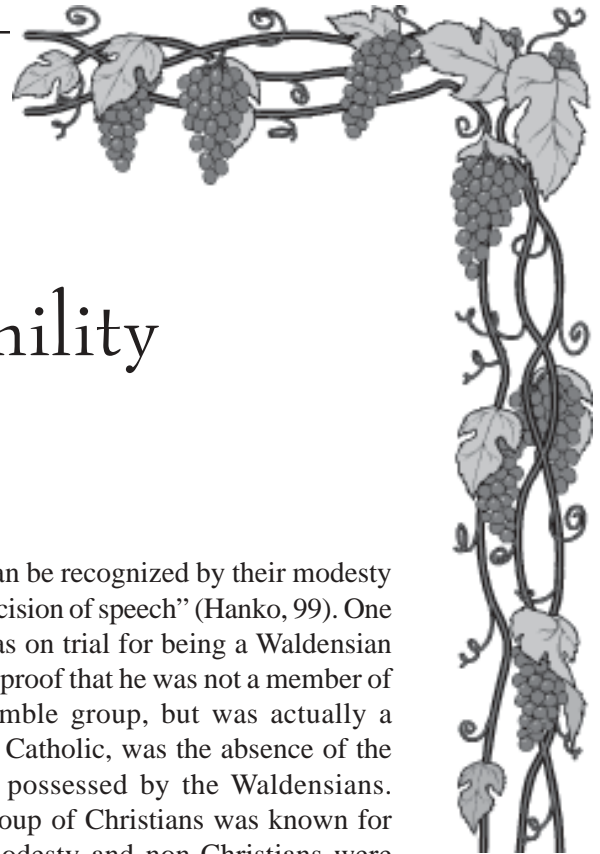
I don't think it is because we don't have assurance that God, according to His mercy and loving-kindness, forgives us. His word makes that quite plain to us in many places (Ps. 51:1; 1 John 1:9; 1 John 2:1, 2). Yet, when many adult Christians begin to raise families of their own "the sins of...youth" come to mind as they now look at their own families. Parents come to the realization that their children will also be tempted as they were.

What parents would not want to help their children avoid the same sinful mistakes that they made in their youth?

We live in a world that is ever growing in sin; young people are confronted with the wickedness of a world that grows more sinful at an alarming rate. What parents would not want to help their children avoid the same sinful mistakes that they made in their youth? These same sins that they in the foolishness of youth committed, they now see more clearly as older and more mature Christians. This is not to say that as adults they don't sin, for they know that they only have a small beginning of that new man in Christ in them. It is just that the years have humbled them, and made them even more aware of their need for a Saviour, and the need to teach their children "to the utmost of your power" the doctrines of God's Word as they promised when they baptized them.

In conclusion, when parents go to their children and warn them about going out to places that they as Christian young people don't belong at, or hanging around with kids that are not a good influence on them, it is not because they think they are so much better or so much smarter because of their age, it's because over the years they have been humbled by their sins and the need for a Saviour. They have also seen the consequences that falling into such sin can bring (Ps. 73). The sternness and even the sometimes needed discipline applied is only out of their love for their covenant children and their faithful Saviour. ❖

Eugene is a husband and father in the Randolph Protestant Reformed Church.



An Essay on Humility

by Lisa Baldwin

The dictionary and the Bible define humility as a sense of one's sinfulness, modesty, recognition that man can do nothing without God, a state of mind that makes us patient under trials, meekness, and a willingness to put others before oneself. There are many people in the history of the church that have uniquely displayed different aspects of this characteristic. Their lives and ministry manifested the presence of humility. However, God used each of these men for His own purposes.

Augustine who was considered one of the church fathers, lived from 354 until 430. Although his mother was a believer and he was taught the Scripture as he grew up, he rejected the truth and lived a life full of sin. He searched and followed several false religions before he finally became a Christian. Upon becoming a believer, he became more and more aware of his own sinfulness. He wrote in a confession, "Thou was within, but I was without, and was seeking Thee there. And into Thy fair creation I plunged myself in my ugliness; for Thou was with me, and I was not with Thee!" (Hanko, 42). Augustine recognized his sin nature and that it was only through God's grace that he was saved. He became very aware of how full of sin he really was.

During the beginning of the Middle Ages a group of Christians arose who were known by several names. The Waldensians, also known as the Brethren in Christ and the Poor in Spirit, were a group of believers who saw the errors in the Roman Catholic Church. They began to preach the truth and soon were persecuted by the Roman Catholic Church. One Roman Catholic man questioned why this group was persecuted and remarked, "They are modest and well-behaved, taking no pride in their dress, which is neat but not extravagant... Chaste in their habits, temperance in eating and drinking, they keep away from taverns, dances, and other vanities...

They can be recognized by their modesty and precision of speech" (Hanko, 99). One man was on trial for being a Waldensian and his proof that he was not a member of this humble group, but was actually a Roman Catholic, was the absence of the virtues possessed by the Waldensians. This group of Christians was known for their modesty and non-Christians were frequently able to recognize the humility these believers possessed.

John Hus was a Bohemian reformer who lived from 1373 until 1414 and was known for his gift of preaching. He recognized that it was through God's power that he was able to preach. He once said, "By the help of God I have preached, still am preaching, and if his grace will allow, shall continue to preach" (Hanko, 113). Hus recognized that it was not through his own power, but rather by God's power, that he was given the ability to preach. Hus also displayed humility in his life when he showed patience in the many trials he faced at the end of his life. He faced numerous persecutions, was placed in jail, and was not given the opportunity to defend his faith. However, even up to his martyrdom by burning at the stake, Hus remained faithful to the Lord in all of his trials.

John Calvin, one of the best-known reformers, embodied the virtue of meekness. He lived from 1509 until 1564 in France and Switzerland. Calvin was very shy and gentle, but he did defend his faith and the truth when it was challenged. He loved the peace he possessed while he lived in Strassburg, which provided him with the opportunity to write and study. However, Calvin was willing to leave Strassburg and go to Geneva where he was persecuted when the church there called him. "His enemies were hateful and not afraid to show it. People called

their dogs by Calvin's name, openly reviled him in the streets, sometimes threatened his life, disturbed him in his studies, and vowed to do harm to his family. Through it all Calvin endured: preaching, teaching, writing, and bearing the yoke of Christ's suffering for the cause of the gospel" (Hanko, 149). Like Hus, John Calvin faced his trials with humility, patience, and perseverance.

William Farel, who lived from 1489 until 1565 in France and Switzerland, was a close friend of John Calvin. Farel would not be considered your typical example of humility, but in his own unique way, he too possessed this virtue. His strong love and passion for the truth led him to be unnecessarily violent on occasion. However, much of his work was done in order to benefit others. In all of his preaching, he sacrificed his own safety in order to teach others about the Gospel. When John Calvin was dying, Farel, who was almost 75, traveled to his dear friend. This journey would have been incredibly difficult as Farel was old and weak. Herman Hanko praises Farel saying, "With a sincere humility he was content to stand in the shadow of Calvin, to retire to the background when events required it, and to decrease in order that Calvin might increase" (Hanko, 161). Farel showed love towards his close friend John

Calvin and the gospel, and in this he lowered himself for the glory of Christ's kingdom.

All of these men are unique and exhibit their humility in different ways. These men display remarkable trust in God and faithfulness to Him. God used all of these believers for his glory and for the advancement of His church. These Christians showed their humility in their actions, words, and ministry. These men can and should be used as role models in our life to show a true Biblical example of humility.

Humility is an essential quality and without question it is a vital law of life. Without it there would be little consideration for others, as everyone would be consumed with himself or herself. Without these men's humility, the church would not be the same today. It is because of their humility that so many reforms occurred in the church during their time. ❖

Bibliography

Portraits of Faithful Saints by Herman Hanko. Reformed Free Publishing Association, 1999, USA.

Lisa is an eighth grade student at Covenant Day School in Charlotte, North Carolina.

Letters to the Editor

A Response to "Slim Possibility of Overcoming a Weighty Problem"

by Rita DeJong

After reading Gloria Doezema's article, "Slim Possibility of Overcoming a Weighty Problem," I found little comfort or hope for those who struggle with a weight problem. Although the intent of the article aimed in the right direction of being content in any state, I believe the article missed the target in finding a real solution.

Having peace with God in our hearts for the gift of salvation, does not mean, as Christians, that our lives are just a big ball of contentment. As Christians, we have

responsibilities. Part of those responsibilities is caring for our bodies, for each child of God is a "temple of the living God" (I Cor. 6:16). In caring for our bodies, we need to recognize that gluttony and obesity are sinful conditions, and problems that fellow Christians need to confront each other about.

The concerns raised in the article are appreciated, but they avoided the real issue, which is more of a heart issue. Every person is responsible for his/her actions, whether good or evil. Proverbs 23:2 tells us that a man

must put a knife to his throat if he is a man given to appetite. I believe being overweight, as Ms. Doezema mentioned, is a psychological problem. It could also signify a spiritual one as well. God requires us to use all that we have, even our bodies, to glorify Him. We take advantage of the gift of the human body by overeating. Plus, overeating has recently been defined as an addiction. Sometimes it's difficult for people to control how they eat. Although food itself is a good thing, it's also powerful. If we suffer from an eating addiction, we must find help. We can't be ashamed to ask for help. After all, that's what community of the saints is all about.

