
Beacon Lights

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*“Behold, what manner of love the Father
hath bestowed upon us, that we should
be called the sons of God: therefore the
world knoweth us not, because it knew
him not.”*

1 John 3:1

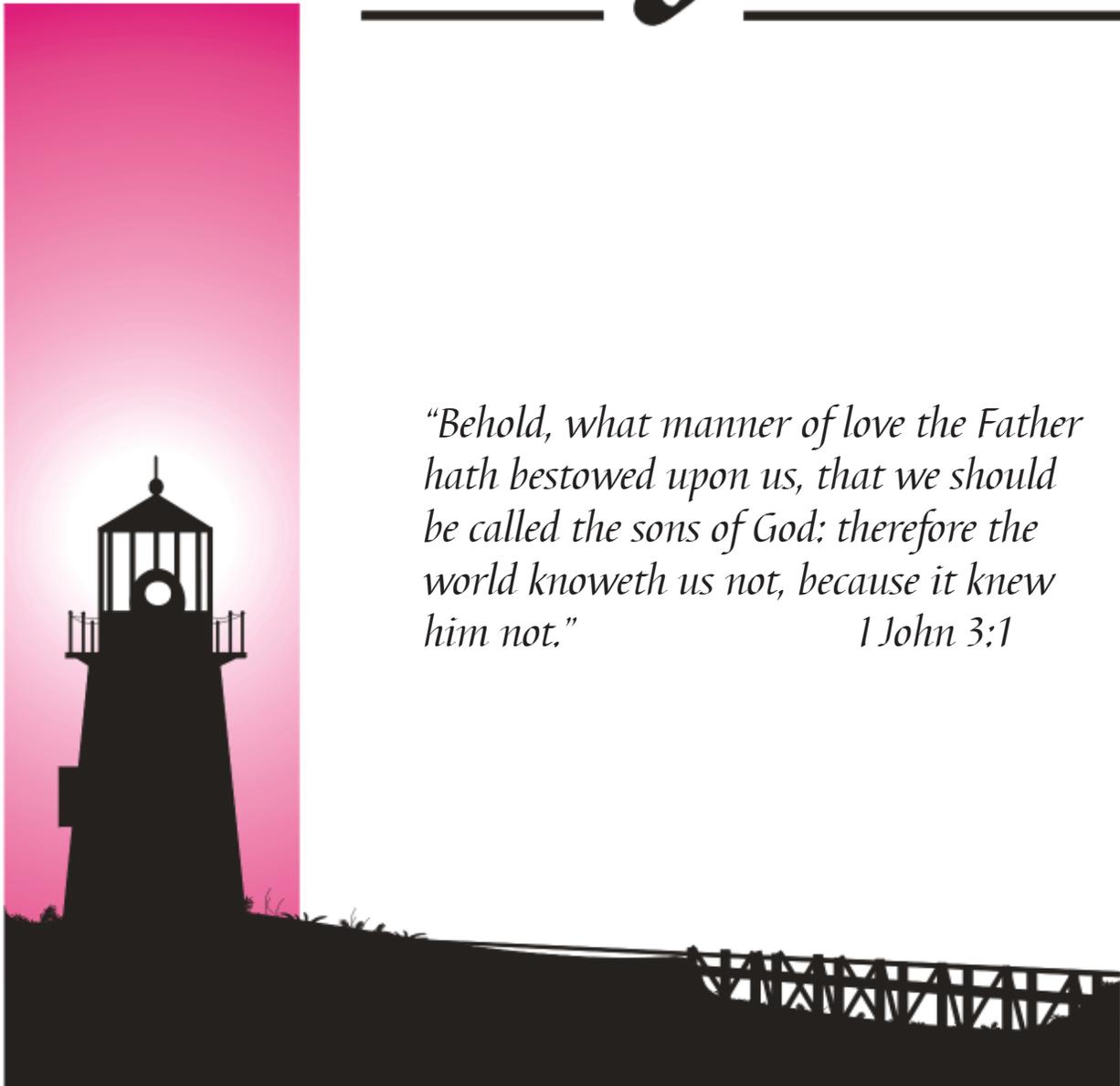


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Consider the Creation

We would like to open up a new rubric with the title “Consider the Creation.” The idea for the title comes from the words of Christ in Luke 12:27 and Matthew 6:28 where He admonishes us to “consider the lilies.” God has filled creation with things for us to consider. Some of these things God has specifically used as types and pictures of spiritual realities. These require special attention. This rubric is not limited to expounding upon these parts of creation. Everything in creation is a subject for us to consider and see the wisdom and glory of the Creator. As we consider the creation, we often find pictures that remind us of our spiritual life as well.

Our rubric “Creation Through the Spectacles of Scripture” is intended to be a bit more technical while this rubric will be more meditative. I suppose there will always be some overlap, but with so many things to write about in the creation, we would like to devote another page of Beacon Lights to this topic with a different slant. It is our prayer that the material we publish under this rubric will help you grow spiritually as you consider and meditate upon the wonders of creation. – the editor

Storms

by Deane Wassink

I still can't believe the foolishness of some people. I was watching two fishermen working their way north along the shore past the cottage where I was watching the storms roll in across Lake Michigan from the west.

The most fascinating and dangerous events of the shore is when the thunderstorms move in from the west and pound the shoreline. This was the last week of March, after an extremely cold winter. The ice had only disappeared earlier in the week. The day before I hadn't seen any boats at all on the lake. Yet, there were the two fishermen in a twenty-one foot, low silhouette bass boat trolling the shoreline about two hundred feet out, just beyond the second sandbar on the shore. They must have been after the prized brown trout that come near shore this time of year. Admittedly, they are as delicious as

fish can get when their flesh is crisp and firm from the cold winter water. Nevertheless, they are not worth dying for.

Anyone who knows Lake Michigan is aware of the danger of being caught on it when storms are coming. The shallow water, coupled with its smaller size causes the conditions to change very, very quickly. Usually people get in trouble when they are lulled into going out too far when it is quiet, and then get caught by the wild waves when the storms come up. The histories of shipwrecks on the lake cite this very reason for the problems that occurred. In many cases, lives were lost.

Storms and thundershowers were predicted all day. However, the day began with an east wind so that the edge of the lake was totally calm below the dunes. In the couple of hours I was watching, the wind increased speed

and turned to the southwest, causing the waves to rise to three or four feet. The waves were coming in with brown coloring underneath because of the sand they were carrying after pounding the outer sandbar. The tops were gray and green covered with white froth as they broke on the shore. It was too early in the season for the coastguard to post warnings. However the conditions were obvious. Visibility was down to a half mile because of the fog and mist. At times, it was possible to see the thunderheads and lightning in the distance.

An hour later the boat went past heading back to the south. It was being pounded by the waves. At times you couldn't see below the gunwales. At other times, it was airborne. The two fishermen were hunched over and wrapped in raingear. The waves were breaking over them. They had to shield their eyes from the rain. I can think of a lot more fun things to do than to be pounded by near freezing water and wondering if I would have to beach the boat in order to get to safety. I hoped they would make it home.

In contrast to the danger for humans, the plants and animals of the shore are adapted to the storms. The animals move inland and seek shelter. Seagulls ride the air currents pushed upwards by the cliffs on outstretched wings looking at the flotsam, hoping that some tidbits would be washed ashore. The trees are usually short and bent from the wind. Pines are twisted into fantastic shapes. The deciduous trees are usually fine until they get to be taller. Then, they often have their branches broken or tops destroyed. If they continue to stand tall, at some point, they flop over when their leaves catch the wind like a sail. Of course, most plants just won't grow in a spot where they can't survive. I find it very interesting that plants and animals have more "sense" than man when it comes to danger.

I've known people like the fishermen who are just as foolish when it comes to temptation. O, they might confess that they are Christians. But, they are willing to endanger themselves spiritually by playing with temptation. They ignore the warnings of their family, friends and church. They pursue their sinful appetites and thrills thinking that they will be safe, that they will be strong. The storms come up and the waves of sin encompass them, and they flounder. Our Lord prayed, "Lead us not into temptation." The only safe place, the place of protection, is in the sovereign care of our Lord. His grace protects us from the storms of life. The means He uses are our godly family and friends, who, with a faithful church where the Word is preached, support and guide

us. Yes, they also help rescue us when we fall into sin. How foolish are those so called Christians who think they can go it alone without joining themselves to a local congregation, which is where Christ dwells. Christ is the only hope we have of weathering the storms of life that will surely come.

The Plea of the Wayward Son

*Pounded by waves,
Rocked by the wind,
My heart danger craves,
I know I have sinned.*

*Lord, save me from harm,
Ere the waves engulf me,
Thinking I had a life of charm,
Now I perish in the sea.*

*From Your presence I have fled,
Now on Your grace I plea;
My only hope is in the One Who bled,
Who died for a foolish sinner like me.*

*Keep me safe with friends and kin.
Speak to me on Sunday morn.
Help me know Your love again.
Cause my faith to be reborn.*

*Make me contented in Your will,
To find fulfillment among my brothers.
Keep me from chasing a cheap thrill,
Help me speak Your grace to others.*

*Protected I'll have peaceful sleep,
When on my pillow my head does rest.
In His shadow the Lord will keep,
When storms oft' my faith do test. ❖*

*Deane is a member of First Protestant Reformed Church
in Holland, Michigan.*

What Makes Right and Wrong?

by Rev. James Laning

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. 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:

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1550 Ferndale S.W.

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Question of Michael Vermeer

My philosophy professor in college has often asked the question "What makes a right (wrong) thing right (wrong)?" In attempting to answer this question, he has brought up several theories, one of which is called the Divine Command Theory. According to this theory, God makes something right or wrong by saying it is right or wrong on Mt. Sinai. This obviously cannot be the case, though, since Cain killed Abel before the Ten Commandments were given, and obviously knew it was wrong when he did it. How do we show from the Genesis account of creation that God instituted the Ten Commandments from the creation of man, and that even the wicked, who weren't at Mt. Sinai, are commanded to obey these commandments?

Response

You ask some interesting questions, and it is very important that we have a good understanding of how Scripture answers them. Your questions have to do with whether God has always demanded that every human

being keep His law. Was this demanded of man before the ten commandments were given, and is this still demanded of every human being today? Let us consider what Scripture and our Reformed Confessions say about this.

First of all, it is important to point out that God makes Himself known not only by His Word, but also by His works. By the works of God even a person who has never heard God's Word in Scripture comes to know what God requires of him. In the Belgic Confession we read that God makes Himself known by two means: first, by the creation, preservation and government of the universe, and second, by His Word in Scripture.