The solution the article gives tells overweight people to perhaps exercise a bit, but basically, to be content that you don't suffer from something worse, such as a mental problem or paralysis. Instead of being pricked in the heart that we suffer from a problem, we are to be thankful. And if we try to change our state, be wary, lest ye fall to vanity and pride. Being joyful that, through God's grace, we have conquered a sin holder in our lives is an accomplishment. We should be proud. Proud that we no longer draw attention to ourselves because of our weight.

Proud that we silence the "fat lady" jokes from onlookers. Proud that we confidently walk up to others, without the fear of prejudice in their hearts, and share the good news of salvation with them. Whether we admit it or not, much of a person's self respect comes from how they look on the outside.

Living in a state of being overweight easily depresses people. For the Christian, that's where contentment comes in. We must accept that, for the moment, that's how we look. We take up the challenges set before us, however, to change our lives. As the Christian artist Steve Green aptly puts in one of his songs, "We're at peace, but we're seldom still." The Christian marks his life through changes, and with the strength of the Lord on his side, what can he fear? To those struggling with a weight problem, I pray that you don't fall into complacency, but strive for the victory, knowing that "we are more than conquerors through Him that loved us." (Rom. 8:37). ❖

Rita is a member of South Holland Protestant Reformed Church and is a senior at Illiana Christian High School.

Story Time

A Writing Contest for You

Are you a student in school, a student in college, starting your first job, a parent, a farmer, a doctor, a teacher, secretary or a car salesman? It really does not matter what your station is in life. We are sure that you and every other reader have stories to tell which will serve to build others in our Reformed faith and give glory to God. Now is your opportunity to put your story into writing for some others to enjoy.

We know it is not easy to write, so here is some incentive. You have a good opportunity of earning a reward for your work: you could win one of six prizes. You fit in one of two categories. Writers currently in high school or younger are eligible for a \$100, \$50, or \$25 prize. Writers out of high school and older will be judged separately and are eligible for the same prizes.

God has given to each one of us many talents so let's explore them and use them for the glory of God.

This is what we are looking for. The entries must be somewhere between 800 and 2000 words. That's about two to four pages typed double space. The story needs to come from a distinctively Reformed perspective. This means, for example, that the characters or problem in the story should in some way convey our belief in a sovereign God who saves by grace alone and lives in covenant friendship with His people. We will leave the creative details up to you. The story could be historical fiction, fiction, or non-fiction. Finally, the entries must be postmarked by May 31, 2003.

Please send your entry to:

The Beacon Lights
P.O. Box 144
Randolph WI 53956

All entries must include your name, address, and the category for which you are writing (high school and younger or post high).

How Should Children Be Raised?

Hi Rev. Laning,

This is Lisa Poortinga. I go to Peace Protestant Reformed Church of Lansing. I have a rubric question that has to do with one of the classes I'm taking at Illiana Christian. It's a child development class. I was asked by my teacher how we should raise our kids? Should we raise them according to denomination or to love God? I know the answer to the question but I was wondering if you could give me further insight on how to approach the subject. (While my class was discussing it, some of the kids ended up defending relativism and individualism without themselves even realizing it. They were saying how we shouldn't judge other Christian faiths - they were even including Baptists and Roman Catholics!) Thanks so much!

In Christ

Lisa Poortinga

Dear Lisa,

You make a good request when you ask about a good way to approach this subject. To begin with, it would be good to point out some problems with the question itself. I would point out the following:

1. What may be the correct answer is not given as an option.

The person has asked an either/or question, when the answer may be that we do both. Yet this was not given as a possible answer to the question.

2. The question is not clear.

When someone asks a rather vague question like this, it is also good to ask him to clarify what he means. For example, what does it mean to "raise a child according to a certain denomination"? Does it mean teaching the child to remain a member of a certain denomination no matter what that denomination maintains, so that even if the denomination decides to adopt false teachings that he should still maintain his membership within it? Does it mean teaching the child to believe what a denomination maintains, regardless of whether or not that teaching is the teaching of Scripture? This may or may not be what that person means. My point is that it is good, first of all, to make sure that we know what a person means

by his question, before we begin to try to set forth an answer.

Although the question is rather unclear, the following are some important truths to remember concerning this subject:

1. We do not teach our children to remain in our denomination no matter what happens.

If we grow up in a denomination that is faithfully maintaining the truth, and then that denomination officially adopts a position that is contrary to Scripture and our Reformed creeds, what should we do? Well, first we should try to point this out to the churches by protesting the decision. But if the denomination refuses to repent, then the faithful believers would have to leave that denomination and form one of their own. We must not remain devoted to a denomination, when that denomination is not devoted to God. Rather, we must remain devoted to God, and cling to His truth.

2. We are commanded to judge and condemn what is false.

As you point out, there are many today who say that we should not make any judgments concerning other "Christian" faiths. But God commands us to do this. We are commanded to "justify the righteous, and condemn the wicked" (Deuteronomy 25:1). When a person is impenitently walking in sin, God commands His people to "put away from among yourselves that wicked person" (I Corinthians 5:13), according to the principles of Christian discipline set forth in Scripture. Those who say that we must not condemn what others believe, are trying to strip from the church one of the keys of the kingdom—the key of Christian discipline (Heidelberg Catechism, Lord's Day 31). God had this to say to the church in Thyatira, when she was not condemning false teachings:

Notwithstanding I have a few things against thee, because thou sufferest that woman Jezebel, which calleth herself a prophetess, to teach and to seduce my servants to commit fornication, and to eat things sacrificed unto idols (Revelation 2:20).

We are forbidden to judge and condemn on the basis of our own thoughts. But we are commanded to ex-

press God's judgment against sinful teachings and practices. This we are able to do because God has revealed to us His judgments in Holy Scripture.

3. Christ is the Truth, and we show our love for God by being members of a denomination that is teaching that Truth.

We must teach our children that we show our love for God by remaining in a denomination that faithfully teaches and believes the truth about God, and by separating ourselves from those who are impenitently speaking lies about Him. If Christ is the Truth (John 14:6), then we show our love for Christ by loving the Truth, and by joining ourselves to that denomination that is faithfully maintaining that Truth. The early church showed their love for Christ by remaining steadfast in "the apostle's doctrine" (Acts 2:42). We do the same today when we hold to our Reformed creeds, creeds which are an accurate summary of the apostles' doctrine.

If you would like a more thorough answer on any of these subjects, or if you have any other questions on this or any other matter, please write again. ❖

Do you have a question that has been on your mind? Something that came up at school or during a discussion with friends or co-workers? You can be sure that there are many more people reading these words who have had the same question and are looking for answers just like you. *Beacon Lights* invites you to try out our new rubric called "The Reader Asks." Rev. Laning of Hope Protestant Reformed Church in Grand Rapids, Michigan is waiting to answer them. Don't worry, if you would rather your name was not published with your question, we will honor your request. We do, however, ask that your name and either your home or email address be included so that Rev. Laning can respond privately if need be.

Please send your question to:

Rev. James Laning

1550 Ferndale S.W.

Walker, MI 49544

E-mail: jlaning@msn.com.

Church Family

The Call to Minister an Effective Word

by Bill Langerak

When a young Reformed man meditates upon the future labors to which the Lord may be calling him, certainly the ministry of the gospel will have primary consideration. A believing young man understands the importance of the ministerial office and its crucial role in the salvation of lost sinners. Not only has he been taught, but also personally experienced the truth that one cannot hear Christ without a preacher (Rom 10:14). Through the preaching of the Word, the Christian young man has heard the powerful call of Jesus Christ in his own heart: "Come unto me, all ye that labor and are heavy laden" (Matt 11:28). He has responded to that call of the gospel through faith. And through the preaching of the Word he has come to know the Savior whose voice he heard, and loves him.

Despite the central role of the ministry in their own lives, many never consider preaching as a future vocation, or if they do, quickly abandon the idea. Others re-

ject the possibility only after long and prayerful consideration. Among these there are indeed many valid reasons for not pursuing the noble office of the ministry. For example, the Lord may have already made clear through one's education that the necessary psychological or mental gifts are lacking. However, some reject the ministry based upon erroneous ideas concerning the work of the office itself, particularly in regard to the nature of the Word that the minister is called to preach.

This situation can occur in churches where preaching is still held in high esteem (as in the PRC), especially when a young man contemplates his own natural abilities and compares these with the awesome and powerful effect of the gospel. Through the preaching of the gospel, the church is established and maintained; her members are fed spiritually. Through the preaching of the gospel the dead are raised to life, the weak are strengthened, and the diseased are healed. Through the

preaching of the gospel Christ is present in the world and his kingdom is established. From a purely natural perspective it seems quite normal that a Reformed young man might become discouraged from pursuing the ministry after meditating upon such things. Yet he wrongly excuses himself from the ministry who simply feels inadequate preaching such a necessary and powerful Word. The truth is that men do not send forth the Word, define its purpose, or give it its power. Therefore, it is neither in the capability of the preacher, nor is it his obligation, to make the Word preached effective. As in all of salvation, the powerful effect of preaching is the work of God alone.

The Word of God is an effective Word in and of itself. By this we mean that the Word is absolutely able to accomplish the purpose of God whereunto he sends it. This is the teaching of Isaiah 55:10-13 which compares the Word preached to God's providential Word spoken in nature.

For as the rain cometh down, and the snow from heaven, and returneth not thither, but watereth the earth, and maketh it bring forth and bud, that it may give seed to the sower, and bread to the eater so shall my word be that goeth forth out of my mouth: it shall not return unto me void, but it shall accomplish that which I please, and it shall prosper in the thing whereto I sent it.

For ye shall go out with joy, and be led forth with peace: the mountains and the hills shall break forth before you into singing, and all the trees of the field shall clap their hands.

Instead of the thorn shall come up the fir tree, and instead of the brier shall come up the myrtle tree: and it shall be to the LORD for a name, for an everlasting sign that shall not be cut off.

The purpose of the Word is to bring into what previously existed eternally only in the divine mind of God. The Word accomplishes what God has planned without fail. It is an effective power due to the fact that the Word spoken proceeds from the divine being of God and, consequently, bears his character and perfection. Therefore, this effective power that continually brings into being the eternal will of God, is called a living, creative power.

In the Old Testament, God revealed the living, creative nature of his Word both in the genesis of the heavens and earth, and the birth of his covenant people. Using the enduring refrain, "...and God said...and there was....," the Scripture teaches that the creative effect of God's Word was the formation of all things in the universe. When God created the world out of nothing by

speaking, he spoke to nothing. Nothing heard his voice. Nothing was there to respond. Yet nothing became something by this almighty speech. As the Psalmist sang: "By the word of the LORD were the heavens made; and all the host of them by the breath of his mouths (Ps 33:6).

The effective power of the living Word is also indicated in Scripture by Jehovah's creation of his covenant people. In the promise of God unto Abraham, God spoke with a dynamic power, accomplishing his eternal purpose throughout history with respect to the elect seed of Abraham. As in the creation of the heavens and earth, the Lord called his covenant people, Israel, out of nothing. God spoke his creative promise to an aged and barren couple—called dead by the apostle Paul in Romans 4:19—and from them sprang forth a mighty nation, a miraculous birth recounted by the prophet Isaiah in several places.

But now thus saith the LORD that created thee, O Jacob, and he that formed thee, O Israel, Fear not: for I have redeemed thee, I have called thee by thy name; thou art mine (Isa. 43:1).

I am the Lord, your Holy One, the creator of Israel, your King (Isa. 43:15).

Thus saith the LORD that made thee, and formed thee from the womb, which will help thee; Fear not, O Jacob, my servant; and thou, Jesurun, whom I have chosen (Isa. 44:2).

This same spoken Word that created the heavens, the earth, and the covenant people of Israel, is the same Word that the church now proclaims, the only difference being that the Word spoken in the New Testament is that of the incarnate and exalted Christ. Christ himself, as the embodiment of that Word, came and spoke with the absolute authority of God. Those who heard him confessed that "he taught them as one that had authority, and not as the scribes" (Mark 1:22). His words were the creative works of power of God by which he performed, not his own will, but the will of the Father who sent him (John 5:30). Christ spoke and the sick were healed, the lame walked, the deaf heard, the blind saw, sins forgiven, food multiplied, water changed into wine, demons cast out, wind and waves obeyed, and the dead were brought back to life. And in his great work on the cross he accomplished the perfect will of God for our salvation so that "the preaching of the cross is to them that perish foolishness; but unto us which are saved it is the power of God" (1 Cor. 1:18).

In the New Testament era, God sends forth this powerful, creative Word of the risen and exalted Christ

through the instrumentality of the preachers' mouth. Preaching, therefore, is a spiritual event by which God, through lawfully called ministers, speaks to his elect church. It is spiritual because God speaks through the Spirit of Christ unto that same Spirit planted in the hearts of his elect. It is an event because this Word is both preached and takes effect at a specific place and time. Therefore through the preacher, the living and creative voice of God that is effectively heard in a given church by God's people.

Preaching the Word of God, therefore, is an effective event in which the voice of God goes forth in might, accomplishing that which the divine mind has eternally conceived—even as that same Word went forth creating the heavens, earth, and the nation of Israel. This Word powerfully and eternally changes things. It does not depend upon man for its effect. It creates its own hearers by bringing to life the spiritually dead. Its mighty work is performed in those who have no ears, no eyes, and no life, so that they come to life and respond. Christ himself spoke of this mighty work of the gospel when he declared: “The hour is coming, and now is, when the dead shall hear the voice of the Son of God, and they that hear shall live” (John 5:25).

The Reformed give expression to this mighty effect of the spoken Word in her creeds. The Belgic Confession speaks of the operation of faith, namely the conversion and sanctification of the the believer that arises through hearing the Word.

We believe that this true faith being wrought in man by the hearing of the Word of God, *and the operation of the Holy Ghost, doth regenerate and make him a new man*, causing him to live a new life, and freeing him from the bondage of sin (Belgic Conf., Art. 24).

The Canons of Dort attribute the whole mighty work of grace in man to the preaching of the Word.

And as it hath pleased God, “by the preaching of the gospel, to begin this work of grace in us, so he preserves, continues, and perfects it by the hearing and reading of his Word, by meditation thereon, and by the exhortations, threatenings, and promises thereof” (Canons 5.14).

Young men who prayerfully consider the ministry should not worry about whether the Word they preach will be effective; they should be concerned with whether the Lord has called them to preach the Word.

If the powerful effect of preaching is derived from the divine nature of the Word and not the preacher, then no human help is necessary to resurrect the dead, turn darkness into light, and convert sinners into glorified saints. No more than the creation of the world needed human cooperation, so also the Word goes forth in its own power and does its work independent of the minister. This does not deny that ministers are the necessary means to

bring the Word. Rather, it emphasizes that the ministerial means itself is powerfully created, enlivened, and directed by the Word of God.

It is not the duty of ministers to convert the sinner or raise the dead, but merely to preach the Word as those who are called by the Word themselves. They may plant and water, but God gives the increase (I Cor. 3:6). Although the ability to make the Word effective does not lie with the preacher, he can, however, obstruct, interrupt, and create offense by his preaching. Unable to empower the Word, ministers are able to prevent others from hearing the Word—a most grievous offense—through their own ungodliness, preaching something other than the Word living in self-promoting pride, lack of sermon preparation, laziness, poor grammar, or garbled speech.

Young men who prayerfully consider the ministry should not worry about whether the Word they preach will be effective; they should be concerned with whether the Lord has called them to preach the Word. There can be no more effective preacher of the Word than one who has personally experienced the powerful effect of that Word in his own heart. Do you know the Word? Personally yourself? Do you love the Word? Young men who prayerfully consider the ministry should be concerned with whether the Word they would preach is indeed the Word of God. For if it is, then it will be effective. How important, therefore, that one would minister in a church where the Word of God is loved and confessed—such as In the PRC. Young men of the PRC should consider the blessed vocation of preaching the Word and prayerfully ask themselves whether the powerful Word of God is indeed calling them as the means by which the voice of Christ is heard. ❖

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

Watching Daily At My Gates

by Chester Hunter

April 1 Read Romans 4:6-12, LD 23 Q&A 60

After having received the blessed assurance that we are righteous before God, the explanation of the source of that righteousness is explained. We learn that that righteousness is not in ourselves but in Jesus Christ. This is a very blessed thought. There is nothing that can dissuade us from that confidence. We embrace this righteousness with the confidence that our own unworthiness is overcome by Christ. What else do we need? What else could we want? This should provide us great comfort no matter what situation in life we are placed. We are righteous by faith alone! What a grand and glorious truth! Thanks be to God. Sing Psalter 83.

April 2 Read Romans 4:13-18, LD 23 Q&A 61

Paul in this chapter of the epistle to the Romans is answering many of the questions that may arrive by the detractors of this blessed doctrine. The great reformer Martin Luther found utmost comfort in this book of the Bible and especially in the truth of justification by faith alone. The writers of our beloved catechism felt it necessary to turn to the same theme. They realized that the enemies of justification by faith alone are found in every generation. We must go forward in life armed with the Word of God as it is found in Romans and explained in LD 23 and fight those who would convince us to believe that we can justify ourselves before God. We cannot. We never will be able to do so. Give God the glory. Justification by faith alone. Sing Psalter 27.

April 3 Read Romans 4:19-25, LD 24 Q&A 62

Good works theology is almost as old as the history of the world. It was this theology that Satan used in Eden to convince Eve to sin. It was this theology that caused Cain to bring an unacceptable offering to God. The Pharisees believed in salvation by works. Jesus constantly preached against this heinous doctrine. The apostles and other writers of Scripture exposed this lie. This lie was the battle fought in the great reformation. Are we fighting this battle? Or do we think we can and must do some good in order to appear righteous before God. People of God, join with the church militant and fight for justification by faith and not by works. We cannot appear before God claiming righteousness based on our works. If we do, we will be condemn to Hell. Sing Psalter 29.

April 4 Read Romans 5:1-8, LD 24 Q&A 63

The writers of the catechism continue to use the strategy of the writer of Romans. They continue to bring up all the objections that the enemies of the truth hurl at God and His church. They continue to answer based on the Word of God. Now they want to examine the worth of those good works. They dismiss

those who insist that our good works merit of themselves something now and in eternity. The answer is simple and comforting. Any reward that we obtain is not because of the worth of the works but rather because of the grace given by God to perform those works. He has ordained them. It is only by His gracious care that we do them. We must give God and only God the glory for any good that we might do. To do otherwise is to try to come before Him in a robe woven by our own filthy hands. This we know will bring disaster. Grace, only grace. Sing Psalter 261.