Even those who have never heard the Word of God in Scripture, have heard what God has made known to them by the creation, preservation, and government of the universe. This article goes on to state that this first means of making God known is "sufficient to convince men, and leave them without excuse." This means that God, through these works, has made known that He is, and that He requires man to love Him and his neighbor. This is sufficient to convince men, and to leave them with no excuse for disobeying God's law.

The first few chapters of Romans deal with this subject. In the first chapter, God says that even the unbeliever, who has never read or heard the words of Scripture, knows from the creation, preservation and government of the universe, that there is a God and that He will punish all those who violate His law. In Romans 1:29-32, we read that an unbeliever who has never heard the Word of God in Scripture knows that hating God, disobeying his parents, committing murder, fornication, deceit, etc., are evil, and that God will punish those who do these things.

There is also something that God does inside a man, so that he knows what God demands of him. Though it is true that only the believer has the law of God written in his heart, the unbeliever does have "the work of the law" written in his heart (Romans 2:15). This means that

he has within him some knowledge of what God's law requires, and that his conscience bears witness to this. That it is wrong to steal, for example, he knows, even if he has never heard the Word of God in Scripture. Romans 2:15 says that he shows that he knows this when he accuses others of doing something wrong, when they steal from him, try to hurt him, or lie to him, etc, and when he tries to find an excuse for himself, when he has done the same thing.

A lot more, of course, could be said about this. But these references are sufficient to prove that those who

lived before the ten commandments were written, and those today who have not heard the truth of Scripture, know what they are commanded to do and what they are forbidden to do. They know, in other words, that there is a God, and that they are commanded to love Him and their neighbor.

If this does not fully answer your question, please write again, and I will include a follow-up answer next time. ❖

Letters to the Editor

Weighty Problem Response

by Joe Van Baren

After reading the article "Slim Possibility of Overcoming a Weighty Problem" I felt compelled to write a response. I am thankful for the people who write articles for the *Beacon Lights* and the staff for oversight of this publication. I do not want to discourage this author or anyone else from submitting articles.

For the past forty-five years I have sat at various places on the overweight chart. Sometimes in the "slightly" category, sometimes in the "moderate," and sometimes in what the American Heart Association calls obese. For several days during those forty-five years I was right where I should be. Let me state up front that I am the first who should take heed to what I will say in this response.

Overeating, usually resulting in being overweight, is sinful. The sin is gluttony. The Bible speaks plainly of this: Proverbs 23:21 reads, "For the drunkard and the glutton shall come to poverty." Also I Peter 4:3: "For the time past of our life may suffice us to have wrought the will of the Gentiles, when we walked in lasciviousness, lusts, excess of wine, revelings, banquetings, and abominable idolatries." There are many reasons people overeat. They are happy. They are sad. They are depressed. They just enjoy the taste of good food and can't get enough of it. They have done so well in battling this spiritual problem that they deserve a reward which means

taking a break for a while or indulging. These are all excuses that are used for this sin. They are commandment breakers (no other gods, improper care of the body, lust for food).

The statements about "psychological problems" and "low metabolism" are excuses also. There is spiritual and medical help if these problems truly do exist.

For the individual who is very overweight, "contentment" is not the answer. Contentment will not prevent more weight from coming on. Contentment will not take away the physical or medical problems which an overweight person experiences. Contentment for those who were born with a physical or mental disability with no possibility of change is a must. Being content in the sinful state of obesity is wrong and should be handled with repentance and change.

The overweight person, young or old, should be treated with compassion by those around them. A heavy person's besetting sin literally hangs where everyone can see it. Just because someone is overweight does not mean they never do battle with this sin and bring it to the Lord in prayer. Sometimes we unmercifully pick on and tease "fat" individuals, especially children, and make their lives miserable. Everyone has their own battles with particular sins. Because obesity is such a visible thing it is in-

excusable to single out those burdened with it and treat them unkindly for it.

Something must be said to parents and grandparents regarding their children being overweight. We must make sure our bad eating habits and lack of temperance do not pave the way for our children to be obese. Almost everything they eat has been made available for them by their parents. We are to train them properly in this area also.

Many times those who battle gluttony and gluttonous ways look to the newest way to curb this problem.

Shots, pills, clinics, support groups, combination eating, no carbohydrates, or high amounts of carbohydrates are just some of the many ways people use to overcome this spiritual problem. While some of these ways may be used to assist with weight loss, the solution is repentance and turning to God in daily prayer to be delivered from the temptation to overeat. Temperance is one of the fruits of the Spirit. Pray for temperance when Satan tempts us to overindulge. We can do all things through Christ who strengthens us. ❖

Dear Editor:

Just a little remark on the article by Rita De Jong, entitled a Response to “Slim possibility of overcoming a Weighty Problem.” First of all it was a nice article. But I have just a little problem with it, and the problem is the part when she speaks of being proud that we no longer draw attention to ourselves because of our weight. I realize we so easily say I am proud of you, forgetting that there is no such thing as good pride. If we could rid ourselves of pride, what a load of trouble and trials would be taken away.

If we were shed of pride, a multitude of problems would disappear, problems in marriage, problems in regard to our fellow saints, etc.

I grow bold to say that I believe all sin can be traced back to pride. Oh, that we were by God’s grace able to say we have conquered this sin, what a joy that would be, what a load of trouble we might have been spared. But thanks be to God that He causes all things to work for our good. For He shows us our every weakness and through it shows what a marvelous love He has for us, that He even forgives these grievous sins. Oh what a joy will be ours when we see Jesus and these sins too will be wiped away, by His redeeming blood.

Your brother in the Lord,
Fred Ondersma

This letter is in regards to the response of Rita De Jong to my article, “Slim Possibility of Overcoming a Weighty Problem.”

She states that gluttony and obesity are sinful conditions. I fully agree, that gluttony is sinful. However, I do not think that being obese is necessarily sinful.

Some people can eat almost twice as much as others and not gain weight. These people might think everyone that is obese is a glutton. This is not so! This is where the problem arises for those with a low metabolism. It is almost impossible to stay on such a low calorie diet. These people might have to be content with their weight and not make it such a big priority in their lives.

She states that we should be 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 fear of prejudice in their hearts (this would be their problem, not mine) and share the good news of salvation with them. I think thankful would be a better word than proud. Proverbs 16:5 says: “Everyone that is proud in heart is an abomination to the Lord: though hand join in hand, he shall not be unpunished.”

Gloria Doezema

Windows of Heaven

by John Huizenga

Ever since the sun was created, it has been spewing forth a violent cocktail of energy. The energy expands outward through space like the ripples from a stone cast into a quiet pond. The ripples, however, could better be likened to a storm tossed sea, rather than a quiet pond. The sun would be more like a stone that is vibrating violently sending forth a spray of mist and tidal waves than the one-time “kerplunk” of a pebble. These waves of energy are powerful and destructive to the fragile life God has placed on earth, but the energy is also very necessary for life. God has designed the atmosphere to stand between the sun and His creatures as a shield and also a carefully crafted window that lets in exactly what we need.

The energy from the sun originates from the atoms within the sun. It is like a nuclear bomb exploding continuously. When a piece of coal burns, the molecules are simply broken and the energy that was at one time absorbed by a plant is released again. In a nuclear reaction, the atoms themselves are broken and changed to another kind of atom. Atoms are held together with a tremendous amount of energy, and some of this is released when the atoms break down. This energy is then carried away from the sun in the form of waves. The waves of energy that erupt from the sun race outward into the cold void of outer space forever until they slam into other atoms and are converted to other energy forms such as heat, light, or motion.

The living creatures on this earth need energy in order to live and move and do the things for which they were created. Only one particular kind of creature is able to take in the waves of solar energy and convert them into the energy we need for life. God has designed the plants so that they are able to use the energy from the sun to build sugar and other molecules that store energy. We call the process “photosynthesis.” The plant brings water and carbon dioxide together, and energy from the sun snaps them together into chains. The process could roughly be compared to setting up dominoes in a line or setting mouse traps. In either process, energy is applied and stored until a situation comes about that releases the energy for another purpose.

The living creatures that move about the earth then eat these plants. They have been given a digestive system that is able to break apart these plant molecules and release the stored energy for use in their bodies. The waves of energy from the sun finally move my fingers to type these words and push the blood through your body so that you can live and praise the Creator of it all.

Life on earth is dependent upon the waves of energy that constantly radiate from the sun, but the majority of this energy is lethal. Only waves of a certain length are safe. If you picture in your mind waves of water, the length of a wave is the distance from one crest to the next. The shortest waves of energy from the sun measure as short as 10 trillionths of a meter from crest to crest. These waves are called “gamma rays.” They are extremely energetic and dangerous. The energy is able to penetrate through the soft tissues of living things, break apart the molecules in cells, and destroy them. Waves a little bit longer are called X-rays. These also are powerful and are able to pass through our bodies. Wavelengths a little longer than x-rays are called “ultraviolet.” These waves do not penetrate as deeply, but quickly burn the surface of our skin.

Waves with a length in the range of four to seven hundredths of a millimeter are safe for living creatures, and are in fact necessary for life. These are the waves that we call “visible light.” Plants use this energy to make food and our eyes are designed to detect this energy as the waves bounce off things around us. Infrared waves beyond visible light have lengths up to one millimeter long. Wavelengths from one millimeter to 30 centimeters are microwaves, and wavelengths ranging from one meter to 10,000 kilometers are radio waves.

The earth is constantly bombarded with energy that would quickly destroy life but the atmosphere acts as a mighty shield to block and reflect it. The atoms of gas and molecules that make up the atmosphere are of such a size that they interact with the energy, absorbing some and scattering the rest. The most energetic and dangerous energy is blocked between 10 and 50 miles above the surface of the earth.

The gas molecules and particles in the atmosphere are just the right size, however, to let visible light, and

only visible light, straight through with minimal scattering or reflecting. This is an amazing wonder of the atmosphere. Only a slight amount of ultraviolet light squeezes through to bring some sunburn, but the rest of the dangerous waves are blocked. The infrared waves penetrate most of the way through the atmosphere and reaches the tops of some of the tall mountains, but are blocked for most areas of the earth. Only when the wavelengths reach the radio waves and some of the micro-waves do they once again pass completely through the atmosphere.

Through the natural eyes of man, this fact about the atmosphere is seen merely as a stroke of luck for living creatures. Man may attempt to explain the phenomenon in terms of evolution saying that if the atmosphere were different, then other life forms may have evolved. Perhaps they think that the only creatures that survived were those that could use energy within the range of visible light that happened to reach the surface of the earth.