April 5 Read Romans 6:1-6, LD 24 Q&A 64

Another charge is hurled at us. So then you sin so that you receive much grace?! Like Paul, the catechism's authors refute this charge down most vigorously. Using the sword of the Spirit, they tell us that it is impossible for the child of God not to bring forth fruits of thankfulness for the great blessing he has been given. God's gift of faith brings for those good works even as fruit and vegetable seeds bring for fruit as they grow and mature. Rather than make us careless and profane, justification by faith should spur us to "work out our own salvation with fear and trembling." "It should make us work to "make our calling and election sure." These are not cries for works righteousness. But rather calls for us to acknowledge that God and only God works faith and the resulting good works in us. Thanks be to God. Sing Psalter 379:1-5.

April 6 Read Ephesians 1:9-14, LD 25 Q&A 65

Now that the vicious objections have been answered the writers seek to show to us various aspects of this doctrine. First of all we see that faith comes to us by the Holy Spirit through the means of grace: preaching and the sacraments. Were we tempted to miss church yesterday? Did we think that not being there was not so bad? If we did, we were sorely mistaken. What about you, children and young people? Do you treat catechism as the means of grace that it is? Parents, do you impress upon your children the importance of catechism that has been placed upon it by God! It is by the means of grace that the Holy Spirit works in us. To ignore the means of grace is an attempt to "quench the Spirit." Let us strive to seek the true preaching of the Word every time that we are commanded to come under it. Let us seek the benefits of faith and not willingly ignore them. To seek the means of grace will bring to us great comfort. Sing Psalter 391.

April 7 Read Exodus 12:21-28, LD 25 Q&A 66

Yesterday we considered the worth of the preaching as a means of grace. Today we must examine the worth of the sacraments. These visible signs show to us the means of our sal-

vation. They also are means to bring to us assurance of that salvation. Because they are means of grace we must use them in the solemnity due them. They are not reason for earthy celebration. These are times of spiritual contemplation and joy. In these sacraments we see the deliverance from the ugly stain of sin which would prevent our entrance to the throne room of God. There is much comfort in the sacraments for the people of God. Let us use them as He has intended. Sing Psalter 311.

April 8 Read Galatians 3:22-29; LD 25 Q&A 67

In the last two days we have been looking at the means of grace: preaching of the Word and the administration of the sacraments. In this question and answer we see clearly the purpose of the means of grace. They show to us that our salvation is only from Christ. If we hear any preaching that proclaims other wise, we must flee from that preaching! If we see the sacrament used for some other purpose we must not be caught up in that kind of administration of the sacraments. The means of grace afford us great comfort. Let us use them only as God has commanded. To do otherwise would be to oppose Him and His Word. Sing Psalter 342.

April 9 Read I Cor. 10:1-4; 15-17, LD 25 Q&A 68

You can see in this Lord's Day the writers' intention. This intention is to expose the error of the Roman Catholic church in multiplying the number of sacraments. This is wrong because a true sacrament is one that is instituted by Christ for the New Testament church. Any other sacrament is manmade and is contrary to the word of God. We can be guilty of this wrong by elevating other practices—worthy in themselves—to sacrament status. We can also be guilty of this by not using the two sacraments we have been given properly. Let us seek to avoid these evils and use the means that God has given to us to show us our blessed salvation. Sing Psalter 370.

April 10 Read Genesis 8:1-5; 15-17, LD 26 Q&A 69

Now our beloved catechism turns to each sacrament specifically and examines it and shows to us the comforts we derive from it. There are several places in the Old Testament which point to baptism. The first of them is the flood. Even as God used the flood to cleanse the world and purify the church, so the water of baptism is used to symbolically cleanse us from our sin. In baptism we see that the blood of Christ cleansed us from all of our sin. Baptism is not just for the family of the baby being baptized. It is for the church. We must see in each and every baptism how we are cleansed from sin. With this sacrament we have the promise that Christ by His blood has washed us whiter than snow. Thanks be to God for His unspeakable gift! Sing Psalter 285.

April 11 Read Exodus 14:21-25; 29-31, LD 26 Q&A 70

In this question and answer we find the meaning of being washed by the blood of Jesus. Being washed by His blood affects all aspects of our lives. It is to crucify the old man and to live the life found in the new man. This has many practical applications for each of us. We must ignore and fight against the sin that is around us. We must seek those things which are from above. We must lay up treasures in heaven and not on this earth. We must be thankful for the free salvation wrought

for us by Christ on the cross. As we witness baptism, let us thank our heavenly Father for the gifts shown in it. Let us vow along with the parents to live the lives of those redeemed by the blood of the Lamb. Sing Psalter 214:1-3.

April 12 Read Matthew 28:16-20, LD 26 Q&A 71

One of the blessings of the church of the new dispensations is the Holy Scriptures. For in them we can find the commands of God concerning His worship. This is true for baptism as well. We can trace the origins of baptism in the Old Testament. We can look at the baptizing done by John and even at Jesus's baptism. But today's text is very clear that the command to the church is to baptize. We can, by reading the book of Acts, see that the early church carried out this command. We, too, as a continuation of that church baptize. We must present our children for baptism. We must obey the vows we make in baptism. Let us partake of this sacrament as a blessed reminder of the washing away of our sin. Sing Psalter 425:4-6.

April 13 Read Matthew 3:10-17, LD 27 Q&A 72

You may notice that the writers of the catechism write many words about the sacraments. This is undoubtedly because the Roman Catholic church had perverted the sacraments so much. Here we are reminded that the water does not wash away our sins. The water is only a sign of that washing. Only the blood of Christ and the work of His Spirit in our hearts can cleanse us from our iniquities. Let us use the sacraments as they are intended. Let us not make them more important than the thing signified. Let us obey Christ in each sacrament and use them properly. Sing Psalter 140.

April 14 Read Revelation 1:1-6, LD 27 Q&A 73

People of God, do you seek the assurance that your sins have been forgiven? Do you seek that assurance in the proper way? God has given to us the sign of baptism as one of the means of finding that assurance. In baptism we are shown that salvation and the forgiveness of sins is truly God's work. We can easily see that a few drops of water or even a brief period of immersion cannot rid us of the filthy stain of sin. We also see in the external washing the truth that we cannot remove sin from us by ourselves. We need the work of the Holy Spirit in our hearts to do this. Let us through baptism be comforted by the Comforter that our sins are truly forgiven. Sing Psalter 232.

April 15 Read Acts 2:37-42, LD 27 Q&A 74

One of the great truths which is shown in baptism is the truth of the covenant of grace which God has established with us and *with our seed*. This is of no little comfort. Each time we take a child to baptism or observe the baptism of another of the covenant seed, we are reminded of this great truth. In believing this truth we set a pattern for how we order our homes. In believing that our children are included in the covenant we educate them covenantally. Young people, this has implications for you as well. You may not despise the instruction of the home, of catechism, and, if God allows, the covenant school. You must embrace this instruction as a gift from God. To do otherwise is to bring despoite upon God's sacrament. Let us

rejoice in the baptism of infants as it is God's way of showing to us the beautiful truth of the covenant. Sing Psalter 360.

April 16 Read Luke 22:14-20; LD 28 Q&A 75

If the writers of the catechism were concerned by the proper use of baptism, they were doubly concerned with the proper use of the Lord's Supper. If they were concerned, we, too, must be concerned. We must be concerned because the truths signified by communion are the heart and soul of our salvation. Just as we would not misuse something that belonged to an earthly ruler, we must not misuse that which belongs to our heavenly King. Again we must see that the elements, the bread and wine, are signs of wonderful spiritual truths. We may not use the Lord's Supper out of either custom and habit or out of superstition. We must use them as God has commanded in in Word. Sing Psalter 313.

April 17 Read I Corinthians 11:23-29, LD 28 Q&A 76

There are many aspects to the idea of the Lord's Supper. First of all we embrace the truth that we are forgiven of our sins by the sacrifice of Christ on the cross. This is central. If we do not have that assurance, than we have no assurance of eternal life. Secondly we see in the Lord's Supper the truth of the communion of saints. The whole idea of supper is a time of fellowship. The fellowship seen here is that of the body of Christ-the church. By Him we are united together with saints of all ages, from all walks of life, and from all places on this earth. We must see this as we partake of this sacrament. We must believe this as members of the body of Christ. It is for this that we should long, whether we be saints who have professed our faith or children and young people desiring to profess our faith, so that we can partake in this beautiful sacrament. Sing Psalter 369.

April 18 Read Exodus 24:3-8, LD 28 Q&A 77

Again the catechism's writers take great pains to show us that the idea of the Lord's Supper is scriptural. It is a supper in which we partake of the covenant as Christ has established it with us. Christ broke the bread and poured out the wine. He did it symbolically with his disciples and he did it for us on the cross. As we partake of the Lord's Supper we must look past the earthly elements and look at their spiritual meaning. Israel of old had to look past the blood of animals and look forward to Christ. With them we have been placed in the covenant. Not by any thing we have done but only by the sacrifice of Christ on the cross. Let us partake of the Lord's Supper with this in mind. Sing Psalter 88.

April 19 Read John 6:32-40, LD 29 Q&A 78

Like in baptism, we are instructed to not become caught up in the symbols. We must rather look at what they symbolize. Christ Himself showed his disciples and us that He is the bread of life. Even as bread feeds our earthly body so He feeds us spiritually by His word. Bread is often called the "staff of life." The Bread of Life is **the** staff of life. Without Christ we will surely die spiritually. When we partake of the Lord's Supper we are assured that by His death and broken body we will have eternal life. We must never minimize this fact by minimizing the sacrament. We must also not minimize the fact by making

the sacrament more than it is. This is the sin of the Roman Catholic Church when they say that the bread becomes the real body of Christ in the mouth of the partaker. Let us cleave to the bread of life, Christ. Sing Psalter 222:1, 5 & 9.

April 20 Read John 6:52-58, LD 29 Q&A 79

Young people, you have either learned or will learn the questions of these Lord's Days on the sacraments. You may have groaned under their tediousness. You may have thought that the writers spent too much time on the truths contained in them. We saw in our reading for today that the error exposed in this question and answer was faced by Christ. The Jews wanted to make Jesus guilty of making them cannibals. Unbelief was the reason for their apparent confusion. They had forgotten the lessons found in the old dispensation about signs. Paul said that they seemed to be wise but they "became as fools." Let this never be said of us. The sacraments are means of grace. Let us hold to them even as Christ has blessedly instituted them for us. Sing Psalter 312.

April 21 Read Hebrews 9:24-28, LD 30 Q&A 80

The Roman Catholic Church was guilty of believing in works righteousness in the mass. But are we any different? Do we treat the Lord's Supper as if it can save us from our sins? We do if we give more importance to it than to the preaching of the Word. We do if we think that the four Sundays of the year on which it is celebrated are more important than the other forty-eight. The Lord's Supper is a blessed sacrament to be sure. The truths of the symbolism of the bread and the wine are to be precious. We must never fail to see that the joy of the Spirit is found at the table. This we must never do. But we must never elevate the Lord's Supper above that which it was intended. This is the sin of the Roman Catholic Church. If we do this, we, too, will be guilty of making the Lord's Supper a cursed idolatry. Let us seek grace to flee from this sin. Sing Psalter 308.

April 22 Read Psalm 103:1-8, LD 30 Q&A 81

The final two questions bring out the comfort found in these Lord's Days about the Lord's Supper. We see that the Lord's Supper was instituted for a particular group of people. These are the people who have been purchased by the blood of Christ. It is these people that seek for the true bread and wine. It is these people that earnestly desire the blessings found in this sacrament. And it is these people who go away from this supper strengthened by God. Then these people desire to live lives of sanctification. Young people, is this your desire? Are you desirous of making confession of faith so that you can be fed at the table of the Lord. By God's grace I sincerely hope so. Sing Psalter 280.

April 23 Read Psalm 50:14-23, LD 30 Q&A 82

The catechism seems to end its exposition of the Lord's Supper on a negative note. We may wonder why? Then we should examine the question more carefully and see its meaning for us. We must see that fellowship at the table of the Lord is a picture of the fellowship that the church, the body of Christ, will have with Him in heaven. Then we will see that this question for us is not so negative. We will see that our acts of keep-

ing the table holy in this life is a picture of that holy table in heaven. This should cause us to seek a pure table now as a picture of that blessedly pure table in heaven. We will quickly see our sin and realize that without the grace of God we do not belong at the table either. Then with joyful hearts we will seek Him daily and long for His table. Sing Psalter 138.

April 24 Read Matthew 16:13-19, LD 31 Q&A 83

In the last Lord's Day the truth of the keys of the kingdom of heaven was mentioned. Now the writers of the catechism expound that truth. We are first told what those keys are. As the name indicates these keys are the means given by God to the church of opening and shutting the kingdom of heaven. The church uses these through the ordained offices of minister and elder. Though it is true that believers, too, in their office must apply the truth of the keys, but officially the key power belongs to those who have been ordained by God. These keys are the means by which the table is kept pure on this earth. This is also the means that God uses for the protection of his church. Sing Psalter 64.

April 25 Read John 4:31-38, LD 31 Q&A 84

The first key is that of the preaching of the Word. This is used not only each Sabbath but also in the catechism room. This key, as we read, applies the blessings of salvation to the believer and condemns the reprobate to eternal damnation. To neglect the preaching of the Word is to ignore the power that is seen in it. This power is given by God for His church and neglecting it is a serious matter. Preaching must remain central in our worship service. Nothing may replace it or take away from its importance. As soon as we minimize the preaching we risk having the candlestick removed for our churches. Let us treat this key as it has been ordained by God. Sing Psalter 350.

April 26 Read Matthew 18:15-20; LD 31 Q&A 85

The second of the keys of the kingdom is one which has grown into disfavor and disuse today. It is not considered loving to admonish or even to excommunicate those who are walking in sin. We see this on the playground when a person is mocked for daring to tell a fellow student that he should not walk in a certain way because it is sin. We see it in the work place when "whistleblowers" are made the pariah of the work place. And sadly we see it in the church when the elders are condemned for working with a sinning member as Christ has commanded us. We must have this key and we must use it. To do otherwise is to bring despoilment upon the church of Christ. To not use it is risking the wrath of God upon us and our children. Let us walk the way of Matthew 18 in brotherly love and let us use this key as God has commanded. Sing Psalter 141.

April 27 Read Galatians 5:19-26, LD 32 Q&A 86

We now come to the third part of the catechism—the section labeled "Of Thankfulness." After seeing our sin, and after learning the way of deliverance we are instructed in how we can be grateful for that deliverance from the misery of our sins. The first question that is asked goes back to the subject of good works. Here we learn that there is a threefold reason for doing good works. First of all, we do them to praise Him

for His work of salvation in us. Second, we do them to assure ourselves of our salvation. Finally, we do them so that those around us may see the source of our salvation and, if it please God, might come to salvation themselves. These three reasons should give to us great cause for consideration. We must realize that our good works are not self-glorifying. Rather our good works are for God's use both in us and for those around us. Walking in good works is necessary for the child of God. Sing Psalter 105.

April 28 Read I John 3:11-18, LD 32 Q&A 87

In this question an objection is answered against the doctrine of good works. The objection is can you be saved and still live a life of evilness on this earth? The answer leaves no doubt, as did our Scripture reading, that this can never be. The redeemed child of God not only must leave the works of sin behind him, but he will want to do so. He will not wish to be tainted with the sins of the world. He will see that to continue to walk in evil ways will jeopardize his inheritance. As Jesus taught, "Ye cannot serve God and mammon." If we are truly thankful for our deliverance from sin we will desire to walk more and more in the newness of the life that God has placed in us. Sing Psalter 93.

April 29 Read Romans 6:7-14, LD 33 Q&A 88

The catechism now turns to the truth of man's conversion as he walks the life of sanctification. First of all, we are told that we must no longer walk in the ways of Satan. We must not put our hands to the plow of salvation and look back at our old life. This was the sin of Lot's wife. Second, we must seek to walk in the way of the new man of righteousness that God has placed in us. In comparing these two ideas we see the sharp line of the antithesis which we are called to walk every day. Everyday we must put off sin and embrace the ways of God. Everyday we must seek to root out the tares of sin and cultivate the plants of righteousness. Let us daily pray for the grace to do this as we are thankful for the salvation God has wrought in us. Sing Psalter 84.

April 30 Read Joel 1:8-13, LD 33 Q&A 89

Young people, are you truly sorry for the sins that you commit against your brothers and against God? Children, are you sorry for sinning against your parents and teachers? We must be, you know. To be truly grateful to God for the salvation that He has freely given to us, we must be sorry for the sins that we commit each day. Second, we must flee from those sins and strive hard not to do them again. We must not say those filthy words, we must not show hatred to others, and we must not rebel against any authority that God has placed over us. This is not something to which we can pay lip service. This is something which must come from the heart. Let us pray daily for the grace to hate sin and flee from it. Let us all do this no matter what our age. The mortification of the old man knows no age limits. Sing Psalter 144.

Arminianism (3)

God's Evaluation of Teachers in the Church

by Aaron J. Cleveland

We ended last time having completed a brief sketch of the life of Arminius. Now we hope to examine Arminius' personality and character. Then we will look at what God's Word has to say about those who are teachers in the church so that we may examine the teachings and practices of Arminius and his followers in that light.

Caspar Brandt, a Dutch Remonstrant (the name of the Arminian party after Arminius died) wrote about Arminius' body and mind that:

In stature he did not exceed the middle size. His eyes were dark and sprightly—the sure indications of quickness of mind and genius. He was of a serene countenance, of a sanguine constitution of body. compact in his limbs, and rather robust, as long as his age permitted it. He possessed a voice that was slender yet sweet, melodious and acute: *But it was admirably adapted for persuasion* (emphasis mine, AJC). If any subject was to be adorned, or to be oratorically discussed, it was done distinctly, the pronunciation of the words and the inflexion of the voice being evidently accommodated to the things themselves (*The Works of Arminius*, Vol. I, p. 310).

Another Arminian sympathizer, The Rev. Philip Limborch (1715), describes Arminius as “a pious and godly man, prudent, candid, mild and placid, and most studious to preserve the peace of the Church.” Further, in quoting another author (supposedly no friend of Arminius), he describes Arminius as “a man of a subtle genius, sound learning, and irreproachable in his manners” (*Works*, Vol. I, liii).