Looking through the spectacles of Scripture we see the amazing wisdom of God who designed everything to work together for the creatures that He made for His own glory. The order in which God created things also follows the basic pattern for life. God reveals to us that one of His first acts of creation was the creation of light. He first provided the energy, and energy in abundance, for the life that would serve and give Him glory. He then created plants that would directly use that energy and provide energy for the other creatures.

When we look at the atmosphere through the spectacles of Scripture, we do not see much concerning the atmosphere as a shield from the powerful waves of the sun or letting only select portions of that energy through. God does, however, speak of the atmosphere as a firmament to divide and separate what is on earth and what is above (Genesis 1:7, 14; Psalm 148:4). He also describes the firmament as having windows. These windows allow that which the firmament holds up to pour through upon the earth. Sometime God opens these windows in judgment. Genesis 7 says that the windows of heaven were opened to release floodwaters upon the earth. Isaiah 24:18 also speaks of the windows being opened in judgment. "And it shall come to pass, that he who fleeth from the noise of the fear shall fall into the pit; and he that cometh up out of the midst of the pit shall be taken in the snare: for the windows from on high are open, and the foundations of the earth do shake."

In other places, God speaks of these windows in terms of bounty and blessings. In Malachi 3:10 we read, "Bring ye all the tithes into the storehouse, that there

may be meat in mine house, and prove me now herewith, saith the Lord of hosts, if I will not open you the windows of heaven, and pour you out a blessing, that there shall not be room enough to receive it." When Elisha prophesied that the besieged city of Samaria would soon have plenty to eat, "a lord on whose hand the king leaned answered the man of God, and said, Behold, if the Lord would make windows in heaven, might this thing be? And he said, Behold, thou shalt see it with thine eyes, but shalt not eat thereof" (II Kings 7:2).

One thing that these passages make clear is the fact that God is the one who controls these windows of heaven. God is the one who so governs the atmosphere that it also provides what He wills for the earth. The prophets Isaiah, Ezekiel, and Joel all speak of the sun being darkened in judgment. In Revelation 16:8 we read, "And the fourth angel poured out his vial upon the sun; and power was given unto him to scorch men with fire." Whether God uses the atmosphere to control the power of the sun or not, the point we need to remember is that God will no longer provide the right amount of solar energy and life will be destroyed in judgment.

When we look at the shielding properties of the atmosphere through the spectacles of Scripture, we often see that light and the sun are pictures of Christ. We read in John 8:12 "Then spake Jesus again unto them, saying, I am the light of the world: he that followeth me shall not walk in darkness, but shall have the light of life." Just as light in the form of energy from the sun is essential for physical life, so the glory and truth of God in Christ is essential for spiritual life.

We read in Psalm 84:11 that Jehovah God "is a sun and shield." Like the sun, God is too glorious and holy for man to behold and live. Rev. Herman Hoeksema writes concerning this passage, "For He is a sun! And the sun blesses us and radiates glory and beauty upon us if we stand in the right relation to its light; but it can also scorch and burn and destroy by its unbearable heat. And thus it is with Jehovah our God." (*The Standard Bearer*, vol. 4, pp. 25-27) It is only in Christ that we stand in the right relation to the glorious light of our God. Here we see that Christ is in a certain way like the atmosphere. He stands between the holy God and His creatures to bring them the grace of God in such a way that they can begin in this life to enjoy eternal life with God. ❖

John is a member of Randolph Protestant Reformed Church in Randolph, Wisconsin and the Editor of Beacon Lights.

Professor Russell Dykstra

edited by Kris Moelker

Professor Russell Dykstra was born on March 10, 1954, in Grand Rapids, Michigan. He is the son of Arnold and Donna Dykstra who are members of Hope Protestant Reformed Church in Grand Rapids, Michigan.

Growing up in the Grand Rapids area near Hope Church, Prof. Dykstra attended Hope Protestant Reformed Christian School and Covenant Christian High School. Then he went to Grand Valley State College in Allendale, Michigan.

While he was growing up, Prof. Dykstra's hobbies included the ordinary things boys do—baseball, football, and basketball. Indoor activities included playing chess, and especially reading books. He has always had a love for reading. Reading is still his main hobby, though he and his wife enjoy inline skating and biking for exercise.

During his teenage years, the peer pressure Prof. Dykstra experienced was mostly in the area of entertainment and dress. Rock music was already popular in the years he was in high school, and anyone who objected to it would be considered strange. Then, as now, covenant young people tended to follow the standards of the world's dress, which was not always good.

For the rest, he did not have much pressure to attend movies or to drink. The friends he had were not interested in that.

There was also good and positive influence from other youth in the Protestant Reformed Churches. He had good examples in the young people's society and high school—covenant youths who lived godly lives and showed interest in spiritual things. Perhaps that is indicated by the fact that out of Covenant Christian's class of 1972 there are many who are teaching in our schools (at least seven) or are in the ministry of the gospel (three). It was not just that class. Today Prof. Dykstra sees strong homes established by many in his age group. He says that peer pressure is significant for teens today, so it is

important to have friends that encourage us to do what is right.

Prof. Dykstra married his high school sweetheart, Carol Looyenga, a member of First Protestant Reformed Church. They met in his first year of high school and married in 1973. The Lord has blessed him with a faithful wife who stood with him and assisted him through many phases of life and changes in vocation. God also blessed their marriage with five daughters and four sons. The oldest four are married. The oldest two daughters live in Iowa and Indiana, respectively; the rest live in the Grand Rapids area. The youngest is ten years old. God has also given them seven grandchildren.

In general, God prepared Prof. Dykstra for the ministry through the solid, Christian and Reformed upbringing that he received in the home, as well as the instruction he received in the schools and in church. The blessings of covenantal rearing are cause for thanksgiving for his wife and him personally, as well as for their children and grandchildren.

More specifically, God prepared Prof. Dykstra by bringing him first into the calling of a Christian school teacher. For most of his life he had wanted to teach, and that desire was realized when he graduated from college and was offered the position of teacher/administrator in the brand new Protestant Reformed school in Hull, Iowa. Teaching three grades gave a new meaning to hard work for him. He learned much about teaching, and virtually every aspect of the ministry involves teaching. Little did he know that it was preparation also for teaching one day in the seminary. Working with parents, teachers and covenant children in that setting was also very beneficial for learning to work with the saints in a congregation. Moving away from his family's home area and getting to know saints in a completely different area was good for his family as well. They learned that they would always be able to enjoy the communion of saints no matter where God would send them.

Then, in the providence of God, certain troubles arose in the church while he was teaching which caused him to focus on the minister and his work. Through it, God impressed upon him certain truths about the ministry. First, he saw the importance of the ministry of the gospel for God's people. When there are problems involving the minister or the preaching, the whole congregation is in turmoil, and the church suffers. Secondly, he perceived that a faithful minister must be grounded in the Reformed faith and be willing to stand for it, even if it means persecution. Thirdly, he saw that a minister must demonstrate that he loves God's people. When Prof. Dykstra's family and peers learned of his desire to enter the seminary, their reaction was overwhelmingly positive. When he made the decision to seek the office of the minister, he faced two years of college and four years of seminary, and he had four children. There were a few who questioned his conviction that he must pursue this high calling, but most encouraged him and financially helped him and his family much over the six years.

When asked about his memories of his years in seminary, Prof. Dykstra remembers two things distinctly; first, the lack of sleep. He learned to work on four hours of sleep per night on average. He recalls once that he was *standing* in the kitchen having a conversation with his wife when he fell asleep, and dropped the cup of tea he had been holding.

The second memorable thing about seminary was the excellent camaraderie among the students. He had six years of classes (counting pre-seminary and seminary) with (now) Revs. Key and Terpstra. Rev. Jai Mahtani joined them from Singapore in the last three years. They enjoyed excellent harmony with each other, and for that matter, with the professors as well.

In 1986, Prof. Dykstra was ordained and became the pastor of Doon Protestant Reformed Church for over nine years. Then in 1995, the Lord sent him to Hope Protestant Reformed Church in Grand Rapids, Michigan where he labored for less than a year. He has served as a professor in the seminary since 1996.

Teaching catechism is one of the most enjoyable things for Prof. Dykstra. It is a great privilege to instruct covenant children. He enjoyed teaching in the Christian school, and he continued to love teaching covenant youth in catechism.

As a minister witnessing the life of the church, Prof. Dykstra says the cause for the greatest gratitude is that God has maintained His truth in the Protestant Reformed Churches, even while He gives us the desire and opportunity to preach the gospel on the mission fields and to set forth the truth in discussions with other denominations. He sees the unity of commitment to the truth among the ministers who maintain that which they have learned in the seminary, but they also keep developing through solid study of Scripture. This unity is virtually unknown outside the Protestant Reformed Churches.

Regarding the controversies that we have faced as churches, Prof. Dykstra says that controversies are never pleasant. Most of the controversies he has witnessed have involved matters that really should not have been elevated to the level of bitter disagreement, or those centered on particular persons, usually ministers, or activities.

For men considering the ministry of the Word to be their calling, Prof. Dykstra has these questions:

a. Do you know and love God in Christ? A minister is a slave of Christ. He must love Him.



b. Do you believe and love the truth? It is not enough to know it; a minister must love the truth of God so much that he is willing to lose all things for the sake of the truth.

c. Do you know and love the Protestant Reformed Churches? The call to the ministry is not some general, ambiguous desire. Christ calls a man to serve His church. In our case, He calls a man to serve the Protestant Reformed Churches.

d. Do you love God's people? A minister is a shepherd of a flock of Christ. A shepherd must love his sheep.

If these things are not found in a man, he cannot serve as a minister of Jesus Christ in the Protestant Reformed Churches.

Concerning changes in the thinking, attitudes, and behavior of the young people, Prof. Dykstra's major desire for the young people is the same that he has for all members of the Church of Christ, namely, that they live their confession. Our young people know the truth. They make beautiful confessions of the truth in society, catechism, school, discussion groups at convention and even in discussions with others at work. But sometimes it seems that we consider religion to be a compartment of our lives. It is almost as if religion is like a valuable treasure under lock and key, but taken out of a cupboard when it is time to talk religion, and put away again when we turn to another area of life. Prof. Dykstra has seen concrete incidents of this at conventions where certain youths talked very knowledgably about the Bible's teaching on a doctrine or aspect of the believer's walk, only to be caught with the most profane and godless music CDs in their room that night. That saddens him beyond words. We must live as God's covenant people every day, all day, and in all activities.

There is much that encourages Prof. Dykstra about our young people in every way. He sees what he considers to be genuine interest in the Reformed faith as well as the history of the church. In the face of tremendous pressure and great temptation directed specifically against covenant youth, he sees the struggle to live faithful to God and His Word. He does not see this in all, nor is anyone immune to the temptations. Everybody can and does fall into sin, but he sees a commitment to the truth that is neither superficial nor pietistic. ❖

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

CLAY

*Does clay to potter speak:
Why is this form for me?
Can earthen lump or muddy clump
Control its destiny?
The artist's skill must be
The sole authority.*

*Why, man, do you to Him
Who molds your life, so speak?
Dissatisfied arid filled with pride,
Not Him, but self you seek.
Obedience to His law
Requires a spirit meek.*

*Lord, take away my pride;
Fill with humility.
Kill earthly lust, grant spirit just,
That I may yearn to be
A vessel formed for Thee.*

Thelma Westra

Watching Daily At My Gates

by Chester Hunter

June 1 Read Psalm 21; Lord's Day 46 Q & A 121

After confessing that God is our father, we then quickly acknowledge that He is not an earthly father with an earthly father's weaknesses. Our father is in heaven! By making this confession we must remove from our minds any earthly conception of God as father. God is almighty, and by His almighty power He can take care of all of our needs for both body and soul. This concept of a heavenly father means that we must acknowledge the majesty of God in our prayers. This should not prevent us from praying, but rather must encourage us to pray to our Father in heaven. Let us in our prayers today in God's house glorify our Heavenly Father and ask Him for all things necessary for both body and soul for today and the rest of this week. Sing Psalter 45:1, 2 and 4.

June 2 Read Psalm 145; Lord's Day 47 Q & A 122

Notice the similarity to this petition of the Lord's Prayer and the third commandment. We must pray for the grace to make our Heavenly Father's name holy. We cannot do this of ourselves. We must ask for the grace to do this in Christ's name. It is important to do this. If we do not, then all of our petitions are in vain. The way we use God's name will direct all of our actions in this life. To make light of God's name will make our prayers light and useless. Let us pray this petition, and in our prayers, and in our lives, let us hallow the name of God. Sing Psalter 352.

June 3 Read I Cor. 15:20-28; Lord's Day 48 Q & A 123

After acknowledging a heavenly father and asking that we may hallow His name, we are taught by Christ to seek a heavenly kingdom. This is difficult in our flesh. We like this earth and the things of this earth. We must pray that our attention be drawn to a heavenly kingdom. When we pray "Thy kingdom come," we may be asking that persecution come upon us as God has told us in His words about the last times. These words have much meaning in them, and when we pray them, we must see what this really means in our lives. Those of you who have recently made confession of faith, do you see what your confessions mean in the light of this petition? Those of you who have graduated, do you understand that praying this petition means that *your* plans may not be God's plans in the light of this petition? Let us pray this petition in the confidence that our Heavenly Father will bring about this petition in the light of what is good for us. Sing Psalter 200.

June 4 Read Eph. 4:1-10; Lord's Day 49 Q & A 124

This petition continues the thoughts of the last one. Our wills must always be in subservience to God's. We may think this is so, but do we always act like it? Young people, are you willing to confess this and live it as you work out your way in life? Do you let the "fun" of this world push out the rightness of God's will in your lives? Older people of God, do we ignore what is God's will and impose our wills upon His because we think that that is the best for us? We must be satisfied with the place God has placed us in this life and carry out His will each and every day. Sing Psalter 282.

June 5 Read Matt. 6:25-34; Lord's Day 50 Q & A 125

How many times do we mumble a prayer at meal time and then eat without thinking about for what we prayed? Have mealtime prayers become so routine that we just murmur a few words and then begin eating? Do we not pray in a public place? If we do any of these things we do not pray this petition. We are called to pray daily for our bread. Even though we think this trite, it is necessary to acknowledge that each morsel of our food comes from the hand of our Heavenly Father. Secondly we must pray only for the necessities of life. And not only must we only pray for necessities, but we must also be content with necessities. In our luxurious lifestyles we often times forget what a necessity is. Finally we must trust that God will give us what we need each and every day of our lives. The animals can do this, can we? Sing Psalter 286:1, 2 and 6.

June 6 Read Psalm 32; Lord's Day 51 Q & A 126

After praying for our food we must remember about our souls. This does not mean that physical is more important than spiritual, but rather that with the strength of physical food we must concern ourselves with our spiritual lives. We must remember that we must pray for our sins in each and every prayer. To do otherwise will leave us with prayers that are self-centered and will be self-righteous. We must confess that we are sinners. We must ask for forgiveness from those sins. This we can do because our Heavenly Father is merciful. Then we must remember our neighbors. We must forgive them, not get even with them for the sins they have committed against us. Children and young people, can you do this? Do you do this? Let us be forgiving even as our Heavenly Father is forgiving toward us. Sing Psalter 83.

June 7 Read I Peter 5:1-11; Lord's Day 52 Q & A 127

After praying for forgiveness we plead with God to not lead us into Satan's clutches. Sometimes in our weaknesses we fall into Satan's power. Of course this is only done by God's permission. We must ask for deliverance and we must do this daily since we are very weak. Secondly we know that God uses Satan to try our faith. For this we must not ask to escape, but rather we must ask that we are sustained by His hand through these trials. For this we can and must ask. There are many temptations in this wicked life. Let us ask for grace not to fall into them and into Satan's power. This we can do because our God is mighty and will give to us the victory both in this life and in the life to come. Sing Psalter 362.

June 8 Read Phil. 4:10-20; Lord's Day 52 Q & A 128

In these words we find the reasons that we can appear before God's throne of grace and make these requests. We can because our God has the kingdom, and is powerful and most glorious. By doing this we see that the ability to pray lies not within us but rather within our heavenly Father. Let us go to His throne of grace often. Let us pray with confidence that He will hear us. Sing Psalter 403.

June 9 Read Psalm 61; Lord's Day 52 Q & A 129

Do we know what the word "Amen" really means? Do we understand that when we say Amen that it must be with assurance that we pray each and every time. Lest that make us hesitant to pray we can know that God has given and will give to us the grace to pray each and every day. In our weaknesses we may be hesitant to pray, but in the strength given to us by God we can and must pray. Even the youngest of our children who can talk can pray. Our oldest saints can feel the comfort found in prayer. Let us pray in confidence that God will give to us the desire of our hearts which we pray for in accordance with His will. Let us know that it shall surely and certainly be! Sing Psalter 434.

June 10 Read John 1:1-5

In this gospel we have the revelation of Jesus Christ both to His people when He lived on this earth and to us the church today. It is a beautiful gospel as it speaks to us the good news of the way of our salvation. In these first words we have the truth of the creation expressed. Christ was not a patchwork for man's sin. Christ was there as the Word spoken at creation. When some men's scissors cut out Genesis 1 and 2 they must also remove John 1. In doing so they remove God's way of salvation for His people. Let us never fall victim to this fallacy, but let us always remember the Word which made the heavens, the earth, and all they contain. In doing this we will understand our salvation and will always be thankful for it. Sing Psalter 86.

June 11 Read John 1:6-14

It does not take the apostle long to get from creation to salvation. In doing so he also expresses the antithesis that is found in this world. The world of unbelief did not and does not acknowledge the true light of this world because they walk

in darkness. We must walk as the true Light directs us. We also see that election is not of our works but rather by the will of God. What a multitude of truths are found in these few verses. Reread verse 14 now. Is it not glorious to us who wallow in sin? Let us behold the glory of the Son as He was sent to us by the Father. Let us be thankful for the only begotten Son of God. Sing Psalter 71:1, 3 and 5.

June 12 Read John 1:15-28

How many of us could do what John the Baptist did? Could we do a lot of hard work preparing for someone's arrival to our house and then bow gracefully out of the scene? This is what John did. Why did he do it? First of all, of course, because he was called by God for this office. Secondly, because he felt in his heart that calling. Finally, because he knew that this was the way of salvation for him and all of God's people. Reread some of the things he says about Jesus. In this way we can understand what Jesus really means for us. In order to taste of the grace and truth that He has purchased for us we must understand that He is truly grace and truth. Then we can walk humbly before Him and do His will. Sing Psalter 65.

June 13 Read John 1:29-34

Behold the Lamb of God! People of God do these words ring out for you? Young people, do you listen for these words whenever you hear the Bible read or you hear a sermon? This is what we must do to taste more fully of the blessedness of the salvation wrought by Christ. John's announcement was not only for the Jews of his day, but it was also for us the church of the new dispensation. Let us hear those words and embrace them fully with a believing heart. Let us know that the only Lamb of God is the Son of God who redeemed us from our sins. Sing Psalter 391.

June 14 Read John 1:35-42

People of God, do we care about our brothers so much that we bring them to Christ? Oh, we might think this easy when our brother has been attending church with us all of our lives and confesses the same faith we do. But what about when our brother strays from the truth? What about when our brother does not know the truth as we do? Are we like Andrew who found his impetuous brother and brought him to Jesus? This is an awesome responsibility in our lives. We must do this. This is the calling of God's people in all ages. Let us make sure that we bring our brothers to Christ. In this way we will "Work out our own salvation with fear and trembling." Sing Psalter 84.

June 15 Read John 1:43-51

On this Sabbath Day is it said of us that we are true Israelites in whom there is no guile? Are we like Nathaniel in this way? Was our worship guileless in this day-The Lord's Day? Do we begrudge the fact that we had to spend this beautiful summer day away from our earthly pleasures? To worship God as He has called us is being an "Israelite in whom there is no guile." Nathaniel needed to know of Jesus' powers to confess Him as the Son of God. We have His Word in front of

us. Do we believe it and believe that Jesus is the Son of God and live lives with that in mind? Let us take time today to consider what it means to be a “Israelite in whom there is no guile.” Then let us ask for the grace to do that. Sing Psalter 30.

June 16 Read John 2:1-11

June is often considered the wedding month. As we attend weddings do we consider Jesus’ attending the wedding at Cana? Do we look at weddings as a picture of the wedding of Christ and his church? As we plan our weddings do we have the true meaning of marriage in mind, or are we too caught up with the earthly beauty of a wedding and ignore the spiritual beauty symbolized in them? Jesus blessed the marriage in Cana by his presence. Is He present with us in our weddings today? If our weddings do not reflect true spiritual beauty in every aspect know assuredly that He will not bless that wedding. The miracle done at Cana shows to us the grace that is given to weddings where all is done to glorify the Son of God our bridegroom. Sing Psalter 360.