Another description of Arminius is given by The Rev. John Narsius who records what Dr. Anthony Thysius is supposed to have testified about Arminius. He says,

that he never knew a man endowed with more virtues or of a higher cast, than those which Arminius possessed; and that no one could be liable to fewer faults or those of a more trivial description. His spirit breathed so much piety and candour, such humility,

kindness, and affability in their highest degrees,—it was so studious of peace and so patient under the heaviest injuries (*Works*, Vol. I, lv).

Arminius' character and personality, as described by his friends, was very flattering. Evidently, he was a pleasant person to be around. All the evidence points to the fact that he was a faithful husband and father. He appeared to cultivate a life of humility and his friends said that he desired the peace of the church. Today, he would, no doubt, be called a “nice guy.” On the contrary, one of his chief opponents later in life, Gomarus, was quite the opposite. Gomarus, was fierce, stubborn, ill-tempered, and sometimes obnoxious (Read about him in *Portraits of Faithful Saints*, by Herman Hanko).

However, we must not come to any conclusions about Arminius and his teachings based only upon his character as described. It is quite often the case in the history of the church that “nice” men have spread heresy. It is also the case that those who stood for the truth could be accused of having many character flaws. Prof. Homer Hocksema, a former editor of *The Standard Bearer*, addressed the issue of whether or not Arminius was a heretic in a couple of editorials entitled “Meet James Arminius” (Vol. 62; pp.77-79, 125-127). In these editorials, one of the questions he addressed was, “Was Arminius a heretic?”

Prof. Hoeksema defined a heretic as follows:

In the strict sense of the word, of course, a heretic is one who has been found guilty of heresy by an ecclesiastical assembly, first of all. In the second place, a heretic is one who refuses to recant his heresy when he has been found guilty. And, in the third place, a heretic is deposed and expelled from the church because of persistence in heresy.

Prof. Hoeksema wrote that Arminius cannot be termed a heretic according to this definition because he died before his views were judged by an ecclesiastical assembly. “Nevertheless,” he continued, “James Arminius was a heretic in the sense that he was the fa-

ther of the heretical doctrines which were exposed and condemned at the Synod of Dordt and the teacher and spiritual father of many of the men who were condemned and deposed at Dordt” (*The Standard Bearer*, Vol. 62, p. 126).

The final standard by which we must evaluate Arminius and his teachings is God’s Word. There are many New Testament passages which refer to false teachers and the doctrines they attempt to bring into the church. We begin with Titus 1:9, which describes probably the central quality that a *faithful* elder or bishop must have. He must hold “fast the faithful word as he hath been taught, the he may be able by sound doctrine both to exhort and to convince the gainsayers.” Why is this necessary? “For there are many unruly and vain talkers and deceivers. . . , whose mouths must be stopped” (Titus 1:10, 11). Sound doctrine is the one thing that every *faithful* elder and minister of God will bring. The doctrine which a teacher brings is the primary standard by which he should be judged.

The one thing centrally opposed by false teachers is sound doctrine. in Romans 16:17, 18 we read, “Now I beseech you, brethren, mark them which cause *divisions and offences contrary to the doctrine which ye have learned*; and avoid them. For they that are such serve not our Lord Jesus Christ, but their own belly; and by good words and fair speeches deceive the hearts of the simple.” John Calvin refers to those who cause divisions in the church contrary to sound doctrine as “ministers of Satan.” And he states that they make disturbances in two ways. He writes:

for they either sow discord, by which the minds of men are drawn away from the unity of the truth, or they occasion offences, by which men are alienated from the love of the gospel. The former evil is done when the truth of God is mixed with new dogmas devised by men (emphasis mine, AJC); and the latter takes place, when by various arts it is made odious and contemptible.

II Corinthians 11:13-15 speaks of “false apostles” who transform themselves into the “apostles of Christ.” These false apostles preach “another Jesus” (vs. 4). One important characteristic of false teachers to be learned from this passage is their deceitfulness. These “deceitful workers” do not have horns protruding from their heads and name-tags which read “Ministers of Satan.” Rather, they appear to be quite decent, dedicated, and “nice” men. Comments John Calvin on verse 3 of II Corinthians 11,

For if false teachers have a show of wisdom, if they have any power of eloquence for persuading, if they plausibly insinuate themselves into the minds of their hearers, and instill their poison by fawning artifices, it was in a similar way that Satan also beguiled Eve, as he did not openly declare himself to be an enemy, but crept in privily under a specious pretext.

False teachers are also identified by the gospel they bring. False teachers bring what Galatians 1: 6, 7 calls “another gospel.” The Apostle Paul says that this is not really “another” gospel equal with the true gospel, but is a perversion of the gospel of Christ. Those who bring this perversion are the enemies of God and His church. Again, Calvin sharply identifies this perverted gospel and the intentions of those who bring it. On this passage he comments,

On the same principle, he calls it another gospel, that is, a gospel different from the true one. And yet the false apostles professed that they preached the gospel of Christ; *but mingling with it their own inventions, by which its principle efficacy was destroye, they held a false, corrupt, and spurious gospel* (emphasis mine, AJC).

One final passage we will look at is John 10. In the first half of this chapter the distinction is made between shepherds and thieves. Shepherds lead their sheep to Christ. All others will lead their sheep away from Christ. From any “shepherd” that would lead us away from Christ, we must flee, as a sheep would from a wolf. This is the command of Christ. How do we identify the wolves? By the deadly poison of false doctrine which they teach. Calvin comments on John 10:10 with the following words:

Not without reason, therefore, does Christ testify that false teachers, whatever may be the mildness and plausibility of their demeanor, always carry about a deadly poison, that we may be more careful to drive them away from us.

There is one important truth that we ought to learn from these passages. Teachers must be evaluated according to the contents of the gospel they bring. Less important is their personality. This is how we ought to evaluate Arminius and his followers also. It is not our intention to judge Arminius before we have fully examined his teachings and actions. Rather, before we proceed, it is good that we always have the standard of God’s Word before us as we examine this history. We ought always to examine the teachings of every man with the standard of God’s Word before us. And as we confess that we are

Reformed, we must be careful that these teachings are in agreement with our Heidelberg Catechism, the Belgic Confession, and the Canons of Dordt.

If we limit our evaluation of men merely to their personality and what we see of their character, we will easily be fooled. God's Word warns us that wolves come in sheep's clothing.

If we limit our evaluation of men merely to their personality and what we see of their character, we will easily be fooled. God's Word warns us that wolves come in sheep's clothing. The ministers of Satan transform themselves into the apostles of Christ. They come with good words and fair speeches to deceive the simple.

As we continue with the history of Arminius and his followers, let God's Word light our path. We hope, next time, to look at the events after Arminius' death and leading up to the great Synod of Dordt, 1618-19. ❖

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

From the Pastor's Study

The Fifth Pointer on the Spiritual Roadmap: Honoring Parents

by Rev. Doug Kuiper



"Honor thy father and thy mother: that thy days may be long upon the land which the LORD thy God giveth thee" Exodus 20:12.

"Children, obey your parents in all things: For this is well pleasing unto the Lord" Colossians 3:20.

Remember, young people, that we are traveling down the Way of Thankful Obedience, the road on which we live to God's glory and enjoy His blessings. We have seen to this point that walking down the Way of Thankful Obedience requires us to serve Jehovah God alone, to worship Him rightly, to use His name rightly, and to keep His day holy. In each of these areas, we must avoid taking the detours and side roads on which unbelievers and unthankful people walk, and which appear to be more glamorous roads than the Way of Thankful Obedience.

Now we notice something different about the road ahead. It requires us to love not only God, but also our neighbor. To love our neighbor as we love ourselves is, of course, Jesus' summary of the second table of the law (Matthew 22:39). But we must never forget that by loving our neighbor with true love in our hearts, we show that we do love God! We are walking the same road—love for God, shown now by loving our neighbor.

The next crossroad we come to is called Parent-Haters Avenue. Interesting that this is the first crossroad we come to, while being reminded to love our neighbor! We never really thought of our parents as our *neighbors* before. But in fact they are our *closest* neighbors; if we do not love *them* for God's sake,



we show we are unable to love any neighbor for God's sake.

But look how many children and young people are walking down that avenue! They seem to be having fun, too—for they are not being restrained by their parents. And look how many adults, and even old people, are on this road! I wonder why, seeing they no longer live in their parents' home, and perhaps do not even have parents alive? Let's figure it out.



To start with, we must understand that the commandment requires us to honor all in authority over us. Of course, it does not say literally, "Honor all in authority." But our parents are authority figures; they represent all forms of authority. They are our closest, most immediate, authorities.

Also, some other authorities and government positions are really extensions of the home. The parental school is an extension of the home. So, in a sense, is civil government. The authority of teachers and all in civil government is derived from the authority of parents in the home.

Furthermore, God clearly requires us to honor more people than just our parents; He requires us to honor civil government (Romans 13:1ff), church government (I Timothy 5:17), and employers (Ephesians 6:5ff). While only one Scripture reference is given in each instance, more could be given.

So the commandment applies to every person. Not only children who live in their parents' home, but to young and old alike, it applies; for each of us are under authority in some area of life. This explains why there are also old people on Parent-Haters Avenue.



What, now, does God require of us, to show thankfulness to Him?

First, we must *honor* our parents and authorities. This means that we must hold them in high esteem, consider them very valuable, because of the fact that through them God teaches us how rightly to live.

Second, we must *love* them faithfully. We must be committed to them, delight in their fellowship, and seek their good.