June 17 Read John 2:12-17

We are in the middle of the week. We are also at the time of year in which Sunday is not given its due. Do we think this is pleasing to God? What would Jesus do if He entered our worship services next Sunday? Would he have to drive out all that was not pleasing to His and our Father? Would there be anything left? Are our hearts prepared to worship Him in the way to which He calls us? These are some questions to which we must give some sober answers. Let us prepare ourselves to worship Him this coming Lord’s Day in the way which will please Him and profit our salvation. Sing Psalter 14:1, 7, 8 and 9.

June 18 Read John 2:18-25

As Jesus spent His life on this earth and especially the last three years of His life on earth, He was often looking ahead to His last days before His crucifixion. He gave many ways of instruction for His disciples and the wicked about His death and resurrection. These instructions are for us as well today. We, first of all, must know the circumstances of His death and resurrection. Second, we must believe that they really happened. Third, we must see the spiritual meaning of those things. Finally, we must see that they point ahead to our blessed resurrection when we are united with the church triumphant and are married to our blessed bridegroom Christ Jesus. Let us read His Word and find the beautiful truths found there about His and our resurrections. Sing Psalter 28.

June 19 Read John 3:1-8

Do we belittle Nicodemus for sneaking off to Jesus by night because he was afraid of what the other Pharisees might say of him? We might, but we are often no better than he was. We, too, might hide the fact that we are interested in the things of God. Are we interested in those things enough to seek answers to our hard questions? Young people, do you dare raise your hands in catechism or young peoples and ask questions?

Do you dare to visit your minister or an elder to have a spiritual question answered? Adults, are you found in society asking such questions? We need to learn about such things as regeneration and all that goes with it. Let us be seeking to find answers for such questions, and let us be interested in learning about spiritual things. If we do not and are not, God will cut us off in our generations even as He did to Israel of old. Sing Psalter 143.

June 20 Read John 3:9-13

Nicodemus was puzzled at the truths that Jesus was relating to him about regeneration. Even after Jesus gave to him clear signs in creation concerning regeneration, Nicodemus did not understand. Jesus then scolded him for not believing. Are we any better? We have much more than Nicodemus. We have the full revelation of the Son of God in His Word. How do we receive it? What use do we make of it? We, too, deserve the scolding of Jesus concerning our lack of belief of things spiritual. Let us cleave to those spiritual things and seek to know what God has said to us in His Word. Let us believe and follow after the ascended Lord, our Savior Christ Jesus. Sing Psalter 183.

June 21 Read John 3:14-21

What a love God has for His people! He created the world for them. After they fell into sin, He gave to them the promise of a Savior. That Savior came to this world and gave Himself so that the elect may live. Do we love the light and do that which is light, or do we love the darkness and do that which is darkness? To walk in darkness is to walk in the deeds of Satan. Which side of the antithesis are we on? Are we saying yes to the things of God and therefore are walking the walk of the antithesis? Let us do that, and let us be thankful for the great sacrifice of Jesus Christ on the cross. Sing Psalter 240:1, 3 and 4.

June 22 Read John 3:22-30

After Jesus’ discussion with Nicodemus, he went to find John the Baptist, and to once more be announced to the public. Once again John confessed that Jesus was the Messiah and not him. John in his words, “He must increase, but I must decrease.” showed that he understood very well who Christ was. He knew that Jesus came from heaven to this earth. He knew that he was the forerunner for the great King. Is Christ our king? Do we rejoice because we can hear His voice in church today? Let us seek the heavenly King of whom John announced. Let us do that today and every day. Let us see in baptism the sign of the blessed covenant God has with us and our children. Sing Psalter 425:5 and 6.

June 23 Read John 3:31-36

As we attended church yesterday did we hear Christ? And in hearing Christ did we hear the word of God? If we did not, one of two things was wrong. Either we were not listening very well and refused to hear Him, or we either did not attend church or attended a church where Christ did not speak. As people of God we have the responsibility to hear Christ in the

preaching of the Word. We must prepare ourselves to listen. We must attend a church with the pure manifestation of the marks. As we hear Christ we must believe Him. In believing Him we will have the everlasting life that is found in Him. Let us seek life not wrath. Sing Psalter 243:1, 2 and 4.

June 24 Read John 4:1-6

Jesus needed to go through Samaria. Why, we might ask. He needed to go there because one of His sheep was there. What does that mean to us? Young people, it means that Christ will find you for your salvation wherever you are at whatever time. Older people of God, we may rest assured that God will find us as well. He left the people of Judea and went to Samaria. The church today must be ready to leave the familiar grounds and do mission work in many lands and any land. The call to repent will go forth to all nations. Are we ready to heed Christ's instruction to us to teach all nations His name? Sing Psalter 198:1, 2 and 7.

June 25 Read John 4:7-10

Jesus met the woman whom He had needs to meet. He met her by the well in her home town. He engaged her in a conversation that would lead her to seek the living water. Do we do this? Do we strike up conversations with strangers in order that we may get to spiritual things? Do we seek the salvation of all kinds of people? This is what we are to do. We do not need to leave our home towns in order to do this. We can do this in the various meeting places that we have in these towns. We can broadcast the loving kindness of our Heavenly Father that is more than life to us. Let us seek God's people whoever they are and wherever they may be. Let us speak of the living water from which we have been privileged to drink. Sing Psalter 187.

June 26 Read John 4:11-15

Do we rest on our earthly heritage to get to heaven? Do we think that because our forefathers have been active in the church that is enough for us? If we do we fall into the Samaritan's woman's error. She thought that it was enough that Jacob had built a well in her city for her salvation. The woman was focused on earthly water not heavenly. What about us? Are we any different? Are we spending the summer in all sorts of entertainments for our physical lives? Even if we are doing some sort of mission work, are we bringing the living water to those to whom we have contact, or are we so caught up in the physical that the spiritual is lacking, or even worse the physical takes the place of the spiritual? Let us seek the living water and let that water lead us to eternal life. Sing Psalter 176.

June 27 Read John 4:16-24

In two days we will worship again. How will we worship? Will it be out of tradition as both the Samaritans and the Jews of Jesus' day did? Will it be superficial without the center of the worship being the preaching of the Word? In this section of Scripture, Jesus teaches about the manner of worship required of the New Testament church. This worship must be in

Spirit and in truth. It must not embrace the legalism or symbolism of the Old Testament. That type of worship had its place. Now we have a better type. We approach the throne of grace through the Son of God Himself. Our worship must be the true worship that He has ordained. Let us seek to worship Him properly, not only in the coming Sabbath but also in the remaining Sabbaths until we reach the eternal Sabbath in heaven. Sing Psalter 263.

June 28 Read John 4:25-30

As Jesus talked to the women, she became more convinced that He was speaking the truth. We see this by her reaction when He reveals Himself to her as the Christ. She goes into her hometown and spreads the good news that the Messiah had come to them. Jesus' disciples also saw the power that He exuded as He spoke to the woman. We see this as they did not try to stop Him from speaking to a hated Samaritan. People of God, let us seek the power of Christ tomorrow as He speaks to us through the preaching of the Word. Let us bow before that power and believe. Let us confess our sins and seek Jesus who forgives all kinds of sinners. Let us prepare for that even tonight as we eagerly await the Sabbath. Sing Psalter 64.

June 29 Read John 4:31-38

This is an appropriate section of this chapter to consider on the Lord's Day. First of all we see that Jesus is strengthened spiritually by speaking the Word to the Samaritan woman. When we hear that same Word, will we be strengthened? Will that Word be more important than the food that we might eat today? Will the receiving of that Word be more important than the preparing of that food? Secondly, do we see the great need to spread that Word not only in our own towns, but wherever God chooses to lead us? The fields are white for the harvest. As that harvest is brought in we come closer and closer to the day of Christ's return. Let us pray that God will send forth reapers even from among our churches and our families for His glory. Sing Psalter 195.

June 30 Read John 4:39-45

What would be our reception of Jesus if He preached in our midst? Would we seek eagerly to hear Him as did the people of Sychar, or would we reject His Word as did the Galileans? To answer that question we need to think no further back than yesterday. How did we receive the Word preached? Did we hear it? Were we happy to hear it? Did we make a special point to hear it? Did our vacation get in the way of our hearing that Word? People of God, we have been given much therefore much will be required of us in the judgment day. Are we ready to stand before the judge of heaven and earth and give account of our stewardship of His Word? Let us consider these things, and let us pray for the grace to seek to receive His Word with willing hearts. In this way we will know that God will be pleased. Sing Psalter 357.

The Sixth Pointer on the Spiritual Roadmap: Loving Our Neighbor

by Rev. Doug Kuiper



*Thou shalt not kill.
Exodus 20:13*

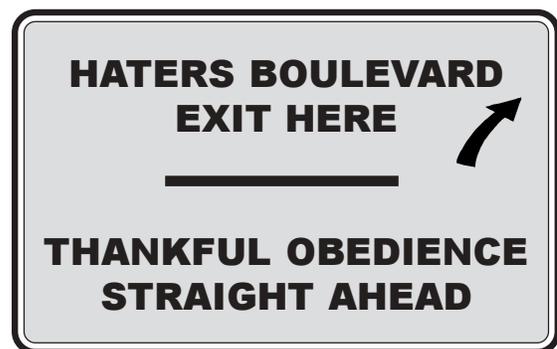
*Love worketh no ill to his neighbour:
therefore love is the fulfilling of the law.
Romans 13:10*

The Way of Thankful Obedience, on which we are traveling, is like a freeway. It is like a freeway, first, because the free, unmerited grace of God has put us on this way; and while journeying on this Way, we are free to serve God. But it is also like a freeway because of how one exits it.

To exit the Way of Thankful Obedience, you see, does not necessarily require that we first come to a complete stop, consciously decide to turn left or right, wait for traffic to clear, and then turn. Stop lights and sharp turns are not found on freeways. To exit the Way of Thankful Obedience, we simply bear gently right onto the exit ramp. To remain on that Way, we stay left. Just like a freeway.

There are two kinds of people who get off freeways. One kind has consciously decided that they must get off at a certain exit, so they deliberately bear right on that exit ramp. The other kind knows that good drivers stay to the right when not passing another vehicle. So they stay to the right—and, because they are distracted, they bear right onto the exit ramp not realizing what they are doing. Too late! They have exited the freeway, and must find an entrance to the freeway again.

So there are two kinds of people who leave the Way of Thankful Obedience for Haters Boulevard. One kind has determined to hate. They want to hate. They love to hate. They simply have no desire to love their neighbor. They are deliberately on Haters Boulevard. The other kind does not intend to travel on Haters Boulevard at all. They love God, and are grateful for His saving work. But they are not always aware of the dangers which lie ahead; they are too distracted to notice the signs on the road; and suddenly, they find themselves on Haters Boulevard, scrambling to find an entrance to the Way of Thankful Obedience again!



Which kind of driver are you, young people?

I'm the latter kind. I'd like to say that I'm neither kind; that I never take an exit off the Way of Thankful Obedience. But we all know better. Though saved, I must still fight sin. And so must you.

So, together, let us take a refresher course in driving! The lesson is entitled, “Avoiding Hater’s Boulevard.”



The reason to avoid Hater’s Boulevard is, of course, that it is so dangerous. No, it does not seem to be, especially immediately after exiting the Way of Thankful Obedience. It seems to be a well paved road, leading to a nice city. But...travel on it awhile, and the road deteriorates; you see many potholes; finally the pavement ends and the wide boulevard becomes just a gravel road; then it becomes a narrow one lane road; and suddenly it ends at a cliff. Over the cliff one sees smashed vehicles and dead bodies.

Young people, I think you understand what I am saying. The danger of hatred is hell. Jesus Himself told us, “But I say unto you, That whosoever is angry with his brother without a cause shall be in danger of the judgment” (Matthew 5:22); and, in the same verse He warns us that whoever says to his brother “Thou fool, shall be in danger of hell fire.”

The apostle John said: “Whosoever hateth his brother is a murderer: and ye know that no murderer hath eternal life abiding in him” (I John 3:15). One implication of this statement is that one who hates cannot experience God’s love or enjoy God’s fellowship.

We must avoid Hater’s Boulevard!

That is exactly God’s warning to us in the sixth commandment: “Thou shalt not kill.” And, this warning is not merely that we should refrain from the act of killing, as if only those who kill, without repenting, will go to hell. Rather, when God forbids killing, He forbids every action, word, and thought which is motivated by hatred. Not killing only, but everything that shows that you wish the other person to be removed from your life and presence, is forbidden. All hatred leads to hell.



But how do we avoid Hater’s Boulevard?

Of course, the answer is: Watch where you are driving! Stay on the Way of Thankful Obedience. That is, continue to remember that God saved us from traveling on this boulevard, and gave us grace to love. And be thankful for that!

Love! That is the way to avoid Hater’s Boulevard.



We know that we are called to love our neighbor—every single person with whom we come into contact. This love which the sixth commandment requires of us does not mean that we must desire and delight in the fellowship of each and every person with whom we come into contact—emphatically Scripture calls us to live a life of spiritual separation from the ungodly. The love of fellowship may be shown only to fellow saints and Christians. But the love which we are called to show to every person with whom we come into contact is the love of seeking their good.

We are to love them by seeking their earthly good. We must be patient (slow to anger) toward them; peaceable, not ready to fight with fists or words; merciful, ready to help them in their needs and troubles; kind; and ready to do good in every way. This we are called to do toward believers and unbelievers alike.

We are to love them also by seeking their spiritual good. This requires us to speak to them of the gospel of Jesus Christ, and especially to warn the ungodly and unbelievers of the destruction toward which they are headed. Sometimes God uses such witnessing to bring them to Christ. Other times He uses it to leave them without excuse for their hatred and unbelief. Always He uses it to accomplish His good purpose.

Such love is not at all easy for us. To stay on the Way of Thankful Obedience does not come naturally.

This is true, first, because God’s law requires us to love even our enemies (see Matthew 6:44, Romans 12:20). In these verses, our enemy is not one whom we hate, but one who hates us, persecutes us, spitefully uses us. We are to show them love, in return for their hatred! This is difficult to do.

Secondly, this is difficult because God’s law requires us to love those whom we think are inferior to us! Of course, such thinking in itself is wrong; we must esteem others better than ourselves (Philippians 2:3). Yet it is true that we think of ourselves more highly than many fellow saints in church or school. To love some people would not be “cool.” To love them might mean that others shun us.

And, of course, this is difficult because by nature hatred dwells in our hearts. What Jesus told the Jews is also true of us by nature: “Ye are of your father the devil, and the lusts of your father ye will do. He was a murderer from the beginning...” (John 8:44).

Although difficult, this love is possible. God gives His children grace to love in Jesus Christ. To deny this would be to deny the regenerating and sanctifying work

of Christ. Young people—do you confess to be saved children of God? Then you say of yourselves that you are able to love your neighbor—*every* neighbor!

The way to guard against unintentionally exiting the Way of Thankful Obedience for Haters Boulevard is the way of seeking the grace of God in Christ every day in prayer. And such prayer must come from a heart that knows the danger is real!

Knowing our salvation, and seeking grace in prayer, we should do one other thing to help us guard against the danger of finding ourselves on Haters Boulevard: we should look to the love of Christ.

This love of Christ is our example. He devoted Himself to loving those who by nature hated Him—namely,

His church! Selflessly, unconditionally, faithfully, continually, He loved us. So ought we to love each other.

This love of Christ is our salvation. Apart from it, we could never love!

Therefore, this love of Christ must also be our motivation. We will love, because Christ so loved us!

By loving, we remain on The Way of Thankful Obedience. And that Way ends, not at a cliff, but where Christ Himself is—in heaven! ❖

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

Where We Stand

Arminianism (5)

Events Leading Up to the Synod of Dordt (2)

by Aaron J. Cleveland

We ended the last article with three tactics used by the Arminian party to further their cause. They attempted to infiltrate the seminaries; they discredited the creeds of the Reformed churches; and they used every means available to short-circuit the proper ecclesiastical operations of the churches. Their tactics many times were successful to the great disturbance of the Netherlands churches.

As time went on, these enemies of the truth were emboldened in their opposition. After Arminius' death, with no synod in sight, the ministers siding with Arminius militated against the doctrines of election, perseverance, the certainty of salvation, and others. They secretly formed a confederation, apart from "the existing body of their Fellow Ministers" (*The Voice of Our Fathers*, p. 69). As a confederation they delivered a request, a remonstrance, to the states, putting in a bad light the doctrines of the Reformed Churches concerning the grace of God, perseverance, and divine predestination. In this Remonstrance was included "a declaration of their opin-

ions concerning the same Articles" (*V.O.O.F.*, p. 69). The remonstrant ministers prevented other ministers from getting copies of the Remonstrance, and they also appealed to the States to protect them from ecclesiastical censures.

In March, April, and May of 1611, the Five Articles of the Remonstrance were debated in the presence of the States by six ministers chosen from each side. Among the Remonstrants were Uitenbogaard and Simon Episcopius. Among the Reformed were Plancius, Bogardus and Hommius. The States of Holland and West-Friesland ordered the participants of this conference to put in writing their differences, along with their advice as to how the situation should best be resolved for the peace of the churches.

The Remonstrants advocated "mutual tolerance," letting both parties freely teach their views. The Reformed recommended a National Synod to come to a judgment on the differences and to determine which position was in accordance with God's Word. "With re-

gard to this advice, the votes of the States were divergent” (*V.O.O.F.*, p. 77). The result was that nothing was decided and the disturbance continued to grow.

As the disunity increased, the Remonstrants “incited the Magistrates” against the ministers who “opposed their purposes” (*V.O.O.F.*, p. 78). Many sound ministers were driven out of the ministry. Some were even driven out of their cities as well. Others were excluded from the ministry, even though they were gifted and lawfully called. In some cities, Arminian preachers were forced upon congregations against their will. It became necessary for some faithful saints to go to neighboring churches to hear edifying sermons and to separate from the fellowship of others. For this they were mocked.

Meanwhile, in the Province of Utrecht, Uitenbogaard brought it about that a “new form of Church Order” was framed which approved toleration of the views of the Remonstrants. About this new Church Order it was written that “one finds very many innovations concerning ecclesiastical rule in this Church Order, so that it was to be seen from this that these men intended nothing less than that everything, not only in the doctrine but also in the order and government of the church, should be changed” (*V.O.O.F.*, p. 80).

The tactics which the Remonstrants employed to further their cause and to bring harm to the churches were many. We list them as they are recorded for us in the Historical Foreword to the Acts of the Synod of Dordrecht.

The Remonstrance did not cease to push their cause diligently, to win the favor of the great, to gain the hearts of the Magistrates, and to render suspect and prevent all Synodical gatherings with the Political leaders, to gain the vacant Churches, to spread their views through public sermons and writings, to violate sound doctrine with terrible slanders, to draw the people to their side and more and more to alienate them from the doctrine of the Reformed Churches (*V.O.O.F.*, pp. 81, 82).

The Remonstrants also continued to press for toleration. The argument that they used to promote tolerance was that the articles of faith in question “were of such little importance that they did not concern the fundamentals of salvation and that in the case of such kinds of articles of doctrine people ought to be tolerant” (*V.O.O.F.*, p. 87). This promotion of tolerance on the part of the Remonstrants ought to immediately strike the reader of this history as hypocritical at best. It is usually the case that those who preach tolerance are themselves

intolerant of opposing views. Their tolerance ends where the truth begins. This was especially the case with the Remonstrants. They cruelly drove out sound Reformed ministers. They were never afraid to blacken the names of men such as Calvin and Beza. They rarely missed an opportunity to turn the authority of the Magistrates against those who opposed them. In other words, they were masters of intolerance when it came to the views of the Reformed.

As time went on and many of the delaying and obfuscating tactics of the Remonstrants no longer were effective, the authorizing of a National Synod was “urgently recommended” (*V.O.O.F.*, p. 92). When the Remonstrants knew a National Synod to be inevitable, they once again tried to avoid ecclesiastical judgment upon their doctrines and actions. They did so by proposing yet another conference at which both political and ecclesiastical men would come up with a way to fix the differences. Their solution would then be imposed upon the churches by the States. When this attempt failed, the Remonstrants became very desperate and attempted in some cities, such as Utrecht, to incite the magistrates of the city to engage their militias in order to deny the authority of the States in the convening of the National Synod. This attempt at breaking up the unity of the States was soon suppressed and the convening of the National Synod was considered even more important.