Third, we must *obey* them and *submit* to them. To obey is, of course, to do what they tell us. Simple obedience is usually not so difficult; when we disobey, it is usually not because we *cannot* do what we are told to do, but because we do not *want* to do it. But we fail to submit when we do not want to obey. To submit is to

obey willingly, from the heart. And if we do not obey, submission is shown by bearing our punishment willingly. We find it difficult to submit, in fact, impossible, by nature.

Fourth, we must bear *patiently* with their weaknesses and infirmities. That, surely, is difficult for us. We are

To be mad at our parents for making certain requirements of us; to grumble and complain as we do what we are told; to have an attitude of being superior to them; all this is hatred of them.

all tempted to think that we know better than our parents. We easily make their weaknesses to be much greater than they really are. But we honor them by bearing patiently with them.

To fail in any of these areas is to turn down Parent-Haters Avenue. To be mad at our parents for making certain requirements of us; to grumble and complain as we do what we are told; to have an attitude of being superior to them; all this is hatred of them. To do the same to our teachers or other authorities is to hate them. How many times haven't we begun to turn the corner, leaving the Way of Thankful Obedience, to walk down Parent-Haters Avenue?



What can we do, to obey this command of God? How is such obedience possible?

Of course it is God's grace alone that makes this obedience possible. God showed us this grace in Jesus Christ, who honored His authorities. He was subject to His parents (Luke 2:51). He, who was God, honored his earthly parents, who were but men! He honored the magistrate, Pilate, who sentenced Him to death! His keeping of this commandment brought Him to the cross, where He bore God's wrath for our sins, died, and rose again the third day as the victor over sin. God's grace worked in us by His Spirit gives us new life to obey. We can obey only by grace.

While God's grace alone makes such obedience possible, what will encourage us to obey *willingly*? When we remember that parents are God's gift to His young children; that believing parents are the means He uses to

teach us truth and love; that by them He prepares us for the place He has determined we should have in His church and kingdom; then we have motivation to honor our parents! When we recall that our own disobedience and dishonor manifests our sinful nature; that our rebellion against parents shows that by nature we think of ourselves as the ultimate standard, ignoring even God; and that the nature of a child is such that he needs government; then we have motivation to honor our parents!

Young people, be resolved to keep this commandment by God's grace! Begin today, if you have not been keeping it. If you have been keeping it imperfectly, seek strength to obey more faithfully.



Go to your parents right now, and thank them for all they have given you, and tell them you love them.

Tomorrow at school, tell your teachers that you appreciate them, and the ways God has used them in your life.

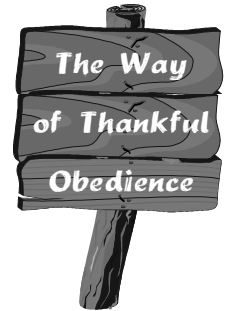
Remind others of the need to honor parents and all in authority; especially, remind that sibling or fellow classmate who thinks it funny when he responds to teacher or parents with a big mouth.

And do all these things in love for God! Thank Him also for such parents, teachers, officebearers in the

church, civil government; pray that through them He does prepare you for work in His church; and thank Him for putting you on the Way of Thankful Obedience, and keeping you on that way, or restoring you to it, when you left it. With such obedience and gratitude He is wellpleased!

The Way of Thankful Obedience is a hard and narrow way, and not many are on it. By contrast, Parent-Haters Avenue is more broad, and more are on it. But the latter leads to destruction; the former leads to life (Mt. 7:13f)! This agrees with God's promise in the fifth commandment: "that thy days may be long upon the land which the LORD thy God giveth thee." The promise does not regard our life in the USA, or Canada, or wherever we have our earthly home; it regards our spiritual life, which we have already now, and will have perfectly in heaven. To honor parents is to show we look for heaven, where we will praise and honor God forever!

Young person, which road are you walking on? ❖



Rev. Kuiper is pastor of Randolph Protestant Reformed Church in Randolph, Wisconsin.

Our Young People's Federation

Update from the Federation Board

by Trevor Kalsbeck

The hardest part about writing is that you never know where to start and how to express your thoughts. I would guess that as soon as you begin, every thing just falls into place and then it seems that you are unable to stop. Thoughts just seem to melt onto the page and feelings begin to flow and it all works together as one. Funny how that seems to be the case as President of the Fed. Board. Everything is a blur and by the time you are half way though your year things begin to blend in with one another. Our time is well spent working towards that blend and many thoughts and discus-

sions occur. The discussions and the decisions made are with utmost care. So you ask, what are we discussing and what decisions have we made?

I could sum up most of the discussion and decisions that we are having with one word, Convention. It seems like a long way off, and yet it really is right around the corner. Colorado is working really hard and sees their progress steadily increasing. This year's convention is being held at the YMCA of the Rockies in Estes Park. Everything seems to be running smoothly and orderly, and it should be a wonderful opportunity for the young

people to renew and make new connections. The convention theme is Surrounded by God, reflecting upon the idea that God is all around his people just as the mountains are visible to the conventioners. The text is taken from Psalm 125:1, 2, and the theme song will be Psalter number 354. The Fed. Board also supports Loveland's 0-tolerance stand in the rules, and also the importance of Christian Conduct at the convention.

Another important topic that is discussed in February is the nomination of new young people to the Federation Board. This seems to be getting harder and harder every year, because our young people societies are getting younger and younger. The age is down to around 18-20 years old, and then those who make confession of

faith seem to continue into young adults. This presents a problem for the Fed. Board, because this board should be made up of our young people's societies. Some of the offices that need to be filled must consist of a confessing member. We would like to see the support of the young adults who are not yet part of our federation, to lead by example for the younger societies.

Those are the two most important topics that we have to discuss and make decisions about in the next few months. Other topics consist of running the Federation Board, which is basically the business part of our meetings. We covet your prayers as we continue to work for our young people's societies. ❖

Church History

George M. Ophoff (6)

Early Years

by Prof. Herman Hanko

In the last article we attempted to describe somewhat the kind of environment into which George Ophoff was born. He was born in the city of Grand Rapids on January 25, 1891. He was born as the oldest of eight children to Frederick H. Ophoff and Yeta Hemkes Ophoff. The house in which George was born was located on Cass Ave., south of Franklin Street in the vicinity of Franklin and Grandville Ave. During the years of George's childhood, the family made a number of moves in the southeastern part of Grand Rapids, finally settling at 1126 Eastern Avenue. George's mother lived at this address until her death in the early 1950's and Rev. and Mrs. Ophoff returned here to spend some of the last years of their lives.

The family was, in many respects a typical Dutch immigrant family. They were members of the Christian Reformed Church, born in the tradition of the *Afsheiding*, people of a simple faith, godly and pious, but finding life not all that easy in the land of hope and promise. In the course of the years seven more children were born into the family, five boys and two girls, and it was not always easy to earn sufficient to feed all the hungry mouths of growing children.

Frederick Ophoff had a job downtown at the Rex Reed Furniture Factory—a factory which no longer exists. The hours were long; workdays began at 6 in the morning and extended to 5 in the afternoon. This was the time before 40-hour weeks, and 10 or 11 hour days were not relieved by a Saturday off. Men worked 6 days and rested and attended church on the Sabbath.

Not only were the days long, the work hard, and the pay meager, but also in those days most men walked to work. While streetcar transportation was available, the few pennies which a ride cost were too sorely needed in the family to be spend on public transportation. The result was that working men had to be out of bed at 4:30 or 5:00 to eat their breakfast and still have time to make the nearly hour walk to their place of work. Then, at the end of a hard day's labor, there was still the long walk home.

It is not surprising, therefore, that work consumed most of the waking hours of these men, and there was little time to spend with the family. The instruction in the home fell mainly upon the mother, and the children really did not get to know their father very well, except

for the few moments they could spend with him before an early retirement at night and on the Lord's Day.

It seems as if life in the Ophoff house was a fairly normal life, not unlike that of many other families in similar circumstances. On the one hand, it was a noisy household—as so many households are with growing broods of children. In later years George was to complain that he could not find in his house the quietness he needed to study. But on the other hand, it was a godly home. The family grew up to be extremely close knit—a closeness which was to remain throughout the lives of the children. In fact, there was an unusual closeness because one of the more difficult aspects of the break in 1924 which Rev. Ophoff endured was the grief of breaking with a family which was precious to him but did not agree with him on the matter of common grace.

Although the responsibilities for the education of the children fell mainly upon the mother, and although all the strength and energy of the father was consumed in his work, nevertheless, there was a profound realization of the importance of covenant instruction. Not only were the children given such instruction in the home, but a few pennies had to be eked out of the family finances each week to pay for Christian instruction.

George was baptized in the Franklin Street Christian Reformed Church which was located on Franklin Street a short distance west of Grandville Avenue. This church no longer is used by a Christian Reformed congregation, but the building is still standing.

When the family moved to the southeast end of town, the membership papers of the family were transferred to the Oakdale Park Christian Reformed Church. There George received the main part of his catechetical instruction; there he made confession of faith at the age of 16; and there he remained a member until the day when he became a minister of the gospel.