On December 11, 1617, the States-General “ordered the convening of the National Synod, to be held, in the name of the Lord, on May 1 of the following year” (*V.O.O.F.*, p. 93). They also “saw fit to invite from all Reformed Churches from neighboring Lands, ... certain theologians outstanding in godliness, learning and wisdom, in order that they should support the delegates of the Netherlands Churches by their judgments and counsel” (*V.O.O.F.*, pp. 93, 94). Again the Remonstrants tried to delay the start of the synod, but the States-General again decided that the convening of the synod would take place immediately. The place would be the City of Dordrecht on the first day of November. On November 13, 1618, the first session of “The Great Synod” of Dordrecht was held.

As we read and contemplate this history we can clearly see the hand of God guiding and directing events to the glory of His name, the further development of the truth, and the salvation and comfort of His people. As one looks back at what took place in the Reformed churches at this period in history it can seem as if the Reformation was headed for certain failure. The enemies

of the truth were attempting to lead the Reformed back to Rome. Yet God was sovereignly working in these events to bring about further reformation and understanding of the truth.

We must always remember God's absolute sovereignty when studying difficult periods of church history. We soon forget that it is God who not only controls the defenders of the faith, but also those who would destroy the truth. During this period in history the Arminians sought to move the church off of the foundation of Christ by perverting the doctrine of predestination, by claiming man's free will, and by reducing the grace of God to a common grace which can be refused. However, God used these men and their teachings to cause believers to grow in their understanding of true doctrine and to clearly expose the opposing lies. The great document which came out of this struggle was the Canons of Dordrecht. The enemies of the truth were nothing more than the servants of God used for the building up of His church.

As they were at that time and especially today, the Canons are a gracious gift of the Spirit of Truth to the

true church in the world. The Canons address many of the errors which are today threatening the Reformed churches. It is good that we know the contents of this creed and that we hear many references to it in the preaching. In the following articles, Lord willing, we hope to address the doctrinal aspects of Arminianism. We hope to review what the Arminians taught by examining the two documents which they produced, the Five Articles of 1610 and the Opinions of the Remonstrants (*Sententiae Remonstrantium*) delivered at the Synod of Dordrecht. We will also see how the Reformed faith was defended and developed in the Canons. ❖

Much of the information in this article has been taken from the book The Voice of Our Fathers, An Exposition of the Canons of Dordrecht, by Homer Hoeksema. Reformed Free Publishing Association, Grand Rapids, Michigan. Copyright 1980.

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

Church Family

Reasons for Preaching in a Protestant Reformed Church

by John Marcus

Every Christian is called by God to serve Him in every area of our lives. Indeed, God commands us to do *all* things to His glory (1 Cor. 10:31). Whether we are mechanics or lawyers, doctors or nurses, fathers or mothers, we must all serve God to our utmost in the place where He has led us. But, how does God lead us to the vocation where He would have us serve Him?

God leads us to our respective callings through a variety of means. These means might entail suggestions from our parents, experiences during our childhood, talents that we perceived while in school, and opportuni-

ties which come our way—to name only a few. Always, however, God uses His word and His Spirit to lead and guide His people. When God's "word is a lamp unto (our) feet" (Psalm 119:105), we can gauge if He would have us pursue one vocation or another. For example, if we know that a particular vocation will entail union membership, then we can certainly know from God's word that He is *not* leading us to pursue such a vocation; His word is abundantly clear that we must submit to all authority He has placed over us. While God's word will often give us clear principles that we must use in making our vocational decisions, His Spirit may lead us in

ways that may not be as obvious to us. However, the fact that God works in our hearts to mold us and to lead us in His paths cannot be denied. “For it is God which worketh in you both to will and to do of his good pleasure” (Philippians 2:13). God uses His Spirit to convict us of our sin and to cause our hearts to seek closer fellowship with Him. When we are being led by the Spirit our desire to serve Him will often cause us to choose one vocation over another. As one of His children, I believe God is directing my life by His word and by His Spirit.

The first thing I would like to address in terms of God’s leading me in my life is His calling me to be a *member* of a Protestant Reformed Church. Article 28 of the Belgic Confession states very clearly that all men are duty bound to join themselves to the true church of Christ. Since we ought to be members of the true church, it only makes sense that we ought to be associated with the truest church. The church that upholds pure and biblical doctrine ought to be the church that all believers support. Joining another less pure church would tend to prop up the false teachings that are being propagated by that church and so would tend to undermine the truth. Since I believe that the teachings of the Protestant Reformed Churches are the closest to the teachings of Scripture, I am duty bound before God to be a member of a Protestant Reformed church.

Second, I believe that God may be leading me to be a *minister* of the gospel. This leading has become clearer to me over time as various influences have taken form. I have received suggestions and comments from those whom I respect. Though the suggestions were not great in number, they have contributed to my conviction that God may be pleased to use me in the ministry. In addition to the comments that have come my way, I have also been burdened with the question of serving in the church for a number of years. These thoughts about the ministry have been recurring and served to strengthen the conviction that God might have me serve in the church in the way of preaching.

These desires to minister in the church, however, may simply be a manifestation of love for the truth. Having a desire to minister in the church is not sufficient; one must also possess the gifts that are required to fulfill the duties of the office of a minister. A man may have a sincere desire to serve as a preacher, but that is not a proper basis for admitting him to the office of minister. The church must first confirm his gifts. Once a man’s gifts and the evidence of his calling are confirmed, the church may then lawfully call him. No man ought to

thrust himself on the church (Belgic Confession, Article 31). If God is truly calling a man to minister in His church, He will make the gifts of that man evident to the church and the church will then call him to serve.

Third, if God would have me be a *minister* of the Gospel then the ministering must be as a *member* of a *Protestant Reformed* church. The same reasons that one has for becoming a member of the true church must also be the reasons why one must minister as a member of that church. If God calls a man to be a minister of the Gospel, He will not cause that man to leave the true church in order to do the ministering. Surely, if one could not join a denomination in good conscience, then he ought not minister as a member in that denomination either. This ministering of the gospel, then, must be done in a true church, i.e., a church that holds to the purest biblical doctrine and practice. A faithful minister, laboring on behalf of a less pure church would not only deprive a more faithful church of his labors but also keep some of the saints in that less faithful church when they also should be joining a more faithful church. Therefore, if I am to be a preacher of the gospel, it must be as a Protestant Reformed minister.

Ministering in a Protestant Reformed church will serve to build up the church in several ways. Preaching in a Protestant Reformed church will serve to *promote* the truths which God has entrusted to us. Such precious truths include His everlasting covenant with all believers, God’s sovereign particular grace, His hatred of divorce and the sin of remarriage of divorced persons, and the principle of the antithesis that applies to every area of our lives. Preaching in a Protestant Reformed church will also serve to *defend* against those who would seek to subvert the truth of God’s word. When God’s people rebuilt the walls of Jerusalem in Nehemiah’s day, they did so with a sword in one hand and bricks in the other. Ministering to the saints in the true church will involve both building and defending.

Ultimately, should God be pleased to call me as a minister in the Protestant Reformed Churches, I must obey that call. We all pray for the “peace of Jerusalem” (Psalm 122:6). By choosing to prepare for the ministry in the Protestant Reformed Churches, I have simply expressed my willingness to seek the good of Jerusalem through the ministry of the gospel. We must always seek the good of the church, whether it is from the pulpit or the pew, with our money and/or our time. All that we have belongs to God and we ought to seek to use *all* our talents and abilities that God gives us for His kingdom.

May God prosper His Church on earth until Christ comes again. ❖

John is a member of Byron Center Protestant Reformed Church in Byron Center, Michigan. He wrote this article for the 2001 Protestant Reformed Scholarship.

Church History

George M. Ophoff (8)

Seminary Years

by Prof. Herman Hanko

In the Fall of 1918, the last year of World War I, George Ophoff finally attained his goal of studying for the ministry of the Word in Calvin Seminary. His college preparation had been completed, and his studies could be limited to those necessary to be a Reformed minister in the Church of Christ.

The years George spent in the seminary were busy ones. Seminary studies in themselves are generally sufficient to keep a conscientious student busy during most of his waking hours and often long into the night. During the years in which George prepared for the ministry, the seminary of the Christian Reformed Church was perhaps one of the best seminaries in the whole country from the viewpoint both of scholarly preparation for the ministry and Reformed orthodoxy. There were many shining lights of the Christian Reformed Church who taught in the seminary in those years. Men like Samuel Volbeda, Louis Berkhof, F. M. ten Hoor and the like were some of the greatest theologians which the Christian Reformed Church produced in all her history.

During the years in which George studied in the seminary, the Janssen case had come up, although it had not been resolved when George graduated. Janssen was an extremely popular professor who occupied the chair of Old Testament studies; but he had also imbibed higher critical ideas during the years of his studies in Germany. These views he had carried into the classroom. In how far his teaching affected the thought of George Ophoff

is not known. George must have had him for some classes, but there is, so far as I know, no mention of Prof. Janssen or his views in all of Ophoff's writings.¹

The common grace controversy was being debated in the churches as well; and the seminary took a lively part in the debate. In fact, the faculty was divided on the issue. Nevertheless, for the most part, the leading thinkers in the seminary generally opposed the idea of common grace.² Seminary life was lively and interesting, but busy and time-consuming.

George did not withdraw from the life of the seminary to live in isolation from his fellow students. He took an active part in the extra-curricular activities of the student body. He was a member of the student voluntary band and of an elocution class, organized by students for purposes of developing their speaking abilities and debating skills. He actively engaged in the "bull-sessions" which were then such an important part of student life. He brought a word of edification in the churches along with the other students. He was courting his future wife. And he had, in addition to all this, the responsibility of the care of his grandfather, Prof. Hemkes, with whom he stayed and who was an invalid who could do little to help himself.

One incident in the busy life of the seminary stood out in George's mind when he contemplated these years of seminary study. It was an incident which, though seemingly rather unimportant, was nevertheless to have im-

portant consequences for the future, especially the role which George would play in the establishment of the Protestant Reformed Churches.

A bit of background will help us understand the significance of this. As we said, already during the years in which George was in college the common grace controversy was in the air. We cannot go into the history of this controversy in these articles, although this is, in itself, interesting enough.

There were especially three reasons why common grace was already a subject of discussion and debate.

The first reason was the writings of Dr. Abraham Kuyper in the Netherlands. While originally a staunch defender of the Reformed faith, Dr. Kuyper had also developed various theories of common grace in his 3-volume work: *De Gemeene Gratie (Common Grace)*. He had written this book and developed his views at about the same time that he had, as the head of the Anti-revolutionary Party in the Netherlands, become a member of the Dutch Parliament and had eventually risen to the position of Prime Minister. This rise to power was made possible by the formation of a coalition government which included the Roman Catholics. Kuyper's own party lacked sufficient votes in the Dutch Parliament, although it did have a plurality. A coalition with another party was necessary to govern. How close the relationship was is not easy to determine, but it is quite possible that the development of common grace, at least in part, was an attempt to justify this political coalition. In any case, Kuyper's views of common grace meant a broadening of the entire calling of the Christian in the world as he discovered increasingly more areas of life in which he could cooperate with unbelievers. Dr. Abraham Kuyper's views, because of his enormous prestige, were increasingly widespread.

In the second place, these same views came to this country through the immigration of Dr. Kuyper's disciples, and were especially adopted by a group within the Christian Reformed Church which was influential in the church and college. A magazine by the name of *Religion and Culture* was the mouthpiece for this group. It too stood for a broader outlook on life for the Reformed Christian. It eagerly promoted an Americanization of what was basically a Dutch church. It pleaded for such cooperation with the world of unbelief that the Reformed man could join unbelievers in politics, labor, and culture in general so as to make one's Christian light shine more clearly. Common grace was the vehicle to promote these goals.

In the third place, as we already noticed, these were also the years when Dr. Janssen was introducing his heresy into the church. As professor of Old Testament in the seminary, he was calling into question various miracles in the Old Testament by means of a rationalistic and higher critical approach to Scripture. Rev. H. Hoeksema played a leading role in Synod's condemnation of these views. What is of interest to us is the fact that, in support of his views, Dr. Janssen appealed to the doctrine of common grace. While the synod of 1922 condemned Dr. Janssen for his higher criticism, it did not enter into the common grace issue which Dr. Janssen had brought forward. That issue remained unresolved. The result was that common grace remained an issue in the church.

It was during his seminary years that George Ophoff was assigned a paper on the subject of common grace as part of his school work. For months he labored with the problem and struggled with the question, but could find no light. His problem centered in the questions of the Scriptural basis for common grace, and the place which common grace occupied in the organic body of the truth of the Reformed faith. You must understand that his whole approach was a naïve acceptance of the doctrine. While the subject of common grace was being discussed, none were seriously questioning what the great Dr. Kuyper had taught. It was true that Rev. Hoeksema, especially because of the Janssen case, was becoming increasingly distrustful of the doctrine; and his dissatisfaction with the doctrine was to grow stronger as he wrote on the question in the church's official publication, *The Banner*. And the professors in the seminary, whatever their own personal positions might have been, rarely if ever expressed them in class. Nevertheless, George Ophoff was not fully aware of any doubts concerning the doctrine and was operating on the assumption that common grace was part of the Reformed heritage and a doctrine to be believed. But he could not square it with Scripture, and he could not harmonize it with the great doctrines of the Reformed faith.

That God was gracious to His elect people in saving them from sin, death and hell, and that, at the same time, God was gracious to all the wicked, though in a different way, seemed contradictory. That God enabled His elect people to do good works by the power of the Holy Spirit as part of their salvation, and that God also enabled the wicked to do good works, although eventually God would send them to hell, seemed strange on God's part, to say the least. That God could earnestly desire

the salvation of all men, and yet desire the salvation of the elect only, seemed an impossible conundrum.

This puzzle which George faced is not difficult to understand. In order to explain the contradictory ideas which one must hold to maintain the truth of sovereign grace along with common grace, it is necessary to fall back on the idea of “apparent contradiction.” That is, one must maintain that it is possible to believe statements which are completely contradictory. It is possible to believe that the oak in my back yard is both a tree and an animal at the same time. Those of us who knew Rev. Ophoff knew too that he was a logical man. He would be so completely lost in thought on occasion that he was oblivious to his surroundings. As often as not, this would be due to the fact that he was following a trail of logic from a principle he had accepted, and would follow that trail relentlessly wherever it led.

The struggle in George’s mind continued for a long time. Finally, almost in desperation, he decided to approach the problem from the viewpoint of common grace as a *false* doctrine. To use his own words, “Suddenly the light went on.” All the pieces began to fall into place. All the loose ends disappeared. All the problems dissolved. The paper was, from this point on, very easily written. It became clear to him that the Scriptures taught no such thing and that the doctrine had no place in the organic body of the Reformed faith, but was a non-Scriptural doctrine and a contradiction of the great truths of sovereign and particular grace which had come down to the church from the Reformers.

What is significant, however, is the fact that George Ophoff came to an independent conclusion with regard to this question. It is true that common grace was being discussed, and it is also true that there were those within the church, the college, and the seminary who denied common grace. But the fact is that no one ever really gave much thought to the idea that common grace was, in fact, heresy. There were differences of opinion on it. Many adopted it at face value. The great Dr. Kuyper had taught it. Perhaps it ought not even to be questioned, or, at least, there ought to be room in the church for differences of opinion on the matter. But now, George came to an independent judgment that the doctrine was, in fact, contrary to Scripture and the creeds, and had to be rejected.

In the second place, he reached this position while still in school preparing for the ministry. His views with respect to common grace were born then. No doubt, he did not yet know what to do with this new insight. No

doubt, the significance of it had not yet penetrated his soul. No doubt, he was not yet even clear in his own mind what all the implications were. And beyond doubt, he could not possibly envision what this position would hold for him in the future and what the consequences of this position would be. Only God knew that. But the fact is that he had set himself, independently, on a course of action which would have in the future the gravest consequences. When finally the time came for him to take his stand publicly in the churches, it would not be the result of hasty conclusions or the influence of a powerful personality, but it would be the result of a position centrally taken when he wrestled with a paper for his professor and could find no answer until such a time as he saw how un-Scriptural common grace really was.

How wonderful are the way of God unfathomed and unknown!

Endnotes

¹ The Synod of the Christian Reformed Church exonerated Prof. Janssen in 1920, but continued suspicion of his teachings ended in the case being considered once more at the Synod of the Christian Reformed Church in Orange City, Iowa in 1922. This Synod condemned his views and put him out of his position in the Seminary. For more information of this controversy, see Gertrude Hoeksema’s book, *Therefore Have I Spoken*, and my unprinted thesis, available in syllabus form from the Protestant Reformed Seminary, *A Study of the Relation Between the Views of Prof. R. Janssen and Common Grace*.

² At least Janssen accused the professors in the Seminary of denying common grace. The fact is, however, that when Rev. Herman Hoeksema and Rev. George Ophoff were accused of denying common grace, all the professors in the Seminary either joined in their condemnation or remained silent and stayed in the church when Hoeksema and Ophoff were expelled. ❖

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

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Theme Song: Psalter #354

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Prof. Russell Dykstra "God is Our Protector"

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Chosen

Henry's father pounded another nail into the roof of one of the birdhouses he was building. Henry watched closely.

"Dad, do you think I could pound in one of those nails?" Henry asked.

"Sure. I'll get it started—" he tapped in a nail, "and you can finish it."

Henry carefully grasped the hammer. *BANG-BANG*. The nail was slightly crooked, but it was in. Henry was pleased. "There, another birdhouse finished."

His father set it on the table next to the others. Henry looked at them closely. Some were plain and simple, while others were quite fancy with extra shingles and trim. "Why did you make some so plain and some so fancy, Dad?"

"Well, there's a place for both. When a birdhouse will be hid in the branches, all you need is a plain one. But sometimes a birdhouse is meant for a prominent place in the yard. Then one with more trim is better."

Later that day Henry saw his father reading a book.

"Henry, come here a minute." His father pointed to the First Head of the Canons of Dordt. "'OF DIVINE PREDESTINATION'," he read. This section defends the doctrine of election and reprobation. God makes vessels unto honor and vessels unto dishonor—*He* chooses what they will be."

"Kind of like your birdhouses—some are plain and some are fancy?"

Henry's father nodded. "Kind of. He makes people to be elect or reprobate according to His good pleasure. He didn't look into the future to see who would be good enough or who would believe. Oh no! By nature no one would be good enough and no one would believe. By nature His elect aren't one bit better than the reprobate. He chose us so we *will* believe and obey."

Henry's father closed his book. "Could one of those birdhouses choose to be fancy instead of plain?"

Henry shook his head.

"When we hang up the birdhouses you'll be able to see how each one fits into its place. And we can think about this, too—how salvation is *all* God's work." ❖

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



"LITTLE LIGHTS"

... let it shine!

by Connie Meyer

Find the underlined words from these sections of the First Head of the Canons of Dordt in the puzzle below:

Article 7

Election is the unchangeable purpose of God, whereby, before the foundation of the world, he hath out of mere grace, according to the sovereign good pleasure of his own will, chosen... a certain number of persons to redemption in Christ...

Article 9

This election was not founded upon foreseen faith...



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BAPTISMS

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

Mark 16:16

The sacrament of Holy Baptism was administered to:
Jacob Alan, son of Mr. & Mrs. Josh Lubbers—Byron Center, MI
Klayton Alan, son of Mr. & Mrs. Brent Kuiper—Faith, MI
Ashley Rose, daughter of Mr. & Mrs. Clay Spronk—Faith, MI
Nathan Gilbert, son of Mr. & Mrs. Mike Langeland—Georgetown, MI
Trenton Scott, son of Mr. & Mrs. Ryan Mowery—Holland, MI
Megan Elizabeth, daughter of Mr. & Mrs. Tom Pastoor—Holland, MI
Josiah David, son of Mr. & Mrs. Tim Bomers—Hope, MI
Darcie Joy, daughter of Mr. & Mrs. Mike Haveman—Hudsonville, MI
Jared Gys, son of Mr. & Mrs. Eric Van Baren—South Holland, IL
Benjamin Dale, son of Mr. & Mrs. Dale Zandstra—South Holland, IL
Joshua Daniel, son of Mr. & Mrs. Dan Butler—Southwest, MI
Elena Marie, daughter of Rev. & Mrs. David Overway—Wyckoff, NJ

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:

Alyssa Brands—Edgerton, MN
Bob Knecht—Edgerton, MN
David Bertsch—Grace, MI
Evan Bleyenbergh—Hull, IA
Myron Bleyenbergh—Hull, IA
Tonia Keizer—Hull, IA
Steve Westra—Hull, IA
Curtis Tolsma—Lacombe, Canada
Michelle Wierenga—Lacombe, Canada
Tony Graf—Peace, IL
John Volkoff—Redlands, CA

MARRIAGES

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

Matthew 19:5

United in the bond of Holy Matrimony were:
Mr. Russ Lotterman and Miss Karisa Hassavoort—Byron Center, MI
Mr. Todd DeBoode and Miss Bethany Venema—Hudsonville, MI
Mr. Jon Regnerus and Miss Kathie Blakespoor—Randolph, WI