The Christian instruction which the children received from kindergarten through the ninth grade was in Oakdale Christian School. At that time the school was not located where it is now but was on the corner of Butler and Temple Street. The immigrants from Netherlands already at the very beginning of their history, showed a strong interest in Christian education, and they built schools almost as soon as they built their places of worship. This was due in large measure to the emphasis on the truth of God's covenant, which was characteristic of the Reformed faith in the Netherlands in general, and of the Churches of the Separation in particular. We do well to pause here a moment to consider this. Most of us

have been educated in Christian schools and now have children attending Christian schools. In fact, we, as Protestant Reformed Churches, have erected our own school system. The danger is that we become so accustomed to the privilege of having our schools that we forget that they are wonderful blessings of God's grace to use and tokens of His care and concern for us. And we forget too, that these schools were built out of the deep and abiding sense of covenant consciousness which characterized our forebears. They were often built out of great financial sacrifice. They were built because our fathers understood the importance of the truth that God gathers His people in the line of covenant generations. It is this covenant consciousness which we must, at all costs, preserve among us, for this stands as the bedrock of a solid parental school system.

Already as a child, George showed some of the traits which were to appear later in life in different contexts and with different results. Many of our readers who knew Rev. Ophoff remember well the crooked index finger on his right hand with which he could gesture so vehemently. This crooked finger was a legacy of his childhood days. While he was not one of the playground bullies who were so common in those days and who can still sometimes be found on the school grounds, and while he was not in his earlier years one who would deliberately go around provoking fights, nevertheless, he was not afraid of a good healthy brawl. Especially if he was provoked—and he was often the butt of childhood pranks and pestering—he would easily turn in anger against his tormentors and engage in a no-holds-barred fight, from which he would usually emerge the winner. And if he believed that the reason for fighting was a just cause—just according to the standards of young boys in those days—he would back down for no one and fight regardless of the odds against him. Many were the times when he incurred the wrath of his mother by coming home with torn clothes, for clothes were not easy to come by and each little boy had only one change of clothing, worn all week, washed on Saturday, and returned to the wearer in Monday morning in time for school. The crooked index finger was a lasting result of one such fight, for the finger was broken in a brawl and was never properly set. It had to heal itself, and it healed crooked. ❖

Prof. Hanko is a professor emeritus of the Protestant Reformed Seminary.

2003 YP Convention

To be held at the YMCA of the Rockies in
Estes Park, Colorado

Hosted by the
Loveland PRC Young People's Society

Main Theme: "Surrounded by God"

Theme Text: Psalm 125: 1 & 2

Theme Song: Psalter #354

Look for more information to follow
in upcoming *Beacon Lights*.

"LITTLE LIGHTS"

What Was It Like?

... let it shine!

by Connie Meyer

What was it like for Israel to be saved out of Egypt and brought through the Red Sea?

The question can come to our minds as we read this amazing and glorious story. Here were thousands of people—grandfathers and grandmothers, parents and children, brothers and sisters and babies. They stood before the Red Sea with its water reaching far and deep and wide. Behind them stormed an army led by a Pharaoh whose heart was hard with hatred beyond all reason and mercy.

The people panicked. They shook with fear. There was no way out. "Hast thou taken us away to die in the wilderness?" they cried to Moses. Children clung to their parents. Fear clutched the hearts of the bravest of men. Indeed, why would God lead them into such a terrible place?

* * * * *

Countless Egyptians were already dead. Frogs, flies, hail, and death—ten plagues in all had almost completely destroyed the nation. So how could Israel still fear? Would God show such mighty judgments in Egypt, and then lead His chosen Israel out to die? Of course not. But the Israelites couldn't read the story like we can. They were right in the middle of it. It was a very frightening thing.

But look! God Himself, in a cloud, stood between Israel and Egypt. Pharaoh couldn't touch them. The cloud was blackness to Pharaoh all night, but to Israel it was a Light to light their way across the open

dry ground through the sea. Only a miracle could save them. Only a miracle *did* save them!

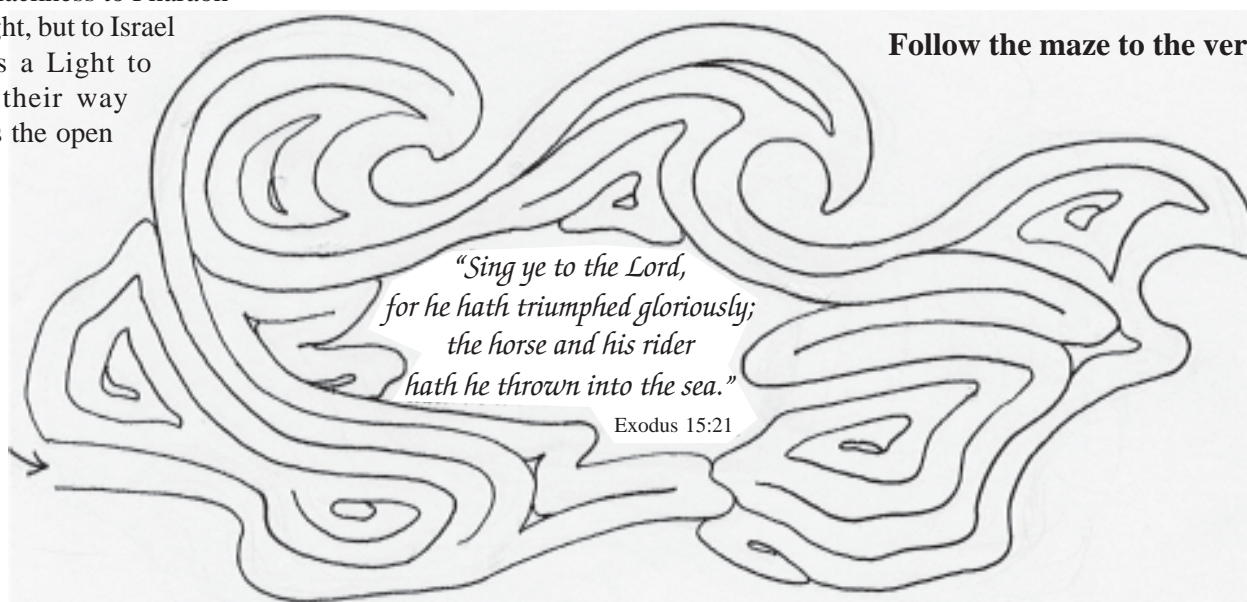
When Pharaoh could finally see where to go, he pursued them. But even as he chased the children of Israel down the dry path, the wheels of the Egyptian chariots fell off. The hearts of the evil warriors melted. "What fools they were!" we say? Yes, it was to certain destruction that they marched. The walls of water came crashing down upon them. But our own old man in the flesh is just as wicked and foolish. We know it's wrong and we do it anyway. That's Egypt all over again. But God has delivered us from that. Egypt has been crushed, ground, and drowned. Even our Egypt. Our own old man of sin.

Let us ask—what is it like for us to be saved out of the slavery of sin and brought to new and thankful obedience? Let us live as those so delivered. What a miracle!



Connie is the mother of 5 children and a member of Hope Prot-estant Reformed Church in Grand Rapids, Michigan.

Follow the maze to the verse.



*"Sing ye to the Lord,
for he hath triumphed gloriously;
the horse and his rider
hath he thrown into the sea."*

Exodus 15:21

BEACONLIGHTS

P.O. BOX 144
Randolph, WI 53956

Periodical
Postage
paid at
Jenison, MI
(UPSS046-840)

Church News

BAPTISMS

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

Mark 16:16

The sacrament of Holy Baptism was administered to:
Noah Lee, son of Mr. & Mrs. Joel Brummel—Faith, MI
Colton David, son of Mr. & Mrs. Ron Kuiper—Faith, MI
Joshua David, son of Mr. & Mrs. Michael Bosveld—
Hope, MI

Leah Corrine, daughter of Mr. & Mrs. Jon Hop—Hope,
MI

Danielle Ranae, daughter of Mr. & Mrs. Brad Brower—
Hudsonville, MI

Brandon Lee, son of Mr. & Mrs. Kevin Kooima—Hull, IA

Sable Jai, daughter of Mr. & Mrs. Phil Maas—Hull, IA

Jared William, son of Rev. & Mrs. Doug Kuiper—
Randolph, WI

Mark James, son of Mr. & Mrs. Mike Holleman—South
Holland, IL

Earl David, son of Mr. & Mrs. Earl Kamps—South
Holland, IL

Isabel Marie, daughter of Mr. & Mrs. Barry Boer—South
Holland, IL

CONFESSIONS OF FAITH

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

Romans 10:10

Public confession of faith in our Lord Jesus Christ was
made by:

Emily Griffioen—Faith, MI

Jeff Griffioen—Faith, MI

Joy Griffioen—Faith, MI

Melinda Kaptein—Faith, MI

Ryan Kooienga—Faith, MI

Leah Petroelje—Faith, MI

Stephanie VanMaanen—Faith, MI

Rich Zandstra—Hudsonville, MI

Michelle Boone—Southwest, MI

Brent Boverhof—Southwest, MI

MARRIAGES

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

Matthew 19:5

United in the bond of Holy Matrimony were:

Mr. David Vander Meulen and Miss Cassandra
Bonestroo—Doon, IA

Mr. Josh Krikke and Miss Glenda Westra—Hull, IA

Mr. Manuel Montalvo and Miss Tracy Koontz—South
Holland, IL

Mr. Justin Bultema and Miss Jodi Zandstra—South
Holland, IL

Mr. Scott Kooinga and Miss Leigh Heyboer—Southwest,
MI